

The Transformative Power Of Seeing Fat-Girl Sex On TV

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In Huluâ€™s new series â€œShrill,â€• Annie (played by the plus-size Aidy Bryant) straddles her boyfriend during a steamy make-out scene.

Throughout my life, Iâ€™ve struggled with my weight. Iâ€™ve ranged from a size 8 to a size 28, the former having been achieved only by means of a strict low-carbohydrate diet and hours at the gym daily. My size doesnâ€™t bother me too much these days, having settled at a fairly comfortable size 12/14 and also having decided that, really, all the most interesting people are at least a little fat.

But in all my fluctuations, one thing I have never struggled with is getting laid. At every size, Iâ€™ve easily found partners casual and romantic to bring to my bedroom (or kitchen counter or bar bathroom). Iâ€™ve slept with many men who would be defined by societal standards as â€œhot.â€• I have always received regular sexual attention and interest from potential partners.

And I donâ€™t think Iâ€™m some magical exception. Despite the dominant cultural narrative, there are no shortage of men of all sizes out there who are attracted to fat women.

Which is probably why I was so thrilled by the moment on Huluâ€™s new series â€œShrill,â€• which is loosely based on writer Lindy Westâ€™s memoir of the same name, when Annie, played by the plus-size Aidy Bryant, clad only in a pair of panties, straddles her boyfriend during a steamy make-out. â€œYouâ€™re so hot,â€• he breathes, in a moment that felt both true to life and totally revelatory.

It wasnâ€™t the only time Annie has been in a sexual situation on the show, but for me, it was the most impactful, representing her beginning to let go and celebrate her sexuality. I donâ€™t even know if it could properly be called a sex scene, but a fat girl was almost naked, her body on display, and sex was about to happen. For many people, Episode 4â€™s pool party was their â€œholy shit this show is importantâ€• moment and deservedly so. But for me, it was Annieâ€™s boyfriend removing her bra. I immediately posted a screenshot to my Instagram with the caption â€œFuck yes, more of this please.â€•

Because when was the last time we saw a fat woman starring in a sex scene on television?

There was Lena Dunham and her not-model-perfect body on display through a series of sexual adventures on â€œGirls.â€• But she was far from plus-size, although that didnâ€™t stop a backlash that saw the New York Postâ€™s Linda Stasi refer to Dunhamâ€™s â€œblobby bodyâ€• in a review and viewers to insist Dunham would never be able to sleep with a man who looks like actor Patrick Wilson, as she did in a Season 2 story arc.

Similar backlash followed Gabourey Sidibeâ€™s groundbreaking sex scene on â€œEmpire,â€• as Twitter exploded with memes and jokes.

Of the scene, Sidibe told People, â€œI was really happy to be part of something thatâ€™s never been seen on primetime television before. And you donâ€™t notice it because you donâ€™t have to notice it, but thereâ€™s never been someone of my skin color, my size, with somebody else of the same skin color in a love scene on primetime

television.â€•

Plus-size actresses have started to make humble strides in being portrayed as romantic interests without their size being a plot point â€• Paula from â€œCrazy Ex-Girlfriendâ€• and Miranda Bailey from â€œGreyâ€™s Anatomyâ€• come to mind, and Aidy Bryant herself had a small role on the aforementioned â€œGirlsâ€• in which she starred in a romantic storyline.

But for the most part, pop culture continues to retread the stereotype of the lonely, sexless fat girl thatâ€™s so contrary to my experience of being a woman in this body in the real world.

The dichotomy is echoed by Episode 6â€™s troll-hunting plotline, where Annie hunts down the man who has been trolling her with body-shaming comments online, only to find that he seems to harbor a self-hating attraction to her. Both the internet and TV seem to operate like fun-house mirrors, taking women who are perfectly desirable and attractive in their day-to-day lives and reflecting them back as grotesque stereotypes for commentary.

The idea that you must have a thin body to be sexually attractive is just not true, and trotting it back out for another tired storyline is boring and lazy.

And beyond that, itâ€™s actively harmful. The reason that images like the screenshot I took resonate so deeply with people is because weâ€™re starving for them. While there are plenty of confident, sexual plus-size women like me out there, most of us have had to fight to claim our sexuality because we live in a society that tells us our bodies are a punchline. The sheer transformative joy of a TV show like â€œShrillâ€• is that itâ€™s rewriting that narrative. And the power is that it can change the way we feel in our own skin. Fuck yes, more of this please, indeed.

Fat people have sex. Fat people are desirable. For that matter, so are older people and disabled people and a whole range of others whose sex lives are rarely a part of mainstream discourse. Seeing this reflected in our pop culture shouldnâ€™t be an anomaly.

- Huffpost