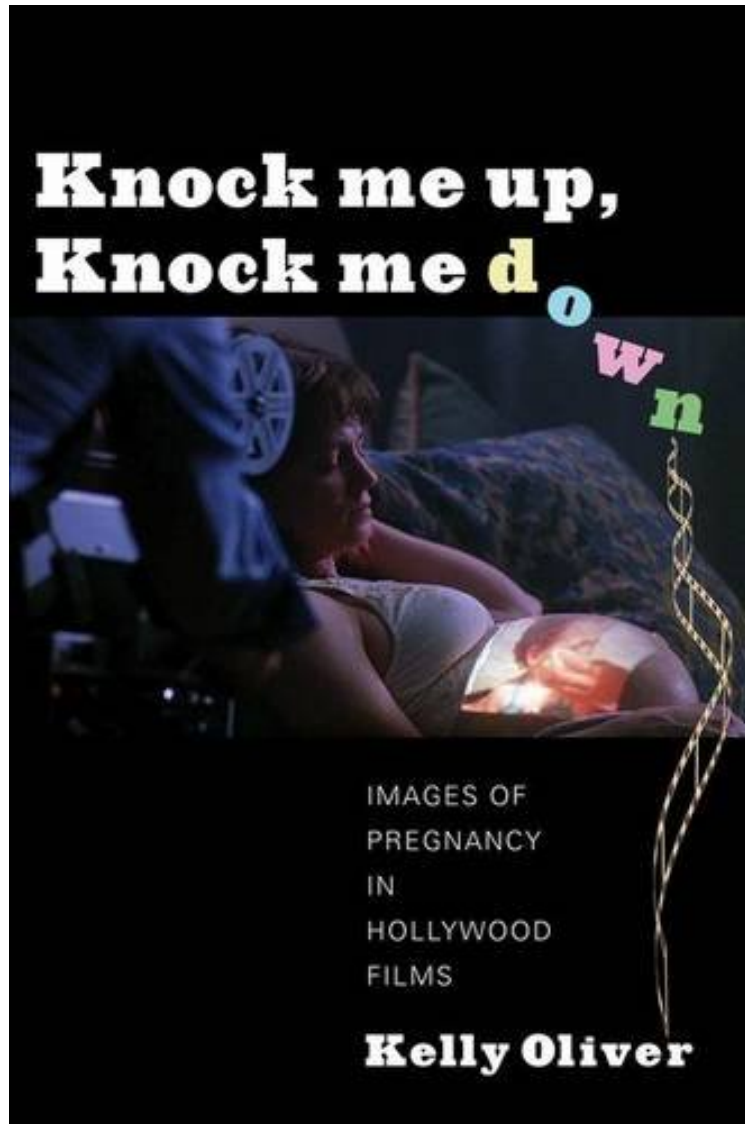


Knock Me Up, Knock Me Down: Images of Pregnancy in Hollywood Films

Kelly Oliver

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Kelly Oliver : Knock Me Up, Knock Me Down: Images of Pregnancy in Hollywood Films before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Knock Me Up, Knock Me Down: Images of Pregnancy in Hollywood Films:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. are women better off when their maternal bodies are brought out of ...By Shannon HoffI believe that philosophical thinking has the capacity to to be extremely relevant to specific,

empirical psychological and social issues, and that it is unfortunate both that it is rarely used to address such issues and that it is rarely expressed in an accessible way. Oliver, however, avoids this problem, bringing her skills of feminist and philosophical analysis to such empirical issues in a highly accessible way. In *Knock Me Up, Knock Me Down*, she aims to analyze what she calls the Hollywood baby boom, or the proliferation of Hollywood movies about pregnancy. The basic question motivating the book is, are women better off when their maternal bodies are brought out of the shadows and on to the big screen? This question receives an ambivalent answer: while it seems that a new openness to pregnancy and maternity is developing, and the division between maternity and sexuality decried by traditional feminist thinking is coming to be traversed, there is also still apparent a deep anxiety about women's reproductive capacities and new reproductive technologies. Conservatism with regard to women and reproduction, which takes the form of a simplistic privileging of nature over technology, of the nuclear family over new forms of sociality, of discrete forms of identity over the blurring of different kinds of boundaries, of white, middle-class reproduction over non-white, working-class reproduction, is simply taking new forms in adapting to a new environment: freedom of choice, for example, is cast as freedom to choose to have a baby! It is important that feminist analysis be flexible enough to recognize the changing character of the issues it needs to address, the appearance of new stereotypes and restrictions, and this book is a good example of such dynamic analysis, helping to mobilize feminist theory to be able to continue to effectively diagnose feminist problems. The book also does a nice job of showing how pregnancy is about more than simply basic issues of gender and the family: the pregnant belly is described as a screen upon which our most basic fears and desires concerning race, nation, religion, technology, and nature are projected. It shows pregnancy as the site at which many kinds of cultural anxieties meet: at the movies, we wonder what race the baby will be, we evaluate the fertility of some social groups differently than that of others, we worry about the use of assisted reproductive technologies (ART), and so on. It's clear, as one might expect, that Hollywood has some serious problems when it comes to reasonable thinking about maternity, sexuality, and pregnancy, and Oliver's overview of these problems is extremely helpful, lucid, and readable.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Illuminating and sobering

By Elaine Miller Kelly Oliver's *Knock Me Up, Knock Me Down* (seemingly playing on the Almodovar title, which examined marriage in a parallel way) shows us the ambivalent attitude of Hollywood film toward images and stories of pregnancy: on the one hand, early 1940s film banned the use of the word pregnancy, while more contemporary films use the pregnant belly as a prop in screwball comedies or use pregnancy as a vehicle for the birth of horror. On the other hand, Hollywood narratives in film and in stars' personal lives valorize natural over technologically sustained pregnancy and sexualize a certain kind of pregnant body, behind which the thin after image must lurk. The book uses psychoanalysis, contemporary continental philosophy, and film theory to approach its subject in a unique and complex way. As Oliver shows us, the image of the pregnant belly in film is a screen for some of our culture's deepest desires, anxieties, and fears. A fascinating read.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Acting Up

By Robin Orlovski It's difficult for my generation (and especially younger) to imagine how pregnancy has evolved in Hollywood. 30-40 years ago, this biological function was scandalous to mention on the screen. You would believe that humans were asexual creatures who reproduced in factories--or through the benevolent 'stork' of pop culture lore. Any public display of biological reality sent censors (who by now were showing kissing...etc) into a frenzied panic. We've come a long way baby! Now films are talking about pregnancy---and women's reproductive issues---front and center. This makes for important cinema. A good historical perspective on reproductive healthcare is HBO's *'If These Walls Could Talk'*, where Demi Moore, Sissy Spacek, and Cher/Anne Heche show the progress around this issue in three distinct eras. The 1974 segment of this film notes that legal reproductive choice also includes being able to have another kid. Because it is Barbara Barrow's (Spacek) choice, a pregnancy is the right decision for her individual needs. A more current-day film was *Citizen Ruth*, with Laura Dern playing the low-income and drug-addicted Ruth Stoops. The municipal court system is coercing her to get an abortion after her latest court charge. Because she is poor and unable to support herself, the system does not believe she should be able to have a say in reproductive self-choice. The local 'baby savers' chapter (whose national director is a hilariously campy Burt Reynolds) is trying to rescue her as their pet cause. But a 'lesbian-feminist' yuppie couple (Swoosie Kurtz and Kelly Preston) counter-rescues her with their own single-minded political agenda. They want her to have the abortion as a statement of being a 'free woman' and do not worry about making economic ends meet. Everybody is so busy claiming Ruth as one of their very own. So they don't really notice that she had a miscarriage--or that she sneaks away from their protesting. Ruth was important to each side as a 'pregnant' image. Both ultimately objectified her, unwilling to hear what she personally needed or wanted. This book is really recommended. It's entertaining and informative. It will make your knowledge of reproductive history 'grow'.

No longer is pregnancy a repulsive or shameful condition in Hollywood films, but an attractive attribute, often enhancing the romantic or comedic storyline of a female character. Kelly Oliver investigates this curious shift and its reflection of changing attitudes toward women's roles in reproduction and the family. Not all representations signify progress. Oliver finds that in many pregnancy films, our anxieties over modern reproductive practices and technologies are made manifest, and in some cases perpetuate conventions curtailing women's freedom. Reading such

films as *Where the Heart Is* (2000), *Riding in Cars with Boys* (2001), *Palindromes* (2004), *Saved!* (2004), *Quinceañera* (2006), *Children of Men* (2006), *Knocked Up* (2007), *Juno* (2007), *Baby Mama* (2008), *Away We Go* (2009), *Precious* (2009), *The Back-up Plan* (2010), *Due Date* (2010), and *Twilight: Breaking Dawn* (2011), Oliver investigates pregnancy as a vehicle for romance, a political issue of "choice," a representation of the hosting of "others," a prism for fears of miscegenation, and a screen for modern technological anxieties.

A wonderful, insightful, riveting, and entertaining romp. (Kalpana Rahita Seshadri, Boston College) Clearly written...this book could serve...as a core text in a course on women in film. (Choice) Oliver's convincing conclusion is that in Hollywood films pregnant women may have become objects of desire, but they are not allowed to become desiring subjects... (Fran Bigman Times Literary Supplement) About the Author Kelly Oliver is W. Alton Jones Professor of Philosophy at Vanderbilt University and the author of *Animal Lessons: How They Teach Us To Be Human*; *Women as Weapons of War: Iraq, Sex and the Media*; *The Colonization of Psychic Space: Toward a Psychoanalytic Social Theory*; *Noir Anxiety: Race, Sex, and Maternity in Film Noir*; *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition*; *Subjectivity Without Subjects: From Abject Fathers to Desiring Mothers*; *Family Values: Subjects Between Nature and Culture*; *Womanizing Nietzsche: Philosophy's Relation to "the Feminine;"* and *Reading Kristeva: Unraveling the Double-Bind*.