section that discusses the pedagogical implications of the personal narratives. She also provides her own reflection notes and questions for further discussion. Like the issues she is trying to expose in this work, the entire research process is deliberately transparent and accessible. *When We Chose Canada* is a conceptual springboard into the following social phenomena: patriarchy and the role of the patriarch in immigration, racism and immigration, acceptance into Canadian society, roles of women in the family, and independence and empowerment for immigrant women.

Indeed, to make this book an even more valuable tool for educators and female immigrant students, it would have been helpful to situate its discussion in the history of Canadian immigration, from 1969 to the present and the rise of "multi-race" anti-racist pedagogy, both in the academy and at the community level. Primary and secondary sources relating to the evolution of these broader themes during the last 30 years, would have helped situate Smith Ramrattan's excellent work in a larger political context. The contrived timelessness of the personal narratives (stories and/or memories) weakens her argument because it brings into question the external reliability of these narratives; the reader is not given evidence to back up the women's stories. While the stories are excellent examples of how the personal is political, "creating an inclusive educational system where each person is valued and accepted for their [sic] contributions" (70) cannot be done by the sharing of personal stories alone, these stories must be contextualized in time, space, and place.

This book makes an important contribution to maternal scholarship because it includes both mother's and daughter's voices and the experiences of an immigrant mother and mother of colour in Canada. It is also a helpful example of co-authorship and intergenerational communication between mothers and daughters, and highlights the importance of family stories as a site of knowledge and identity (re)production.

## Immigrant Mothers: Narratives of Race and Maternity 1890-1925

Katrina Irving
Urbana IL: Univeristy of Illinois Press, 2000.

## Reviewed by Jennifer Harris

The title *Immigrant Mothers: Narratives of Race and Maternity 1890-1925* might be slightly misleading: Katrina Irving's study has little to do with the lives of actual immigrant women. Instead, Irving takes as her subject turn-of-the-century cultural representations of immigrant women and men as imagined,

represented, or deployed by social scientists, in their representation and discussion of contemporary America. Exploring the various popular discursive positions as manifested in six key literary texts, Irving demonstrates how general cultural anxieties about consumerism, urbanization, industrialism, increased immigration, and the future of America are played out through the image of the racialized immigrant woman.

This deployment of the figure of the immigrant woman, according to Irving, is central to understanding the construction of various discourses around race, ethnicity, and nationalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Irving draws particularly on the novels of Willa Cather, Stephen Crane, Harold Frederic, and Frank Norris, as well as the documentary photographs and accompanying text by activist Jacob Riis, to demonstrate the degree to which culturally current discourses and anxieties about immigration insinuated themselves into popular culture forms. Her analysis of Frederic's *The Damnation of Theron Ware* illustrates that despite Frederic's sympathy towards Irish immigrants and the "civilizing" influence their rich cultural heritage might have on American culture, in his work he nevertheless reproduces the nativist argument that a declining Anglo-Saxon American population is endangered by the "feminizing" and "weakening" influence of immigrants. Likewise, Frank Norris's classic *McTeague* and Stephen Crane's *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* suggest that the American-born daughters of non-Anglo immigrants are only superficially "civilized" and/or "Americanized," and, in fact, pose a lurking danger to the racial purity of the nation, given their inevitable regression to type. That in each instance, it is the immigrant woman, not the immigrant man, who serves as an agent of racial degeneration, emphasizes her very gendered construction as the principle threat to American civilization. Nowhere is this more evident, Irving postulates, than in the construction of the overly fecund immigrant mother and her concomitant potential for mongrelization, miscegenation, and race suicide.

While the image of the immigrant mother is not as central to Irving's project as the title of the book suggests, she nevertheless explores it as an important contested site in the arguments of nativists, Americanizers, and cultural pluralists alike. Furthermore, just as the discourses of these different groups impacted literary imaginings of immigrant women, so too did these rhetorical constructions affect the actual physical realm, in the enacting of particular kinds of social reform directed towards immigrant women and mothers.

*Immigrant Mothers* resonates with both historical insight and contemporary relevance. Irving's discussion of the role of sociologists and policy makers in normalizing and nationalizing discourses of racialized motherhood, as well as public debates about the supposed national threat posed by "foreign" immigration exactly a century ago, echoes contemporary American fears of displacement in the face of new waves of immigration from non-white, non-

Anglo countries. And though an imaginary and highly racialized "welfare queen" continues to be paraded in front of conservative American constituents, the affirmation that the image is neither new nor original in its construction, use, or purposeful deployment, provides little consolation. Lack of consolation aside, Irving's book is a theoretically and historically astute investigation of the gendered and racialized fears of immigrant women, at one particularly charged moment in American history.

## Mothering Teens: Understanding the Adolescent Years

Miriam Kaufman, ed.
Charlottetown, PEI: gynergy, 1997

## Reviewed by Ruthe Thompson

Anyone familiar with children aged 10 to 21 will appreciate this collection created "not to tell you how to parent, but to help you understand the process of adolescence" (Kaufman 7). Editor Miriam Kaufman, a pediatrician at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto and associate professor of pediatrics at the University of Toronto, gathers a diverse group of women to provide a comprehensive look at shepherding children through the transition to adulthood. As these 21 essays demonstrate, it is no easy task. President of the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States, Debra Haffner comments in an excellent essay on sexuality that teens can feel "omniscient, omnipotent, and invincible" (82). Kaufman underscores this point in the overview of adolescent development that opens the volume, reminding readers like me, mother to children aged 16 and 13, that "'When you're parenting a teen, every time you think you've got it right, you realize you are an asshole!'" (15).

Constant reassessment of household attitudes, rules, and expectations emerge as key themes in essays like, Cheryl Littleton's piece on adolescent drug and alcohol use, Jacqueline Haessly's discussion of teens and violence, Kathleen McDonnell's article on rites of passage, and Merryl Bear and Kaca Henley's cautionary tale about body image. We remember that adolescents double their body weight while surrounded by media prescriptions of unrealistic physiques. We read that teens need privacy, independence, and freedom to develop decision-making skills. We read about the strictures of gender roles and learn, perhaps contrary to parental fantasy, that "more than 80 percent of North Americans first have intercourse as teenagers," making quality health education vital (Haffner 88). In provocative essays by Gail Winter and Pat Watson we are schooled in the challenges of raising aboriginal teens and on attitudes about