payments, childcare, and other policies serving the interests of women in the workplace, unionists—occupying the left wing of the Democratic party—worked tirelessly at the federal and state government levels, as well as within their unions. They dominated the loosely formed coalition of business, religious, civic, and union groups that gathered with the support of the U.S. Women's Bureau.

This book is strongest in its coverage of the early 1960s. It was during this peak of postwar liberalism, with a sympathetic Democratic administration in office and Esther Peterson, longtime union staff member, at the helm of the Women's Bureau, that union women achieved their most impressive results. Cobble credits union women with playing a crucial role—possibly the dominant role—in bringing about the Equal Pay Act of 1963, the formation of the President's Commission on the Status of Women, the expansion of the Fair Employment Standards Act to include low-paid and marginalized workers, and the enactment of a law providing for federal government support of daycare. Even while labor feminists held fast to their emphasis on formalized protections for women, the economic and social realities of postwar America were leading many working women to gravitate toward support for equality. This difficult transition can be seen in the proceedings of the unprecedented AFL-CIO's Industrial Unions Department–sponsored conference in 1961 on "The Problems of Working Women," as well as the 1963 *Report of the President's Commission on the Status of Women*. With the ban on sex discrimination brought about by Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, rank-and-file women flooded the newly created Equal Employment Opportunity Commission with formal complaints. By the late 1960s the courts, to stem this onslaught, had invalidated most protective measures.

Cobble argues that union women moved from support for formal protections toward support for equality in the 1960s and early 1970s, and then, after the mid-1970s, back toward advocating from a perspective of gender differences, with a focus on comparable worth and reproductive rights issues. In none of these periods, she points out, were these women's allegiances clear-cut: for example, even labor feminists who favored equality after 1960 maintained a healthy skepticism toward the masculine standard of equality proffered by middle-class feminists (p. 223). Some female unionists, like the Hotel Workers' Myra Wolfgang, budged little from the view that sweeping demands for equality were not in the best interest of working women; others, notably activists and staff members with the United Automobile Workers, chafed at protectionism's constraints on their efforts to advance their economic status and their place in the labor movement generally. Cobble seems personally drawn to those who fell in the middle, between these two tendencies. These unionists were neither enthusiasts nor enemies of the new feminism (195). They grappled with the tensions between the goals and strategies of equality and difference, understanding that the ERA, which unions finally endorsed in the early 1970s, would not solve many problems affecting women.

Although full of insights and compelling in its analytical detail, Cobble's book seems unfinished at times, especially when dealing with the post-1965 period. Indeed, two-thirds of her book covers the fifteen years preceding the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, giving the last part of *The Other Women's Movement* a slightly rushed quality. One aspect of the emergence of feminism that gets relatively little attention, for example, is the hostility of male unionists to demands for gender equality. The resistance was especially fierce at the local level, where rank-and-file women faced harassment and even violence when they filed EEOC discrimination complaints. Cobble acknowledges the occurrence of such events, but does not incorporate them thoroughly into her explanation of the rise of support for equality.

There is much to admire in this well-crafted study of labor feminism. Cobble is persuasive in making the case that these unionists were complex in their motivations, priorities, and strategies, and that their contributions are central to the story of second-wave feminism. Moreover, although they failed to address important aspects of gender relations such as the sexual division of labor at home, they were successful in forcing other feminists to address issues of importance to working-class women. Cobble predicts that female unionists will continue to be an important force in what she calls a new class politics for the twenty-first century (227).

Dennis Deslippe

Scholar-in-Residence
Department of History
Franklin & Marshall College

Working Women in Mexico City: Public Discourses and Material Conditions, 1879–1931. By Susie Porter. Tucson: University of

Arizona Press, 2003. 285 pp. ISBN 0-8165-2268-5, $50.00 (cloth).

Mexico's revolution (1910–20) has cast a long shadow on the country's twentieth-century history and historiography. To the reading public, the revolution is virtually synonymous with the peasant leader Emiliano Zapata or the social bandit Pancho Villa. Rarely would it conjure an image of the radical, urban-oriented Flores Magón brothers or (perhaps thankfully) the bloated career of labor boss Fidel Velázquez. It is peasants and land, not industrial workers and labor, that occupy center stage.

Susie Porter joins a growing number of historians of Mexico who are showing that there is much to be gained from moving out of that shadow, in particular by focusing on the city rather than the country, on urban rather than rural labor, and on transformative processes other than the revolution. Porter's lens is directed at female workers in Mexico City from roughly 1880 to 1930, a temporal scope that purposely avoids situating the revolution as either the end or beginning of an era. The author is explicit about this choice: she wants to counter the notion that the revolution constituted a significant break with the past and instead emphasize the long process of industrialization that bridged the revolution. She argues in her introduction that while the revolution generated a significant reconfiguration in the relationship between laboring men and the state, "for working women that relationship retained certain continuities with the past" (xxv). For women in Mexico City, at least, it was an attenuated process of change in the labor market and the workplace (and the public discourses about gender, work, sexuality, and morality that attended such change) that most dramatically shaped and reshaped their reality. Theirs was an industrial revolution.

The 52-year period saw women move in significant numbers into the industrial work force, and Porter sets herself the task of gauging how that shift affected the material reality and symbolic understandings of gender and work. For Porter, industrialization had contradictory consequences for working women in Mexico City. On the one hand, increasing numbers of women entered the industrial work force, moving gradually from female-dominated industries such as cigarette production, knitwear industries, and consumer goods to mixed-sex industries. In the process, they created new forms of collective association that challenged existing gender and class norms. They also found increasing opportunities to have their voices heard in the public sphere. On the other hand, that same public sphere bit back as social commentators both generated and voiced a host of fears regarding a perceived threat to gender norms, class codes, and sexual morality. Working women became ambiguous and liminal figures in a changing economic and social order. This was true even after the revolution: as Porter shows, while the revolution changed the vocabulary regarding women and work, it did little to alter the gendered suppositions and categories (morality, honor, and an encompassing female essence) that structured social and political relations. Despite revolutionary changes in the relationships between the state, capital, and labor, discourses of morality and sexuality continued to constrain the possibilities for women in the workplace.

The text is organized into seven thematic chapters, covering themes such as changes in women's position in the work force and the discursive representations of those women; the impact such material and cultural changes had on labor organizing by women; and the conceptions of female workers promoted by various government institutions. While the various themes are handled well, the overall structure of the book is awkward at times. Tracking some half-century in each thematic chapter inevitably leads to some redundancy and confusion.

Throughout the book Porter nicely links the material and the discursive, showing the complex interplay between the two. She also understands industrialization broadly, as a process that should be situated within as well as beyond the confines of the factory floor. The effects of industrial production on gender and work extended far and wide. For example, in one particularly impressive chapter, Porter shows how industrialization affected women who were not formally a part of the industrial wage labor force: itinerant peddlers, waitresses, and prostitutes. Industry functioned in unison with the state's modernizing impulses and desires to regulate public space and assume control over the economic activities of largely female street vendors. In examining the contestation over public spaces and government efforts to regulate and transform customary rights assumed by these women, Porter captures a quintessential component of the modernization of state power that accompanied changes in the structures of production and at the same time situates socially underprivileged women in the middle of that story.

The analysis is less compelling in other in-

stances. In examining discursive constructions of working women, Porter's analysis relies heavily on a few texts, and one gets little sense of how such texts circulated, how they were received, and their popularity. Still, the texts she does discuss are quite suggestive and Porter uses them to good effect, giving the reader a sense of the concerns voiced by at least some people during the era of industrialization and, perhaps more revealing, of the language in which such concerns were expressed. For example, that social commentators chose to link explicitly the selling of women's labor to the sale of women's bodies is suggestive not only of the fears wrought by increasing numbers of women entering the work force but also of the ambivalence surrounding industrial wage labor *tout court*.

Most successful are Porter's efforts to show how female workers themselves used discourses about morality, sexuality, and femininity to further their own interests. In her examination of the growth of women's mutual aid societies and of labor activism among cigarette makers and seamstresses, Porter reveals how both groups used the language of morality to make claims upon their employers and the state. Cigarette makers, for example, played the morality issue to good effect when they argued that by giving women the labor protections and rights enjoyed by men, the government would help women avoid the slide into moral depravity. When striking, working women were not above arguing for help due to "the weakness corresponding to our sex" (81), at times appealing directly to Carmen Rubio de Díaz, wife of the President. Yet, as much as female workers could make their appeals *as workers*, they could rarely escape the gendered confines within which they labored. Even their allies held fairly rigid notions of acceptable and unacceptable behavior on the part of women. If in fact industrialization wrought a more significant transformation of working women's lives than any other force, its effects, Porter shows, were ambiguous.

Based on extensive archival work in Mexico City and a broad reading of secondary work in labor and gender history, *Working Women in Mexico City* is an accessible and useful study that will be of interest to historians of Mexico, labor, and gender. It significantly adds to the growing literature on gender relations, urbanization, and industrialization in Latin America by putting working women at the center of the material and symbolic struggles generated by industrialization. Perhaps most important, Porter emphatically demonstrates that female workers, both before and after the revolution, were never a collectively docile work force, despite claims to the contrary.

As much as it makes a contribution to Mexican historiography, Porter's book also resonates more broadly. When she observes how the discourse about morality and the "lack of family integrity" grew in volume precisely when increasing numbers of widowed, single, and divorced women were forced into the labor market to support themselves, it is hard not to think of the United States today. In our own era of appalling minimum wages, exploitative "guest worker" programs, skyrocketing CEO salaries, anti-union legislation, unequal pay for equal work, and a state that appears committed to protecting capital at the expense of its own citizenry, it is the very defenders of such a system who most loudly champion "family values" and "moral virtue." As this fine book reminds us, such disingenuous discourses are invariably rooted in the material realities of both gender and class privilege.

Raymond B. Craib

Assistant Professor
Department of History
Cornell University