Daughters of Joy, Sisters of Misery: Prostitutes in the American West, 1865–1890, by Anne M. Butler. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985. xx, 179 pp. Notes, illustrations, bibliography, index. $16.95 cloth, $10.95 paper.

Gold Diggers and Silver Miners: Prostitution and Social Life on the Comstock Lode, by Marion S. Goldman. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1981. ix, 214 pp. Notes, illustrations, appendixes, bibliography, index. $18.50 cloth, $9.50 paper.

Popular literature, movies, and television frequently have romanticized the frontier prostitute as a woman of great natural beauty whose physical charms and business acumen allowed her to live in a luxurious environment, surrounded by adoring male companions and envious female rivals. Sometimes she emerged from the pulp and celluloid of popular culture as the heroine with a "heart of gold" who gave her fortune and life for the sake of the community which officially shunned her. Typical of this romanticized heroine was Julia Bulette who arrived in Virginia City, Nevada, in 1861 or 1862 and willingly assumed the life of a prostitute. Though she nursed the sick and injured and donated money to worthwhile civic causes, little public thanks resulted until after her death. Within a few decades, this rather plain-looking Englishwoman had been transformed by legend into a beautiful and refined lady who had risen in wealth and independence to become a virtual pillar of society. From Julia Bulette to Miss Kitty of television's "Gunsmoke" fame, the stereotype became pervasive for modern generations.

Despite the longevity of this popularized image and the prurient nature of the subject matter, few scholarly studies of the topic have been published. Anne M. Butler, a member of the history department of Gallaudet College, now has offered the best monographic synthesis of prostitution throughout the trans-Mississippi West during the closing decades of the nineteenth century. Drawing upon court dockets, arrest records, county sheriff files, trial testimony, cemetery records, newspapers, and private correspondence, Butler sketched a grim reality for the "soiled doves" of frontier life. Most were between the ages of fifteen and thirty, continuously rejected by "proper society," and victims of the low pay endemic to their profession. Although only a small number were second-generation prostitutes, the overwhelming majority came from poor families, limited education, broken marriages, and other economic disadvantages. A significant number turned to the sordid business precisely because of the limited economic opportunities facing independent women, the recently divorced, and the recently widowed living in frontier regions. Rather than being a well-planned

career choice, the decision most often represented an act of desperation as the women reluctantly turned to a demeaning lifestyle in order to support themselves and their children. Some deluded themselves that the vocation would only be temporary, but the months quickly stretched into years as the goal of economic independence proved elusive.

Presumably two avenues of escape existed—marriage and advancement to the status of a successful madam. Unfortunately, both avenues proved deceptive. Since most married prostitutes wound up with spouses who came out of the vice-ridden underground, few of the marriages offered much chance for social improvement or even a normal family life. Often the husbands were pimps or gamblers who encouraged the continuation of their wives' prostitution. If children resulted from the marriage, the woman's problems actually increased because she generally took a greater role in the child-rearing than did her husband. Thus her meager resources were stretched even further and her dependency became more pronounced. Likewise, the prostitution hierarchy made it difficult for a rapid rise to economic security. At the bottom of the ladder were the crib women, followed in ascending order by the streetwalkers, saloon workers, and brothel dwellers. This system left little opportunity for the emergence of the lush parlor houses and expensive bordellos of movie fame, and allowed for even fewer madams at the top of the pyramid who could make much money. For most it was a dead-end street, both socially and economically.

Marion S. Goldman, formerly of the sociology department at the University of Nevada, discovered a similar reality among prostitutes of the Comstock Lode region during the same quarter century. Authored four years before the Butler study, his book offered a detailed account of community life in two of America's most celebrated mining towns—Virginia City and Gold Hill. Utilizing grassroots sources similar to Butler's, Goldman documented the same themes in microcosm that Butler found in the macrocosm. Furthermore, *Gold Diggers and Silver Miners* discusses with greater precision the important racial element in deciding the hierarchical organization of the business. While white prostitutes were much favored by Comstock miners, black and Hispanic women were also welcomed in the trade. Yet segregation lines were strictly enforced so that these "darker sisters" could not work in white brothels, and as the decades passed most of them left the area in deference to the increasing number of white prostitutes. At the bottom of the order were the numerous Chinese women who were most thoroughly exploited by their pimps and clients alike.

Goldman also confirmed an important theme detailed in *Daughters of Joy, Sisters of Misery.* Both authors document the hypocrisy of city

fathers who periodically carried out "purity raids" on the brothels, while simultaneously making money from the illegal business. Although relatively few members of the ranking establishment drew direct revenues from the vice trade, prominent businessmen, office holders, and civic leaders indirectly profited because the prostitutes brought dollars and clients into the broader marketplace. Sizable towns which might have attempted to eliminate these illegal activities certainly would have invited an economic setback from which they may never have recovered.

Both of these studies stand as important additions to frontier and women's history. Perhaps the conclusions seem more of the commonsense variety than of the earth-shaking type, but the corrections of popular stereotypes needed to be made. While Butler assumed the historian's approach and Goldman pursued the discipline of sociology, both authors complemented and reinforced each other's efforts. The "oldest profession" has now been properly moved from the gossip parlor to the dissecting microscope of the social scientist.

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Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family from Slavery to the Present, by Jacqueline Jones. New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1985. xiii, 432 pp. Notes, illustrations, appendixes, bibliography, index. $25.95 cloth, $10.95 paper.

Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow is a remarkable, elegantly written book, the first to provide a comprehensive survey of the work, family life, and community service activities of black women from the period of antebellum slavery to the present. It is a welcome addition to Afro-American historiography and to the literature in American women's history, with endorsements from black scholars and leaders. The dust jacket quotes Coretta Scott King, for example, who notes that the book provides "a moving, eloquent testament to the strength, dignity and the courageous struggles of black women in America." Not long after publication, it received the 1985 Brown Memorial Publication Prize, presented for the best book on Afro-American women's history by the Association of Black Women Historians. Jacqueline Jones was also the author of *Soldiers of Light and Love: Northern Teachers and Georgia Blacks, 1865–1973* (1980). A professor of American history from Wellesley, Jones indicated that *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow* grew out of courses she taught there on women's history since 1977.

Yet, for interpretation, topical content, methodology, and new insights, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow*—which surveys 150 years of black

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