

August 31, 2016

*Spotlight on Books:*

*Shrill: Notes From a Loud Woman* by Lindy West

When it comes to selecting the correct adjectives to describe Seattle writer and comedian Lindy West, one feels at a loss! There are simply too many laudatory descriptors that come to mind when reflecting on the author and her compelling collection of essays. You will laugh and you will cry as you read *Shrill* which for me perfectly captures the essence of the best sort of comedy.

In *Shrill* West charts the course of her evolution as a big child who became an overweight woman and who allowed society's prejudices and negativity around body size to silence her for many years before confronting them directly in both her writing and stand-up comedy sets. The author's wit ("*There were people-sized people , and then there was me.*") and eloquence on this subject captures reader empathy leading us to reflect on West's premise that the world regards bigness as "*aesthetically objectionable as well as a moral failing*". West wordsmiths her piece so eloquently that she crashes stereotypes and also helps us to feel her pain and to join her in celebrating a body that is not a "consumable object".

Serious themes aside, Lindy West is laugh-out-loud funny though she feels that her political focus and opposition to comedy that targets the vulnerable has resulted in the loss of her "funny card". She has weighed in passionately, for example, against rape jokes and this principled tenaciousness has effected change in many who may have indulged in laughter in response to such humour. Thoughtful readers may agree with her premise that artists have a responsibility around which ideas they "dump into the water supply". *Shrill: Notes from a Loud Woman* could only have been penned by someone who clearly loves humankind despite its many flaws and, though clearly fearless and committed to advocacy, chooses to underpin her humour with a joyful benevolence and kindness. *Shrill* awaits your check-out from the library's *Funny Women* display.

*-Review prepared by Deborah Bruser.*

