

# CORPUS LINGUISTICS AND 17TH-CENTURY PROSTITUTION

Computational Linguistics  
and History

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AND  
HELEN BAKER**

RESEARCH IN CORPUS AND DISCOURSE  
SERIES EDITORS: WOLFGANG TEUBERT AND MICHAELA MAHLBERG

B L O O M S B U R Y

# Corpus Linguistics and 17th-Century Prostitution

## Corpus and Discourse

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Anthony McEnery and Helen Baker

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## Prologue – Our Goals and Your Reading

This book is the fruits of collaboration between a corpus linguist and an historian. Our goal in working together was not to produce a blended work, where we worked cheek by jowl throughout, with a high degree of mutual direction from the very start of our work. Rather, we wanted to approach the same question from two disciplinary perspectives and to then see to what extent those perspectives complemented or contradicted each other. We did this by working separately in the first instance and then bringing our analyses together. So, for example, Chapters 2 and 3 were initially written by the historian independently. Similarly, Chapters 4, 5 and 6 were drafted by the linguist independently. We did this because we wanted to avoid any possibility that the findings in one of the two investigations was skewing the course of the work of the other. By the same token, we also wanted to avoid any suggestion that where we found support, or contradiction, in either direction that it was as a result of deliberately mining to achieve that effect. We wanted to explore, in as clear and bias free a way as we possibly could, the interface between our two approaches. So only after drafting our chapters did we read each other's work and start to draw parallels, noting where our work was mutually supportive and exploring issues around our findings where some of our findings seemed contradictory or unsupportive of one another. This led to an integration of the two streams of work as we redrafted our work to align the arguments in what we had written while bringing to the fore elements of our work which meshed well or were a cause for reflection. An important feature of the redrafting was to introduce cross-referencing, clearly signposting points where the two analyses intersect or contradict. Another important feature of the redrafting was a consideration of points raised by one analysis but not the other – for example, if the historical analysis suggested a particular feature or incident should be highly salient, but the initial corpus analysis did not note that feature, the corpus was checked to see if the feature had been somehow overlooked and vice versa. Any insights gained through this approach to analysis are marked throughout the book. In Chapter 7 we return to reflect squarely upon the findings of what we might call our experiment in interdisciplinary working. For the moment, suffice it to say the decision to work in this way, and to retain as much of a capacity for surprise

across disciplinary boundaries, was important to us. Rather than forcing a fit between two disciplines, we wanted to see how much of a natural fit could be found through this approach and how complementary these approaches may be.

We also wanted to see how our work would proceed when drawn on what we might term a big canvas – rather than look at focused text collections and base our work upon those, we wanted to see what would happen if we dealt with a large, general collection of data and viewed the question we were interested in over a long span of time. This decision also shapes this book, as will be made evident at the start of Chapter 1.

Writing an interdisciplinary book is rarely easy – and reading one is rarely easy either. Just as we, the authors of this book, had to share knowledge and practices across disciplinary boundaries, so does this book. This inevitably leads to us having to spell out things for some readers which other readers already know. For example, much detail is included in the early part of the book about corpus linguistics for historians who may not be familiar with the subject. This will not necessarily be of interest to many corpus linguists. Similarly, for social historians of the seventeenth century, the account of prostitution in the seventeenth century provided may simply be a repetition of what they already know. But for corpus linguists this is vital contextual information – it is the historical context within which the words studied are to be interpreted and understood. To help readers, we therefore suggest the following approaches to reading this book, while encouraging all readers, of course, to consider reading the book from cover to cover!

For *corpus linguists* unfamiliar with diachronic language study, Chapter 1 will help to set out the context for the analysis in the book. For corpus linguists familiar with the study of language in the past, they may care to focus on Sections 1.1, 1.5.1 and 1.6 of Chapter 1 alone. Section 1.1 provides a general introduction to the book, Section 1.5.1 presents the corpus we use and Section 1.6.5 introduces important ideas related to the study of collocation through time. Other than this little trimming in the reading for corpus linguists, we would recommend that you read the book in full.

If you are an *historian*, Chapter 1, while not focused on the seventeenth century, does introduce you to the aim of the book and how corpus linguists approach the study of language in the past. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 are the core of the linguistic analysis presented in the book. Chapter 7 provides a final reflection on our experiment with interdisciplinarity. Throughout those chapters we link back to findings, where appropriate, arising from research by historians as presented

in Chapters 2 and 3. Hence, if you are familiar with the history of prostitution in Britain and with the scholarship on the practice in the seventeenth century in particular, you may skip reading Chapters 2 and 3, referring back to them through the cross references in the corpus analyses only.

An appreciation of language is vital for an understanding of the written records left to us from the past. Similarly, an appreciation of the historical context within which those texts were produced is essential if texts from the past are to be interpreted appropriately. So for us, and for many other linguists and historians we believe, the interface between the two subjects is a vital and promising area where the two disciplines can meet to their mutual benefit. It was with this firm belief in mind that we wrote this book. We hope you enjoy it.



# Introduction

## 1.1 The aim of this book

This is a book about using corpora – large bodies of machine-readable texts – to assist historians to gain insights into people, societies and cultures long gone. In this book we do not want to focus on a narrow question and pursue it. We have chosen precisely to draw on a large canvas specifically to test the limits of – and the opportunities presented by – the corpus approach to the study of history. In looking at this we want to work, as much is possible, in collaboration – we do not want to see the subject expertise of the historian as an adornment to the work of a linguist. Nor do we wish to see a linguist as an expert who can be called upon to examine a narrow linguistic issue and then be dismissed. We want to explore, in a spirit of full cooperation, what a linguist and historian can achieve together. We think that using the field of corpus linguistics as a setting in which that collaboration occurs can be especially fruitful. Both corpus linguists and historians have an interest in approaching and assessing large bodies of, typically documentary, evidence. Similarly, both also understand and value the benefits that close readings of individual documents can bring to the study of a much larger text collection. So the methodology of corpus linguistics creates, in our opinion, a common ground on which the linguist and historian can meet. The linguist brings expertise in the manipulation and understanding of large textual databases, with experience of the insights that can be brought about by the appropriate use of the tools of the corpus linguist. The historian brings their knowledge of the period and topic in question, with a well-developed sense of the hypotheses of interest to that subject community and a body of work that can help to frame and explain what the corpus investigation finds. Both also approach the collaboration wishing to be challenged – what historical approaches set methodological and analytical challenges for the linguist? What findings from the corpus present challenges for established historical research? Such questions

underlie the enterprise that led to this book, a book which welcomes a healthy, bidirectional trade in ideas and investigation between linguistics and history.

But what subject have we chosen to explore to realize this collaboration and why? We have chosen to study women who traded sex for cash or some benefit in kind in the seventeenth century. For ease of reference we will call that prostitution, though our findings, as will be apparent as the book progresses, fall at times outside of what we might think of as prostitution today. Seventeenth-century prostitutes, usually coming from the ranks of the lower classes, were mostly illiterate and thus rarely speak to us directly through recorded history. However, we are setting ourselves the challenge of exploring *general* attitudes towards prostitution in what was a turbulent century. We are interested in particular in seeing whether, in looking at general written English from the period, we are able to gain insights into the representation of prostitution in the period – how people wrote and thought about the people involved in the sex trade and the trade itself. Given a span of hundred years, we are interested to see how, if at all, that representation changed over the century. Where it does, we will be interested to seek to explain how that change came about supporting, where we can, our hypotheses with historical research and corpus analyses.

A goal we set ourselves from the outset of our work was to look at public discourse – general written English of the period. Studying specialized documents such as court records, for example, would doubtless have yielded much discussion of the sex trade. However, this is not what we are interested in. We want to look at general attitudes to prostitution – not judicial attitudes to it. Similarly, where we study texts, we are interested in seeing what is said about prostitution outside of the confines of a courtroom where it was being judged and condemned. When away from the court and other sources of judicial power, what was said about transactional sex and those involved in it in the seventeenth century? In exploring such a question we are, of course, aware that censorship regimes in the century may be an explanation for some of what we see – and what we do not see.<sup>1</sup> We are also mindful that censorship in the period can be overt (e.g. legislative) and covert (e.g. the judgement exercised by the owner of a press over what they were and were not prepared to print). Nonetheless, we think that the question of the everyday and the opportunity that this brings to unearth the views of those with less overt power than is present in a courtroom makes this investigation worthwhile.

The investigation is also worthwhile from the point of view of a corpus linguist. The challenge set by this question is substantial. As will be explored in the remainder of this chapter, the challenge is to work with corpora the scale

of which has not previously been used to explore language in the seventeenth century. Given the scale of the corpora involved and the breadth of the historical investigation undertaken, the research also makes new methodological demands that this book will explore. However, for both the historian and linguist we believe the effort is worth it. The spur to innovation that working with a new subject brings makes demands on, and expands the horizons of, corpus linguistics. The scale of investigation that corpus linguistics can, in principle, offer to an historian makes a venture such as the one reported on in this book worthwhile – to be able to account for millions of words of data across a long time span and to test hypotheses from small-scale, close reading, against large-scale, machine-aided analysis holds real promise.

However, it should be apparent from what has been written so far that the task set by the historian for the linguist in this book is not trivial. What corpus can we use to explore this topic in this century? What tools should be used? In this chapter we will explore these questions. To begin, let us consider the current state of the art in historical corpus linguistics and how it needs to progress, in order to enable exploration of a broader range of research questions of relevance to linguists and historians.

## 1.2 Looking into the past

In spite of a large body of work in linguistics in general, and in corpus linguistics in particular, using corpora to explore the past is still in its infancy. Pioneering work with corpora such as the Helsinki corpus,<sup>2</sup> the Archer corpus<sup>3</sup> and the Corpus of Early English Correspondence<sup>4</sup> has provided a wealth of useful insights into the English language in the past. Even in the area of speech, the work of Culpeper and Kytö (2010) has allowed a window onto the spoken language in the early modern period. By collecting representations of speech in sources such as court records and plays, Culpeper and Kytö devised an ingenious method for at least beginning to look at spoken English in a period well before the creation of sound recording devices. Books have been written looking at the development of English over time (Leech et al. 2009) and whole journals are devoted to looking at features of interaction in language in the past, such as the *Journal of Historical Pragmatics* and the *Journal of Historical Sociolinguistics*. Such a host of corpora and publications using corpus linguistics to investigate the past of English hardly seems to give credence to our claim that the use of corpora to explore the past is in its infancy. Yet it is.



The first issue that we encounter when we look at the corpora that have been used to explore the past is that they are typically small. Take the Archer corpus, for example. It is a corpus of 3,298,080 words looking at a number of discrete time periods of fifty years in length over a period from 1600 to 1959 for British English and from 1750 to 1959 for American English.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, the Helsinki corpus is small. It covers a period of 950 years, from 750 to 1700 AD, split into Old English (with sections covering 750–850, 850–950, 950–1050 and 1050–1150), Middle English (with sections covering 1150–1250, 1250–1350, 1350–1420 and 1420–1500) and Early Modern English (with sections covering 1500–70, 1570–1640 and 1640–1710), yet it does so using only 1,572,600 words.<sup>6</sup> Neither the Archer nor the Helsinki corpus is unusual in using such a relatively small size to cover a comparatively large span of time. In fairness, the size and structure of those corpora reflect very much the types of research questions the corpora were designed to address. Both corpora have been used to look at the development of the grammar of the language over a long period of time. The grammatical features of a language often change very slowly, if at all. Many of the features being looked at, such as modals,<sup>7</sup> are very frequent. So a relatively small corpus composed of a series of ‘snapshots’ in which the language at a point in time is sampled, is quite well designed to explore frequent grammatical features changing over time. Similarly, the Corpus of English Dialogues also permits a number of interesting and frequent features, such as discourse markers (Lutzky 2012), to be explored through what is, in reality, a corpus of relatively modest size. However, the issue of size becomes acute when one tries to use such corpora to explore words of what one might describe as moderate or low frequency; there is simply not enough data to begin to make generalizations of any worth. Take, for instance, the word *prostitute*. Table 1.1 shows how many examples of the use of the word occur in the data from the seventeenth century in three corpora.

**Table 1.1** Number of examples of the word *prostitute* in three well-known historical corpora

| Corpus                             | Period    | Number of words covered by that period in the corpus | Examples of <i>prostitute</i> | Normalized frequency to per 100,000 words |
|------------------------------------|-----------|--|-------------------------------|---|
| <i>Archer</i>                      | 1600–99   | 397,869  | 2                             | 0.502                                     |
| <i>Corpus of English Dialogues</i> | 1600–1719 | 924,765  | 0                             | 0   |
| <i>Helsinki Corpus</i>             | 1570–1710 | 416,617  | 0                             | 0   |

It may be that the word *prostitute* is infrequent in Early Modern English. On the other hand, it may be that it is moderately frequent, but the size of the corpora means that they do not yield many examples because some simply miss having any examples of the word (Corpus of English Dialogues, Helsinki Corpus). Another has but two examples of the word (Archer). Perhaps, one may conclude, the word was very rare in the seventeenth century. On the basis of what is, in fact, very little data, it would be unwise to jump to that conclusion. The point is well illustrated by considering the frequency per 100,000 figures in Table 1.1 and comparing those to what we find in corpora of present-day English. The British National Corpus (Aston and Burnard, 1998) contains approximately 88 million words of written English, principally from the early 1990s. In this corpus, the word *prostitute* occurs 307 times, or 0.349 times per 100,000 words. The British English 2006 corpus (Baker 2009) contains approximately a million words of written British English from around 2006. It contains four examples of *prostitute*, or 0.348 times per 100,000. The word seems no more rare in these corpora than in the Archer corpus. No speaker of present-day English would think of *prostitute* as a rare or especially infrequent word. So the suspicion remains that, with the small corpora of seventeenth-century English, we are simply missing the examples to investigate words which were, in fact, in quite wide circulation and moderately frequently used because the corpora available are too small.

An analogy may help here. Imagine that you are in a room with a million boxes. Each contains a picture of an animal. You are asked to estimate how many contain pictures of rabbits. You do not have time to look in all of the boxes so you look quickly in a hundred. You find no pictures of rabbits. You do, however, find five pictures of hamsters in the boxes and one of a fox. You conclude that in the population of pictures in the boxes, ones of rabbits are at best rare, those of hamsters are very common and the ones of foxes seem more common than rabbits. Another person, with more time, looks at 100,000 boxes. They confirm that pictures of hamsters are common – they found 4,833. Yet they also found 500 pictures of rabbits, 480 of horses and 1 of a fox. They conclude that you looked in too few boxes to get a fair idea of what was in the population of boxes. You missed a moderately frequent picture as a result – that of the rabbit – and failed completely to notice that there were pictures other than those of hamsters and rabbits to be found. You also spotted a very rare feature, the fox, but misclassified it as more frequent than the rabbit as chance led you to find the fox but not a rabbit, and your sampling of the boxes was too small to correct that error.

What is the purpose of this analogy? The point is that when you are looking at a very large and diverse feature – in our case words – the size of your sample needs to be proportionate to the frequency of the feature you are looking for. The corpora we have used to date are like the person who searched the boxes first. That search allows you to spot the most frequent features with some reliability. The second person looked at a much larger proportion of the boxes and hence was able to identify what one may call moderately frequent features – the rabbits and horses. They were also able to identify what looked like a truly infrequent feature. So the corpora we have used to date to explore the past have allowed us to identify the frequent features. But they are too small to allow us to begin to reliably discriminate moderately rare features from moderately frequent features. They also give us too few examples of moderately frequent features to be of help.

When we are investigating content words – where our focus is on meaning rather than grammar, as it is in this book – we need larger corpora than those available to date. This is one sense in which the use of corpora is in its infancy. The type of study to be conducted in this book has been, until very recently, virtually impossible because the words we want to look at are not frequent enough to be observed reliably using the relatively small historical corpora that have been available for study.

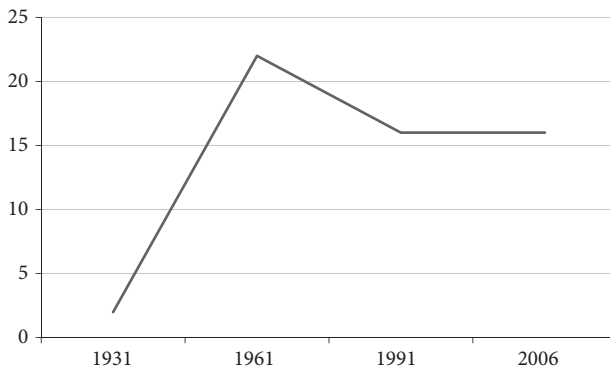
The relative sparsity of data discussed so far leads to a second point – as the size of the corpora are relatively small, so are the number of points in time when we can observe the words and begin to look at, for example, diachronic change (change through time). Why is this important? If we want to look at something like representation, this may change over time. Also, at any one point in time it may be the case that what we are interested in is simply not mentioned. Again, this distinguishes this type of research from studies focused on grammar – those frequent words and structures relating to grammar occur frequently and reasonably steadily meaning that the study of some features with relatively small datasets is quite possible, as noted. However, if we are interested in a person, a group or an idea, for example, it may or may not be mentioned at certain times, in certain types of texts and by certain authors. Let us look at another historical corpus to illustrate this point.

The Lancaster Newsbooks Corpus is composed of newspapers published in Britain in the 1650s. For the purpose of this experiment we will look at titles published in 1654. This allows us to search just under a million words of data. If we look for the name *Cromwell* we see something of interest. Though he is the foremost politician of his age and the corpus contains 105 mentions of him,

there are seven newsbooks that do not mention him at all. This illustrates nicely the point that, at any given moment in time, even those who are frequently mentioned may not be mentioned by all types of publications or authors. If we look for the name of the battle which effectively ended the English Civil War, we find but one mention – and it is of a ship called Naseby rather than of the battle. We are looking at the wrong point in time and/or the wrong type of text to find mentions of the battle. Newsbooks were reporting news – by 1654 Naseby was old news and hence was not mentioned in the newsbooks. It may be that if we had a corpus of military histories of the time, we may well find a mention of the battle, but we do not find it in newspapers. This neatly illustrates the second point – mention can vary over time. What may be frequently mentioned in one type of text at one point in time may not be mentioned frequently or at all at another, even close, point of time.

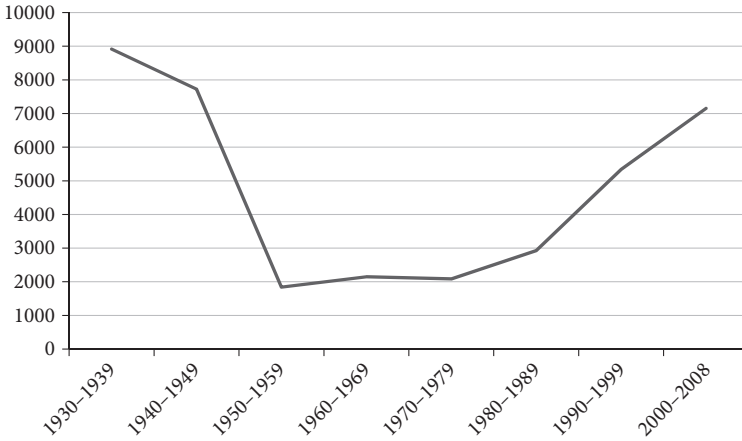
The existing historical corpora that have been discussed fall foul of problems such as those outlined when we try to use them for looking at representation through time, for example. As noted in Table 1.1, if we want to look at the word *prostitute* through time using some of these corpora there are very few examples – if any – to work from. Where corpora are better organized to allow specific points in time to be explored in sequence, the gaps between the points in time sampled is so great that a very partial picture of the development of a word may be gleaned. Consider the Brown family of corpora. These are one million word samples of British or American English taken at specific points in time. So far, four points in time have been sampled – the early 1930s, the early 1960s, the early 1990s and 2006. At each sample point a corpus of British English and a corpus of American English have been constructed. Each corpus is approximately one million words in size. Each corpus samples a number of texts of different types written by a variety of authors. They are very useful for looking at slow-moving change in language as discussed earlier in this chapter. Such corpora produce snapshots of the language which, when run together, might be likened to slow motion cinematography – allowing a very slow change to become visible. Yet when such corpora are used to look at non-grammatical features of language change, while they are useful, they suffer from some of the limitations discussed so far. They are relatively small, so only frequent features may be explored. They also sample very few points in time relative to the time period over which language is changing. So, with this family of corpora, we have four sample points per language covering a span of nearly eighty years. As a consequence, it is possible that, in the gaps between the sampling points, change is happening that we simply cannot measure because we have not sampled in

that area. Millar (2009) and Leech (2011) have debated such issues with the Brown family of corpora. While their use is clearly appropriate for looking at grammatical change and the change in frequent non-grammatical features (e.g. Baker 2011), there is little doubt that much is missed that may be of interest to the linguist and historian where we represent such a wide span of time with so few sample points. Arguably worse still, there is a great temptation to draw graphs on the basis of such corpora that imply steady changes between the points when, in fact, we have no real evidence to claim such a steady change. Consider the graph in Figure 1.1.



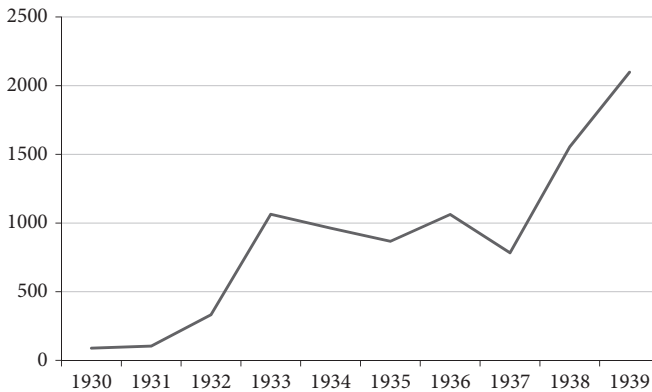
**Figure 1.1** A word explored through the four British English corpora in the Brown family.

In this graph it is implied that the word starts from a low frequency, increases steadily through to 1961, then declines to a plateau between 1991 and 2006. What word is this? It is the word *Hitler*. This graph is almost certainly wrong. It is very likely that the peak of mention is much, much earlier than 1961 and that there were fluctuations in each year. The graph looks artificially neat because of the limited number of sample points and the implied smooth transition of frequency from one point of time to another. We would emphasize again that for gradual change these assumptions may be quite reasonable to make. But for topics or mentions of individuals in a language it is almost certainly the case that relying on so few sample points to cover such a long stretch of time is likely to give highly misleading results. To make the point clearer, consider the graph in Figure 1.2. It is taken from the Times Online, which allows access to all copies of the *Times* going back to the late eighteenth century. It is a graph of mentions of *Hitler*, by decade, in the *Times* between 1930 and 2008.



**Figure 1.2** *Hitler* explored through the Times Online, from 1930 to 2008.

Comparing the graphs in Figures 1.1 and 1.2 directly is obviously difficult – we would be comparing corpora of fixed size and a range of genres to a corpus composed of only newspapers with the volume of print produced at any sample point varying. That notwithstanding, the graph in Figure 1.2 tells us something very important – with more sample points we can see more variation in the curve drawn. However, we are still treating a whole decade as one point – what happens if we zoom in further and explore one decade in detail? The picture changes – the number of examples in a decade is not smoothly distributed. Figure 1.3 shows the distribution of the word *Hitler* by year through the Times Online in the 1930s.



**Figure 1.3** *Hitler* explored through the Times Online, in each year of the 1930s.

In short what we observe changes as the resolution of our observation improves. The decade-by-decade analysis of Figure 1.2 has value – we discover that mentions of *Hitler* were at their most intense in the 1930s – this accords well with what we know of the history of the twentieth century and as such provides a more credible picture than that in Figure 1.1. Figure 1.2, being based on data from throughout the period, represents the period better than the data in Figure 1.1. Consequently, even though the data is aggregated into decade-long chunks, the overall picture presented looks plausible. Figure 1.3 shows what we get from a higher degree of resolution. Disaggregating the decade into yearly chunks yields dividends – we see that mentions of *Hitler* are not smoothly distributed. From 1933, when he becomes chancellor of Germany, we see mentions of him rise to a fairly high number of approximately 1000 mentions per year from 1933 to 1937. With the Munich Agreement and Danzig crisis in 1938 and 1939 respectively, we see mentions of him escalate as his actions become increasingly newsworthy. All of this accords well with what we might expect, given the history of the period. Yet Figure 1.3 has one last possible contribution to make to this discussion – it is of note that the lowest levels of mention of *Hitler* were in the period in which the Brown family British English corpus for the 1930s was sampled, the beginning of the decade. This probably explains the curious shape of the graph in Figure 1.1 and shows why samples of a small number of points over a long period of time are unlikely to prove fruitful for research questions relating to relatively transient events and mentions of people.

To sum up, another area in which historical corpora must develop is in terms of coverage if they are to be of use for a broader range of research questions. Corpora which cover long periods of time with little data and few sample points are of limited use – or no use at all – for exploring changes in language that may be relatively transitory and dynamic. Trying to explore such features using such corpora can lead to highly misleading results. The question that remains, however, is: what degree of resolution might be necessary to explore a research question? This is bound to be a balance between what is possible and what is desirable. This is a point we shall return to later.

So, in order to use corpora to explore historical questions it seems that a continuous run of material might be desirable. Similarly, it seems that, while we may trade off resolution for sufficient material to analyse, we might want to work with reasonably short spans of time in order to achieve some tolerable level of resolution in the analysis. While the ideal may be to analyse by day, month or year, from the graph in Figure 1.2 it certainly seems that analysing by decade gives useful results. As long as there is not sufficient data to allow day/month/

year resolutions in searches, a heuristic adopted in this book is that a decade-by-decade analysis represents a minimum level of resolution for the purpose of historical investigation. So any corpus we might want to use for our study should at least allow this level of resolution, with the corpus being a collection of material drawn from across the period in question, rather than from discrete and disconnected sample points.

Do such corpora exist? Have researchers worked on them? It is possible to say a very tentative ‘yes’ at this point. If we view a corpus simply as a large collection of textual material that can be searched by computer, then the answer is ‘yes’ – though, as will be shown, what is lost by accepting such a definition is substantial. If, on the other hand, we want that material to be subject to manipulation by various corpus processing tools and subject to close analysis where appropriate, then the answer is more ‘not very often, if at all’. However, this is changing as Section 1.5 and the rest of this book will show. Yet before we explore what is now possible, let us focus first on the weaker definition of corpus linguistics and explore the usefulness of Google Ngrams and Culturomics to the study of language and history. Readers not interested in this may skip directly to Section 1.5 at this point.

### 1.3 Google Ngrams and Culturomics

Google, the search engine provider, has been scanning books for some time and started to make them available online in 2004. Over time they have amassed what is, in effect, a substantial corpus. They have produced the corpus using optical character recognition – effectively making printed texts into machine-readable ones suitable for rapid searching. This is the data that underpins the Google Ngram Viewer service. When searched for in that system, a word appears in a simple graph, not dissimilar to those in Figures 1.1–1.3. The resolution of the search is to a year and an indication of the frequency of the term relative to the total words in the corpus for that year is given – that allows a comparison of relative frequency similar to that which we achieved by normalizing frequency to occurrences per 100,000 words in Table 1.1. The corpus you search can be looked at using so-called wild cards – characters which can be used to represent single characters or sequences of characters in a word. So, to search for all words beginning with *prost* one would type in *prost\** and words such as *prostitute*, *prostitutes* and *prostitution* would be included in the result returned. However, this would also include results for words such as *prostate* and *prostrate*.



Accordingly, the search engine allows you to look for all inflected forms of a word, solving this problem. What if one wanted only to find *prostitute* as a noun? Again, the system can help as you can search for *prostitute* as a noun separately from *prostitute* as a verb. Helpfully, for a book like this, the so-called Google One Million collection of texts contains books from 1500 to 2008 and so represents a potentially useful source of data for historians. However, there are issues with the Google corpora – first, they can only be accessed via the Google interface. The operations you can carry out on the corpus are limited by what is, relative to the tools that will be introduced later in this chapter, primitive. Simply looking up words and combinations of words is of limited interest and utility. First, you need to know the words and word combinations to look for – the capacity for users to discover interesting patterns is limited. Unless you look for a pattern, you may not see it. Yet unless you know the pattern you will not look for it. This is an issue because, as will be shown in this book, as we move into the past our intuitions about language experience strains and breaks. We need to use tools which allow us to discover patterns we may not be aware of – and some of the tools of corpus linguistics, notably collocations and keywords, which are used later in this book, allow for this. We define both collocates (words which co-occur frequently) and keywords (words which are unusually frequent in a corpus) later in the chapter, but for now we need simply to acknowledge their usefulness to corpus linguistics and, by contrast, how unhelpful it is not to be able to explore them. Hence the interface through which the data must be accessed is a major limiting factor.

Secondly, how accurate are the scans of the original texts? We have no way of knowing this as the original texts cannot be downloaded and used. However, it is not unreasonable to assume that there are errors in the scanning of the texts. Also, given the effects of time, the declining quality of print, and the prevalence of variant spelling in the early modern period, all of which must have impacted upon the quality of the OCR process, it is not unreasonable to assume that, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, errors are not smoothly distributed in the Google One Million corpus and that they are skewed towards the earlier data.<sup>8</sup> Research on other large-scale OCRed resources suggests that the accuracy of such scanning may be low and get lower the further back in time you go. Tanner et al. (2009) undertook a study looking at eighteenth- and nineteenth-century material OCR scanned by the British Library. On average, 78 per cent of the words in the nineteenth-century material were accurately identified, while 65 per cent of the words were, on average, correctly identified in the eighteenth-century material. It would be surprising if there was not to be a broadly similar scale of error in the Google material of a similar age.

Thirdly, the lack of access to the original texts is a major drawback. Without being able to see the original examples in context, or even knowing which texts are used in the corpus, it is difficult to reliably interpret the meaning of any word in context. The limited contexts made available by Google in the form of ngrams is not adequate for this purpose. While concordancing, collocation and keywords can be helpful and also often present limited views of the data, the ability in corpus analysis tools to navigate easily and swiftly to the full text underlying an analysis is critical in terms of aiding analysis. At best, Google Ngrams allows one to navigate to view a list of the books in a sub-period of the analysis. From there you can scroll down a list of books in which the word occurs in that period, with results presented in much the same fashion as if one had searched for something via the Google search engine. This is an approach to the presentation of the data that is clumsy and not fit for the purpose that a corpus linguist or historian would put the corpus to.

We will not labour these points, but they are important. Perhaps the best way of demonstrating this is to look at culturomics, a research area which has enthusiastically embraced such data in order to make sweeping statements about language and culture through time. Spurred by a milestone paper by Michel et al. (2011), culturomics has become something of an industry with researchers, typically not linguists, but rather from the physical and other sciences, taking the ngrams available from Google and using statistical techniques that they are familiar with in order to make statements about culture through language. While we are sympathetic to the goal of studying culture through the written record, the way in which culturomics does this sets it aside sharply from corpus linguistics. As noted, corpus linguists would typically manipulate textual data using a range of tools which have a proven ability to give us insight into language and through language, where we wish to explore it, culture. These tools are not available to the culturomics experts, for the reasons outlined. Similarly, the study of the results and the working back to the texts themselves, a well-established procedure in corpus-based discourse analysis, in particular (see, e.g., Baker et al. 2008; Partington 2003), is difficult or well-nigh impossible to operationalize using the Google Ngram Viewer. It is perhaps for that reason that culturomics researchers do not seem to make any notable effort to link their analyses back to close reading of texts. Another reason they may not do this is that they do not value this as a process. Given that they are typically not linguists or, where they are, they have not worked with linguistic corpora previously, they make a series of leaps that corpus linguists would find surprising. First, as noted, they do not link their analyses back to close readings of texts. Secondly, they do not use the

procedures which corpus linguists have established as fruitful in the exploration of culture via language. But thirdly, and perhaps most damagingly, they do not seem to conceive of the mutable nature of language, especially when studying representation and meaning. In this important sense language varies very significantly from the physical world to which many culturomics researchers have devoted their studies. It is perfectly reasonable to assume that, if you could study hydrogen atoms through the centuries, they would be no different between the Big Bang and the present. Similarly, a hydrogen atom a million light-years away from Earth would have the same properties as the hydrogen atoms on Earth. Yet such statements are simply not true for language. Words vary – they vary through time (diachronically) and they vary across space at any moment in time (synchronically). Words inhabit a social world. Different people and groups may use the same token (word) in the same way. To give an extreme example, the word *nigger* is unacceptable when used by some speakers in some contexts in present-day English, yet when used between certain types of speakers in other contexts it is acceptable. Its meaning changes by context and speaker. Similarly, words change through time. What is true of the word *nigger* today was not true of it in the past, when, no matter how distasteful it may seem to the modern reader, the word was not thought to be as unacceptable as it is considered today. So, in drawing graphs that span centuries, one is indeed looking at the life of one token, one symbol to which meaning is attached. But unless we want to limit our claims to simply saying ‘the combination of letters *prostitute* has the following frequency through time as shown by this graph’ then we have a problem. What we are measuring, while it appears to be immutable, is almost certainly changing through time – meaning is protean. Without access to appropriate tools to study this change of meaning, we may be proceeding on the almost certainly false assumption that the meaning of a word is as immutable as the composition of an atom. It is not. We are also left in a position where, while we may marvel at the peaks and troughs of a frequency profile for a word or phrase over centuries, we are not really any closer to describing and explaining the phenomena that underlie that profile. Culturomics is theory and narrative free – and at best the data it produces is a challenge to theories and historic narratives, not a replacement for them. Let us illustrate these problems by looking at a study in culturomics.

Let us consider the work of Gao et al. (2012), a group of engineers and mathematicians who have published in the area of culturomics. In Gao et al. (2012), using a lot of mathematics that we need not concern ourselves with here, they look, via Google Ngrams, at words which describe social and natural

phenomena in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For example, social phenomena include *communism*, *Christian*, *democracy*, *famine*, *politics* and *war*. Natural phenomena include *avalanche*, *earthquake*, *fire*, *tornado* and *typhoon*.

The paper founders almost immediately on a linguistic point – not every use of each of these words relates to the meanings that the authors believe that they do. Take *avalanche*, for example. Using a corpus of 1.1 billion words of present-day English<sup>9</sup> we looked at the word *avalanche*. Of the first fifty examples of the word, an exploration of the context in which the word occurs demonstrates that the use of the word *avalanche* to refer to the natural phenomenon applies to only twenty-eight of the fifty examples. The other sense of *avalanche* is metaphorical, relating to being swamped by a sudden flood of something, at least in this brief study. There is no discussion of such issues in the paper, even though it touches on almost every word they look at – other words that they study may also be used as metaphors and similes but there is no discussion of this. Some of those words are also bound to be sensitive to historical events; it is reasonable to assume that around the time of the world wars the literal use of *war* would have increased. Such issues may have been shown had corpus linguistic techniques been used. In another example, the word *political* occurs very frequently with the word *earthquake*, a clear sign that the word has a metaphorical use which is clearly social, yet the authors would have only considered it with a literal meaning which they would have considered to be physical. Given that the paper is essentially using word frequency while assuming that each word has a meaning that consistently groups it into either the ‘social’ or ‘natural’ phenomena groupings, it is not unfair to say that the results are flawed because the authors misconstrue what they are counting – they are not counting words coupled with immutable meanings. They are counting words which associate themselves with different meanings over time and in different contexts. In a newspaper article on an election, the meaning of *landslide* is not the same as it is in an article describing a natural disaster. In a period during which a war is raging, the meaning of *war* may indeed primarily refer to armed conflict. In a period of peace that is unlikely to be the case. The paper states that ‘social and natural phenomena are governed by fundamentally different processes’ (Gao et al. 2012: 1956). This would hardly come as a surprise to any social scientist or humanities researcher. Yet it is certainly something to bear in mind when scholars versed in studying natural phenomena turn their hand to studying social phenomena.

While interesting, the linguistic and historical naivety of much culturomics research hugely reduces its value. Note that we are not saying it has no value – there is value to be gleaned from looking at word frequency data, as this book

will hopefully show. However, a result based on word frequency data alone, especially results premised on simplistic views of word meaning, is likely to be distracting at best and dangerous at worst.

However, it is still the case that the data underlying the culturomics venture could be useful for historians if they could access and manipulate it easily – though for the purposes of this book it may be less useful. As discussed earlier, there is cause to believe that the further back in time one goes with the Google material, the greater the noise caused in the analysis by OCR error. The [www.culturomics.org](http://www.culturomics.org) website certainly seems to caution that as one moves back in time with the corpus the results are less reliable, though the reason is ascribed to data sparsity caused by the sampling of the books in the earlier centuries when fewer books were printed: ‘Watch out for the time period your [*sic*] are looking into: the best data is the data for English between 1800 and 2000. Before 1800, there aren’t enough books to reliably quantify many of the queries that first come to mind.’<sup>10</sup> Whatever the cause of the issues with the Google material for earlier centuries, there is little doubt that the problem exists.<sup>11</sup> Consider the graph shown in Figure 1.4 for the word *prostitute*:



**Figure 1.4** The word *prostitute*, 1600–2000 in Google Ngram Viewer.<sup>17</sup>

It seems highly implausible that the word *prostitute* was proportionately at its most frequent in English in the 1660s, as the graph in Figure 1.4 suggests. This is almost certainly an example of skew in the corpus – in one of the years of the 1660s it would seem that there is a text, or texts, which use the word *prostitute* unusually frequently. Given that, as [culturomics.org](http://culturomics.org) warns, there are fewer texts per year in this part of the corpus, the opportunity for a small number of texts to produce skewed results like this is enhanced. It is difficult to discern exactly

how this spike occurs using the rather basic interface Google provides to look at the examples making up the count of usages. Hence, this example shows both the dangers of using the Google material to explore the seventeenth century and how important it is to be able to easily navigate back to the examples producing a feature in a graph so that they may be fully understood. For now we will leave our discussion of the Google data, though we will return to it when we look at the word *prostitute* in the seventeenth century using other corpus data later in this chapter.<sup>12</sup>

## 1.4 An important corpus – the Old Bailey Corpus

So far the focus of this book has been on issues in the use of corpora for historical research. Existing corpora will not permit many of the studies we may wish to pursue. Some corpora, notably the Google data, seem to provide a solution but are bedevilled by a restrictive interface and issues with data prior to 1800.

Another corpus which might hold some promise for the purposes of this book is the Old Bailey Corpus.<sup>13</sup> This is a corpus derived from the texts produced for the Old Bailey Online website – a web-based concordancer, of sorts, that allows one to search through the proceedings of the criminal court, the Old Bailey. In principle this is very useful data, but is less useful for this book – our aim is to look at the representation of prostitution in general, not simply the representation of prostitution in criminal proceedings during which, it is reasonable to assume, it will be presented as wholly problematic. Another problem with the Old Bailey Corpus is its coverage – it covers 1674 to 1913, whereas we wish to study 1600–99. A final problem is the scale of the corpus – while it contains 2163 volumes of proceedings resulting in a corpus of almost 134 million words, the corpus addresses one objection raised earlier in the chapter, yet falls foul of another. It is a continuous sample through the period covered by the data – one can, in principle, achieve resolution at a number of levels as the court sat fairly continuously in the period covered by the corpus. However, relative to the span of time covered, the size of the corpus is not overwhelming which probably, once again, means that it is best for the study of frequent features – grammatical features or, perhaps, concepts frequently addressed in the courtroom. So while the corpus is without doubt very useful, it is not the ideal corpus to use for this book. Setting aside the issue just discussed, the focus of this book is on the seventeenth century, but the Old Bailey Corpus

only covers the latter quarter of it. For these reasons, this corpus is not central to the study undertaken in this book.

The Old Bailey Corpus is but one example, of course. There are other historical corpora which can be used, perfectly satisfactorily, to study specific research questions. If these questions rely on specific genres, it is not unusual to find small, focused, corpora which allow an investigation of that genre. For example, the Lancaster Newsbooks Corpus (Hardie and McEnery 2009) is useful for those interested in journalism in the 1650s and the Helsinki Corpus of Early English Medical Writing<sup>14</sup> is valuable for those looking at the development of both medicine and the genre of medical writing. However, as with the Old Bailey Corpus, such corpora are of use to those interested in a narrow research question. The challenge we set ourselves for this book was to find a very large, general corpus of written English for the seventeenth century. Hence, while the focused historical corpora are very useful, they do not suit our purpose generally, though we will use the Old Bailey Corpus in Chapter 3 of this book to explore some criminal cases against prostitutes. But we cannot use it to look at public discourse; for that, we need to look at a wholly new corpus.

## 1.5 Introducing the corpus to be used in this book

At this point we think it is likely that any reader of this book will have been intrigued by the possibility of a corpus-based approach to historical research questions but may be beginning to despair that it is possible. For the purposes of historical investigation as we have outlined them, the resources discussed so far are deficient in a number of respects. At this point, we could argue for a change of scope of our study (e.g., looking at prostitution cases in the Old Bailey Corpus), shift forward to the modern day and demonstrate with modern resources what might be possible if we had access to similar resources for previous centuries or, perhaps, simply decide instead to write a paper critiquing the state of the art in historical corpus linguistics. Fortunately, we need do none of those things. A new corpus is being constructed which meets all of the criteria we have outlined for our corpus-based investigation of historical questions. It covers the time period in question. It is large – with approximately one billion words of data available for the seventeenth century. It samples from all of the years of the seventeenth century. Finally, it is composed of printed materials of all sorts, not simply books. The corpus in question is the Early English Books Online (EEBO) corpus.

### 1.5.1 Early English Books Online

Pioneering work scanning and putting online digital facsimiles of works from the past has a history that predates Google Ngrams and an important part of that history was the creation of EEBO by a company called ProQuest. These books proved an immensely valuable research resource, yet it was of limited interest for linguists as the texts were images rather than machine-readable texts. In 1999, however, the Universities of Michigan and Oxford, in collaboration with ProQuest and the Council of Library and Information Resources, began the text creation partnership with the express goal of producing fully machine-readable texts from the EEBO collection. The text creation partnership grew and now over 150 universities worldwide are contributing to this effort. The texts are quality-controlled transcriptions of original texts. At the time of this book going to press, 40,000 texts are available in the EEBO corpus.<sup>15</sup>

The EEBO, as a corpus, has some distinct advantages over the corpora behind Google Ngrams. First, we know which texts are in the corpus<sup>16</sup> – this is not true for the Google material. This gives us a better insight into possible issues of skew in the corpus. Secondly, we know the quality control processes used to create the data and can check that as we can gain direct access to the texts in the corpus. Thirdly, we can use the corpus and manipulate the data in powerful corpus searching engines which allow all of the tools and techniques developed in corpus linguistics to be applied to the data. Fourthly, because the corpus can be manipulated directly, the corpus can be processed. As a result, at Lancaster University we have been able to both part-of-speech tag the corpus and use powerful software to deal with the issue of spelling variation in the data (see Baron et al. 2009). Fifthly, as with the transcription, because we have access to the corpus itself, it is possible for us to explore results in order to see if any of them are skewed unduly by errors in the part-of-speech tagging or variant spelling handling. Finally, we get scale – the EEBO corpus material for the seventeenth century amounts to nearly a billion words. As this is fairly smoothly spread through the century, we can hope to gain resolution to at least the decade level.

In short, the EEBO corpus is close to ideal for the purposes of this project. It gives us direct access to the texts and, because the texts can be manipulated through concordancing software, an easy ability to map between results and the texts that produced those results. This in itself enables the type of supporting close reading for results that both historians and corpus linguists would expect. It is possible that readers may think that some of the advantages outlined above



are mere adornments – potential advantages that rarely make a difference. We can say with confidence that this is not true and that, as the results in this book unfold, the value of these advantages, and the corresponding disadvantages of the Google material, will, we believe, become apparent.

One immediate point can be made based on the scale of the EEBO corpus – there is sufficient evidence to allow the type of investigation we want to undertake. To illustrate this, consider the data shown in Table 1.1. Three historical corpora yielded two examples of the word *prostitute*. In the EEBO corpus, we have 2,397 examples of the word in 1,616 texts. Throughout this book we will be using the CQPWeb system as provided to us by Dr Andrew Hardie at the University of Lancaster. CQPWeb is a powerful online concordancing system which allows us to use state-of-the-art processing tools to swiftly and reliably manipulate the billion words we are interested in. Rather than simply drawing crude graphs, as the culturomics website permits, CQPWeb provides useful information in a variety of forms. For example, Table 1.2 shows the useful distributional data provided for a search such as that made for *prostitute*.

The data in Table 1.2 compares very favourably indeed with the graph of the word reproduced in Figure 1.4. While visually appealing, the graph is nothing more than a visual rendering of a normalized frequency. We have no idea of how widely spread mentions of the word are, or how many words are at each sample point in the graph. In Table 1.2 we have a much richer context in which to begin

**Table 1.2** The distribution of mentions of *prostitute* in the EEBO corpus in the decades of the seventeenth century

| Period  | Words in the corpus for this period | Number of mentions of <i>prostitute</i> in this period | The number of files for this period in the corpus that mention <i>prostitute</i> at least once | Normalized frequency per million words in the period |
|---------|-------------------------------------|--|--|--|
| 1600–9  | 57,272,438                          | 95   | 69 out of 1349   | 1.66   |
| 1610–19 | 61,922,837                          | 146  | 92 out of 1465   | 2.36   |
| 1620–9  | 55,748,866                          | 118  | 88 out of 1674   | 2.12   |
| 1630–9  | 63,496,401                          | 166  | 121 out of 1572  | 2.61   |
| 1640–9  | 87,480,996                          | 196  | 147 out of 7424  | 2.24   |
| 1650–9  | 168,912,439                         | 338  | 216 out of 4690  | 2  |
| 1660–9  | 111,998,646                         | 279  | 179 out of 4227  | 2.49   |
| 1670–9  | 118,167,747                         | 265  | 175 out of 3920  | 2.24   |
| 1680–9  | 142,071,417                         | 408  | 282 out of 6916  | 2.87   |
| 1690–9  | 128,494,904                         | 385  | 246 out of 5588  | 3  |

to interpret and account for the word *prostitute* in the seventeenth century. This is just the beginning – because CQPWeb is capable of so much more than producing the data that can be seen in Table 1.2, impressive as that is.

Before leaving the discussion of EEBO, it is probably worth noting that this corpus is probably more unfamiliar, at the time of writing, to linguists than it is to scholars in the so-called digital humanities. In the digital humanities there is a growing body of research on EEBO and other historical text collections. Some of this focuses on what is lost and gained by shifting data from the physical to the digital (see, e.g. Kichuk 2007). Withington (2013) has used very basic corpus-based methods in order to introduce an analysis of the semantic complexities of the term *peace* in early modern England. He has used the Shakespearean<sup>18</sup> and EEBO corpora in order to compare the number of times *peace* appears in each corpus and, specifically the title pages of EEBO, in comparison to other search terms, *war* and *god*. This is a rudimentary use of corpus linguistics and mainly serves as an introduction to Withington's subsequent sophisticated qualitative analysis but it is, nevertheless, an example of how historians are starting to make use of digitized sources and, moreover, are becoming aware of how corpus linguistics can benefit their research.

A growing area of focus is upon using techniques from computer science to try to automate various aspects of the analysis of historical materials, not entirely analogous to the culturomics approach to language outlined, but far from different. This work is not based upon linguistic insights into language. Nor did it find its genesis in a wish to meet the need of historians studying large historical text collections. Rather, techniques such as topic modelling (e.g. Wang et al. 2012) have essentially been repurposed from work in information retrieval and library science, designed to service the needs of librarians in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. Work on named entity recognition (e.g. Grover et al. 2008) grew out of work in the 1990s, often funded by the American military research agency, DARPA, in the United States, which had perhaps understandable interests in looking at patterns of mention of named entities relating to such areas as finance and defence in newspapers and other texts.<sup>19</sup> Using such approaches researchers have used automated approaches to study subjects such as conceptual history (see, e.g. Pumfrey, Rayson and Mariani 2012), perceptions of the Second World War across different text collections (Odijk et al. 2015) and textbooks aimed at children in German schools in the period 1850 to 1918 (Schnober et al. 2015). This book takes a different approach. Our aim is not focused on automation. Our goal is to bring linguistic insights to the study of language and discourse in the seventeenth century. The

tools we use to do this are discussed in the following section. But for now it is important to note that our focus is upon bringing corpus linguistic insights and historical insights together. The result is machine-aided, rather than purely computational, analysis with a sound footing in concepts such as collocation which are of proven utility and theoretical value in linguistics. While a critical overview of the approaches rooted in computer science is not a goal of this book, we do, in Section 5.3, evaluate a tool which may have allowed an automated content analysis of *EEBO* to be undertaken. It is perhaps the case that the critical investigation there may suggest the need for a more critical engagement with automated analytical procedures in general.<sup>20</sup> However, as noted, that is not the goal or aim of this book, so let us return now to consider how we will exploit the *EEBO* corpus.

## 1.6 Tools and methods – How we dig into data with CQPWeb

So far we have alluded to some of the processes of which CQPWeb is capable. As we move towards the conclusion of this chapter, now is the time to review the tools that CQPWeb provides that will be used in this book. Readers familiar with corpus linguistics may safely skip this section.

Collocation is a central method for the exploration of word meaning in corpus linguistics. The idea of collocation is old (e.g. see McEnery and Hardie, 2011, for a fuller discussion of collocation), but began to form into a shape in which it had a clearer operational definition following the work of John Sinclair in 1970 (republished as Krishnamurthy et al. 2004). The insight that Sinclair gave is that certain features seemed to be important in terms of how words co-occur. Words co-occurring with one another in quite a narrow span, for example, five words either side of a word we might be interested in investigating, seem to be strongly linked to the decoding – or potential creation – of meaning. Measures have been developed for exploring words co-occurring in such a window in order to allow us to systematize the selection of words which seem to keep company with a word more frequently than we may expect – so-called collocates. To identify a word as a collocate, we can look at the frequency of co-occurrence of the collocate with the word we are interested in and contrast that with the frequency with which the word occurs with other words. We can subject those frequencies to a statistical test to ascertain whether the word has a statistically significant attraction to the word we are interested in or not (this provides, in

essence, a simple yes or no result, it is either significant or not). We may also check those frequencies to see how strong the difference is. So as well as being statistically significant, we may find that the so-called effect size – how marked the difference is – will vary between the statistically significant collocations. In this book we will use a statistic called the Log Ratio statistic<sup>21</sup> which, helpfully, combines a test of statistical significance with a measure of effect size – so, for the words above the significance threshold for the measure, words which get a higher Log Ratio score exhibit a greater effect size than for those words with a lower Log Ratio score.

This may sound rather abstract, so let us consider a simple example. The word *bank* has multiple meanings. However, in context, collocations make the meaning associated with the word in that context manifest to the hearer or reader – in the British English 2006 corpus (Baker 2009), the word *manager* is a collocate of *bank*. In an example like ‘the salami sandwich that the bank manager had been planning to have for lunch’<sup>22</sup> the word *manager* helps the reader to identify the word *bank* as meaning a financial institution as the collocate *manager* helps select that meaning of *bank* – river banks do not usually have managers. Used in another way, collocation can help to discover word meaning; hence, it has been a key tool for lexicographers using corpora. Pretend that you did not know the word *bank*. If we look at two million words of present-day English<sup>23</sup> we find collocates for *bank* that show us, when we explore some examples of the words used in context, that banks deal with money (e.g. *money*, *stock*) and the banks that do so have names (e.g. *european*, *midland*, *scotland*) but we also find that they are locations by rivers (e.g. *west*). Collocates can help us to discover nuances of meaning of words that we think that we know, or they may allow us to explore meanings of words which we do not know at all. We mentioned here the need to explore context to understand collocates – corpus linguists do that through concordancing, a process whereby examples of a word are shown organized as one example per line, with the word of interest in the centre of the screen. This arrangement greatly facilitates the process of looking for patterns in the data by a focused closer reading of the text.

An important feature of collocates is that they may show semantic preference and discourse prosody. Semantic preference occurs when a word collocates with words of similar meaning. Discourse prosody occurs where a word attracts other words which are either positive or negative in meaning. In this book we will largely bypass the term ‘semantic preference’, though the concept does underlie the organization of collocates into semantic fields which will be a key feature of the analyses undertaken in Chapters 5 and 6. Discourse prosody is

also important in that chapter, as it will be shown that some of the words we investigate were routinely associated with negative concepts/ideas. Discourse prosody is arguably the most subtle way in which collocation encodes meaning in that it is indirect, the cumulative effect of the pattern of collocates that a word attracts. Consider the word *cause*. The corpus linguist writing this book has asked many students in seminars and lectures over the years to write a short definition of this based on intuition and the answers produced rarely vary. Typically, a definition something like ‘to make something happen’ is provided. However, as Stubbs (1995) has shown, in fact what is caused to happen is negative in the overwhelming majority of cases in spoken and written present-day English. So, in the British English 2006 corpus the strongest collocates of *cause* are *damage* and *death*. While we could, in principle, say ‘cause happiness’ our habit is to not do so because, corpus linguists would argue, the negative discourse prosody of *cause* is part of the meaning of the word.

One final concept to explore under the broad heading of collocation is colligation. Collocates are those words which help to define meaning through co-occurrence – colligates, on the other hand, key more directly into grammar. Co-occurrence with grammatical words such as ‘articles’, ‘prepositions’ and ‘subordinators’ is the most obvious manifestation of colligation. In the studies in this book we will typically focus on collocates and will largely set aside colligates unless the discussion of them is relevant to the study of prostitution.

Another technique that will be used in this book is the keyword procedure. Let us explain simply what the keyword approach does. Imagine we have two corpora, A and B. The keyword procedure checks, for each word in corpus A, how frequently that word appears in corpus A relative to corpus B. As with collocation, the keyword may be marked by statistical significance and effect size – hence once again we will use the Log Ratio statistic in this book. Note that in calculating the test of whether or not a word is key, the statistics takes corpus size into account: if corpus A is twice the size of corpus B, then if a word is twice as frequent in A as it is in B, this should be the cause of no excitement – the relative frequency of the word in both corpora is the same. Finally, note that keywords may be positive (the word has increased in frequency) or negative (the word has decreased in frequency).

Keywords are an important technique in corpus linguistics as they help us to grasp the ‘aboutness’ of a large text collection. If we find a positive keyword, a word is being mentioned more often in the corpus in question, relative to the one being compared to, in a way that is unlikely to be explained by chance. Similarly, a negative keyword occurs when a word is being used less in a corpus, relative

to the corpus it is being compared to, in a way that is unlikely to be explained by chance. Keywords have proven their value in looking at large corpora which span a long period of time, notably in the study of Gabrielatos et al. (2012), where keywords allowed different British newspapers' attitudes to Muslims to be explored in a corpus of 140 million words of newspaper articles mentioning Muslims or Islam in the period of 1998–2009.

The challenge of looking over stretches of time is only amplified in this book by our decision to look at a century of material. These challenges will be greater, at times, than those faced by other studies. For example, Gabrielatos et al. (2012) worked with a corpus in which they could reasonably produce a resolution of analysis as small as one day in their study of newspapers in an eleven-year period. This led them to consider methods to look for trends in that data as, with many more sampling points than other studies mentioned in this chapter so far, they had a much greater issue when it came to identifying trends in the data and identifying points that varied significantly from that trend. We too will face the challenge of looking for trends in a long period of time. A greater challenge will be set by collocation. Gabrielatos and Baker (2008) noted that collocation was subject to variation in discourse over time. They developed the concept of consistent collocates to deal with this, focusing on collocates which appeared reasonably consistently with a word across the points sampled in their study. Studies like these will provide a useful guide to this book as we deal with similar issues on a larger scale. Yet the scale of our enterprise, across a century, will present other issues to which a methodological response is required. In the sub-section that follows, we will briefly outline a series of methods we either use or have developed for this book which revolve around the use of collocation to explore four states – consistency, initiation, termination and transience. Note that we may apply these labels either to individual collocates, or to the semantic fields which the collocates are drawn from (as happens in Chapter 5). In the discussion that follows, however, we will focus on individual collocates to illustrate the idea. We will return to these concepts later in the book, after they have been used in Chapter 5, to try to understand how we may explain such patterns of collocation.

### **1.6.1 Consistency**

In this book, we will be looking principally at collocation and the extent to which it intersects with prostitution. Collocations will form the evidence both for any claimed shifts in word meaning that we discuss and for any changes

in representation. The last point is an important one. When we see collocates change in the life of a word, what are we seeing? There are a number of possible answers and only by looking at a collocate through time can the most plausible answer be determined. Consider a word, let us call it A. Over 100 years, in an analysis with a resolution of a decade, we see A collocate with B in every decade, but with C in alternating decades. It would be unusual to claim that this was evidence of the semantics of A changing. Rather, what we are observing, would more probably be a word A which has two collocates, B and C. B is a collocate which does not seem to be prone to fluctuation, while some factor seems to be making C enter and leave discourse. Yet throughout we would claim that A has meaning formed in collocation with B and C – not that the meaning of A shifts every ten years to either include or exclude C. Consider the word *landslide* as discussed earlier in the chapter. It has collocates based on its metaphorical uses and collocates based on its literal meaning. Landslides in the UK are rare and hence, unless a major landslide occurs and is commented on, the word typically appears as a metaphor. However, when a landslide is reported, it is not that the word gains a new set of collocates, and with it meaning. It is, instead, that a latent set of collocates are selected that are appropriate to the discourse. Hence when looking at consistent collocates, Gabrielatos and Baker (2008), rightly in our view, came to the conclusion that to be consistent a collocate need not always occur with a word. There may be periods during which discourse makes a set of collocates latent, or at least infrequent for a word. Collocates are sensitive to the discourse environment which, in turn, is sensitive to the social, cultural and moral pressures being exerted on language at any one moment in time.

Consequently, consistent collocates in this book will be those that occur in at least seven decades out of the ten being looked at (the rationale for this is discussed in Section 1.6.5).

### **1.6.2 Initiation**

A clearer sign that a change worth investigating has occurred in language is marked by the initiation of collocation. If a collocate has not been observed in a diachronic corpus until part way through it and then appears consistently for at least three consecutive decades, then we deem this collocate to be a candidate initiation collocate. In short, there is sufficient evidence that this may be a collocate coming into being and that a close examination of the context and prior context of that word is warranted to confirm this. So, imagine that in the

period 1600–40, word A collocates with B and C. But in the period 1640–99 it still collocates with B and C but, from 1660 onwards, it also collocates with D. D would then be looked at as a possible initiating collocate. The reasoning is, we hypothesize, that several decades would be a long time for a collocates to remain latent in a speech community. At the very least, if this was the case, you would have to explain how a latent collocate was communicated to new members of a speech community. Wrigley and Schofield (1981) calculated average life expectancy in the UK to be around forty years of age in the mid-seventeenth century. Imagine that a speaker is born in 1600 and that they have an average lifespan for the age. By the time that the collocate D appears in the 1640s, it would be difficult to explain how this speaker could have contributed to this collocate's survival if it was not a notable collocate in their lifetime. It seems more likely that this is a collocate coming into existence. Yet, note that we have used the phrase candidate initiating collocate. There may be good reasons to believe that this collocate could have been current but absent from our corpus, so when we observe the collocate for the first time it should be carefully examined. For example, it may be the case that this collocate was frequent in speech but not in writing. This would explain how it had, in fact, been a collocate in the lifetime of our imaginary speaker of Early Modern English – it was part of their spoken repertoire but was absent from writing in their lifetime. By exploring the context in which the collocate comes into existence, we may see evidence of that; for example, it may appear initially in quotation. So while the collocates may be suggestive of a collocate entering the language, we should approach the category of initiating collocates with caution and curiosity, taking nothing for granted.

### 1.6.3 Termination

Terminating collocates are very much the inverse of initiation collocates. Where we have seen a collocation that has been consistent in a corpus disappear and not reappear over a sustained period of some decades, we have a candidate terminating collocate. In this case it is suggestive that the collocate is entering either a long period of latency or it is entering a period of latency as a prelude to being abandoned. Again, however, the context in which this occurs should be explored. As with the initiation discussion, it may be that the collocate is simply shifting to become a feature of speech rather than writing, or is now becoming closely associated with a genre not represented in the corpus. However, equally, as with all collocations, there may be historical explanations which explain well



why the collocate is either coming into or going out of use. Those historical explanations seem to us to be the key, in particular, to the next category of collocate, transient collocates.

#### **1.6.4 Transience<sup>24</sup>**

Transient collocates we define as collocates which are associated with a word for a short period – in our terms a decade or two – before they vanish. We think it highly likely that these collocates are well worth exploring as being diagnostic of transient shifts in society, culture and morals. As attitudes change, events unfold and the cultural practices of a society shift, we should expect to see language shift with it. Some changes sustain – the collocates are thus initiating collocates. However, some collocates are drawn into usage and either terminate or lapse into latency, though they may re-emerge at a later date. Hence, in a century a transient collocate may appear and disappear on a number of occasions.

#### **1.6.5 Measuring collocates and keywords**

How do we identify the collocates outlined above? First, we need a procedure for identifying collocates in the corpus. Then we need criteria for categorizing collocates as consistent, initiating, terminating and transient.

All of the measurements used are, to some extent heuristic – the settings for collocation are normally a window of +/- five words and we will use that in this book also. We use the Log Ratio statistic for the calculation of the score, which determines whether an association between two words is counted as a collocation or not. As noted this is a relatively new statistic which has the merit of testing both significance (i.e. whether it is possible to ascribe statistical significance to the frequency with which two words are attracted to one another) and effect size (i.e. how strong is the bond between the two words).

Consistent collocates have been measured by Gabrielatos and Baker (2008: 11) as being present in seven out of ten cases tested. The resolution used for their study was years, but we shall use the same measure with a decade level resolution.

Initiating collocates will be determined, for the purposes of this book, as collocates which are not present in our corpus from its beginning for at least forty years. From the point it appears it occurs in at least 50 per cent of the remaining decades, with a minimum of two occurrences. Terminal collocates

will be determined to be those collocates which are present in at least 50 per cent of the decades from the start of the corpus, being a collocate in a minimum of two decades. It will exit the list of collocates for a word for a minimum period of forty years. Transient collocates are those which do not meet the criteria for being classified as consistent, initiation or terminal collocates.

These measures are a starting point for the investigation of collocates to determine whether the classification given to them is plausible linguistically and historically. Note that the definition, coupled with the resolution at decade level and the span of 100 years, means that some of the categories, notably termination and initiation, are bound to be distributed unevenly through the decades. Initiating collocates can appear no sooner than the 1640s by our definition. Similarly, terminating collocates can occur no earlier than 1630 in our data. We have set our parameters for these categories conservatively – it may well be that collocates may be initiated or terminated more swiftly than we imagine. However, in both cases we have used the average lifespan as the, admittedly somewhat arbitrary, filter through which termination and initiation must pass, while also applying a weak consistent collocate test of at least 50 per cent (as opposed to the full consistent collocates measure of 70 per cent).

The heuristic nature of the investigation is again underlined by our decision to work with conventional decades – these are arbitrary units. We could well look at ten-year chunks running from 1601 to 1611 and so on rather than starting with 1600 to 1609 as we do in this book. It would be interesting to see whether other approaches to looking at change over time might be supportable – for example, looking at a sliding window and calculating changes in collocations on that basis, starting the analysis at 1600–9 and then slowly changing the window to 1601–10, 1602–11, 1603–12, etc. While this form of analysis is not yet supported by corpus searching software and is extremely laborious to do manually, in order to see whether such an approach may have a dramatic effect on our findings we did run a sliding window experiment with the word *whore* between 1600 and 1620. The results were interesting but not alarming – the collocations, while they change across the period, were reasonably stable when you compared one ten-year window (e.g. 1600–9) to the next (in this case 1601–10).<sup>25</sup> Hence, our approach has the merit of being feasible with the available tools and does not seem to be unduly deficient.

Keywords, words which are significantly more frequent in corpus A when compared to corpus B, will be calculated using the Log Ratio measure. In order to see the key discourses in the corpus through the century, each decade in

the century will be subject to pairwise comparison with the next decade – for example, 1600s to 1610s, 1610s to 1600s, 1610s to 1620s, 1620s to 1610s, etc.

Finally, a brief comment on notation. In this book we will, when mentioning a word, italicize the word in question. Where we are referring to the lemma of a word, that is, the citation form of the word, which would cover its various forms in practice, we put the word in small capitals. So if we discuss the use of the word ‘dog’ in an example we would write *dog*, if we wished to refer to the noun *dog* in any or all of its forms, we would write DOG.

## 1.7 Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the aims of this book as well as problems with existing corpora and culturomics. We have also introduced the corpus we will use in the book and have discussed a series of approaches that we will take to the data, based principally on frequency, collocation and keywords. In the next chapter, we will switch to setting the stage for our analysis by providing a background on the history of prostitution in England. The goal of this chapter will be to outline the historical background of prostitution in early modern England and the experiences and practices of prostitutes in the seventeenth century. Chapter 3 will go on to examine how prostitutes were constructed in popular discourse of the time. We will take a deliberately broad approach in these chapters because, first, we do not assume any prior specialized historical knowledge on the part of our readers and, secondly, the analysis in this book is primarily corpus-based and will take place in the chapters which follow. While the legislative context is national, much of the detail in the chapter that follows relates to London. We know most about prostitution in that city and, given its status as a major centre of population, such a focus seems inevitable. We set aside for the moment the question of whether public discourse focused on London when discussing prostitution, though we do return to that question in Chapter 6. For now, we note that the focus of the review on London happily matches a bias we may expect in the data – most published works were produced in London. Hence, we might expect that public discourse as represented in EEBO will have a London bias. Given that this bias is in favour of a city where we also have most evidence of prostitution, the bias is a fortuitous one for the purposes of this book.

A second issue to note is that Chapters 2 and 3 focus on the practice of female prostitution in seventeenth-century England. Despite evidence indicating the existence of male prostitution in the same period being scant and ambiguous

to say the least, some scholars do believe that gay brothels were operating in London by the seventeenth century.<sup>26</sup> We intend to investigate the lexis of male prostitution – for instance, terms such as *stallion*, *he-whore*, *franion* and *spintry* – in a separate study elsewhere. However, in Chapter 5, Section 5.4.3 we do note that early modern nicknames used for prostitutes tended to be presented in a feminized way.

The main goal of this book is looking at representation, so before we can explore the lexis of prostitution and show how collocation can help us to reveal changing meaning attached to the words, and hence perhaps changing representation, we need to explore what evidence we have of attitudes towards prostitution in the period already. That will be presented in Chapter 3. Chapters 2 and 3 will provide us with the context in which our corpus-based investigation can be interpreted. This will then allow us, in Chapters 4 onwards, to carry out the investigation of HARLOT, JILT, PROSTITUTE, STRUMPET and WHORE in the context that Chapters 2 and 3 have painted.

Historical context is essential for this book – as should be apparent from the discussion so far. Without understanding the societies in which these words were produced in our corpus, it is very difficult to understand their use and meaning. Similarly, without a way of beginning to approach the use and meaning of a word in historical context, it is difficult to use documentary evidence to reflect upon that period. The approach taken in this book is, therefore, similar to that taken by McEnery (2005) and in a number of multidisciplinary studies by Wodak, notably, Heer et al. (2008). The work in this book can be viewed as a continuation of the discourse historical approach of these works which has been championed by Wodak. As this chapter began to elaborate the methodological context in which the study presented in this book is framed, so the following chapter begins the process of outlining the socio-historical context in which any corpus-based findings should be interpreted.



## Life as a 17th-Century Prostitute

*Free as light and air I walk,  
And uncontroll'd my passions guide;  
I eat and drink and sing and talk,  
And something else I do beside;  
Hither then, my followers come,  
And, on the couch, the seat of bliss,  
I'll strait conduct the hero home,  
And shew you what this something is.<sup>1</sup>*

### 2.1 Introduction – historical research on early modern prostitution

If we asked our readers to imagine a seventeenth-century prostitute, it is likely that some might picture a beautifully dressed and youthful courtesan, perhaps attending the playhouse with her wealthy lover but keeping a mindful watch for potential suitors. Others might visualize a wretched streetwalker, her appearance visibly marred by the tolls of venereal disease, alcoholism and physical abuse, attempting to interest a passer-by in a brief outdoor transaction. Both of these images do have their place in early modern England but they represent polar extremes of a profession that spanned a great range of social class and economic status and which women turned to for different reasons. We must resist viewing seventeenth-century sex workers as one homogenous group: each person had individual backgrounds, motivations and experiences of the sex trade. However, it would be wrong to suggest that early modern prostitutes were spread equally throughout the social strata of England in the period. As we will see, the driving force behind the vast majority of women selling their bodies was, and probably still is, poverty.

The seventeenth century was a period of revolution (both the English Civil War and the overthrow of James II in 1688 have been termed revolutions), dislocation and unremitting religious tension. It would have been almost impossible for people living in what we now call Britain to avoid the effects of such turmoil, no matter their social status, gender or age. Cities such as London struggled to cope with desperate and often unskilled migrants competing for the disproportionately small legitimate employment opportunities. There was already a rudimentary poor relief system in place at the beginning of the seventeenth century but eligibility was far from guaranteed and payments, when made, were usually insufficient to live upon. If a woman was single, childless and physically able to work, as many prostitutes were, local officials considered her responsible for her own economic well-being and were almost always unwilling to provide outdoor relief.

Prostitution, therefore, became a particularly viable choice for women who had few other options. In some cases, it provided a financial safety net for lower-class women during unstable periods of their lives – a temporary solution to bridge a gap between other jobs. Other women turned to prostitution in a full-time and professional capacity. Rubenhold (2005: 288) has noted that prostitution differed little from any lifestyle of underprivileged women at the time: ‘Women of this class, whose voices were unheard and who were virtually sidelined by society and the law, had little recourse in the tragedies that befell them.’ Severe social and economic disruption affected every class and, as a result, some prostitutes had relatively grand origins or reinvented themselves as paid mistresses simply because they believed it would allow them more social freedom than wifedom and motherhood.

Scholars interested in researching early modern prostitutes face similar problems as those who are trying to reconstruct the lives of any group which is overwhelmingly illiterate and politically disempowered. We will see in Chapter 3 that prostitutes were often referenced by contemporary male writers in a variety of genres but do the voices of these women ever reach us directly? A minority of seventeenth-century women were taught to read, no doubt to allow them the benefit of biblical study, but very few of these could write. There were proportionately more literate women living in seventeenth-century London than in rural areas: a quarter at the beginning of the century and, by the end, rising to nearly half.<sup>2</sup> Prostitutes, usually coming from the ranks of the lower classes, were mostly illiterate. Those women who had the ability to document their lives either failed to do so or suffered the fate of their manuscripts being considered insufficiently important to preserve.<sup>3</sup> There are more surviving

documents written by women than one might expect but the vast majority of these is from the gentry class: from those who had the literary ability, motivation and leisure time to allow them to write alongside the status necessary to give their words even a chance of enduring. Historians' attempts to reconstruct the lives of women using these women's own voices have also been obstructed by contemporary male prejudice and interference. Samuel Pepys, for example, who went on to inform and delight future generations with diary accounts of his extramarital liaisons and drinking, ordered his wife to destroy her own memoir.<sup>4</sup>

It is not all bad news, however. Academics studying seventeenth-century prostitution are by no means bereft of evidence. While this century witnessed the burgeoning of a print culture, throughout the period a rich oral culture also persisted, traces of which were preserved. Hence, we can learn from gossip and insults, proverbs and folklore, street songs, ballads and charms, jokes and stories, including anecdotes, fairy tales and 'old wives' tales'. Mendelson and Crawford (1998: 58–64), for instance, have employed proverbs to illustrate commonplace seventeenth-century attitudes held by women and conceived to characterize women. Also important is the study of material objects such as everyday household items which can shed light on a woman's daily activities.<sup>5</sup>

While the possibility of studying prostitution in the past existed, prostitution, as a subject of scholarly study, was deemed distasteful well into the 1960s.<sup>6</sup> In the following decades, partly as a result of the rise of feminist theory and a new interest in the lives of everyday people, attitudes changed. Attwood (2011: 8) has explained how, over the past thirty years, social historians have studied the social structure and organization of commercial sex while students from the fields of art history, literary scholarship and feminist theory have studied the representation and symbolic meaning of prostitution. Present-day historians usually accept that the prior omission of research into the lives of women created a serious imbalance in our understanding of the early modern world and appreciate that scholarship which focuses on prostitutes is one way of contributing towards our rewriting of the past. As Froide (2005: 221) has written, in understanding what seventeenth-century society regarded as marginal, we are much better placed to understand what was considered to be normal.

In Chapter 1, we discussed the potential shortcomings of conducting research into seventeenth-century prostitution solely using the Old Bailey Corpus. We would argue that drawing on a wide range of types of texts provides a more balanced picture of an historical group than would be achieved by looking at one type of text alone. But what relevant textual data may be available? Prior to the eighteenth century, when the crimes of whores were documented with



a new gusto, there were few official sources relating to prostitution other than secular and church court reports. There is an abundance of court records to investigate and their bulk might lead us to believe that we possess the necessary information to fully understand the circumstances of women who were brought before the law. These legal documents do sometimes provide us with very useful information on the circumstances and behaviour of sex workers, including where they were based and with whom they associated. However, information contained within early modern criminal records cannot truly illuminate the lives of seventeenth-century prostitutes for a number of reasons. Although the vast majority of records of indictments and recognizances survive, as we shall see, most women accused of being prostitutes were dealt with by more informal legal procedures which required less rigid record keeping. Most importantly, only a small percentage of women selling their bodies were actually caught and prosecuted. The women referenced in legal records represent only a very small portion of those who were regularly working as prostitutes.<sup>7</sup>

Those women prosecuted for prostitution or for being involved in the sex industry in another capacity were, at most, accused of committing a misdemeanour and were not tried by a jury or given the opportunity to speak in court. Criminal proceedings were recorded from the point of view of the authorities; it must be assumed that recorded testimonies were not verbatim transcripts as they were edited by court officials. First-hand accounts by convicted felons have survived by means of their biographers reproducing their testimonies, again probably edited, but prostitutes never look us square in the eyes and our best chances of reaching them come via their male contemporaries.<sup>8</sup>

In terms of archival sources, we must make the best of what we have been left and a number of historians have produced richly illuminating studies which are highly relevant for researchers of early modern prostitution. Many of these discuss prostitution as part of a wider study of early modern criminal activity.<sup>9</sup> Some historians researching defamation litigation have shown how early moderns perceived prostitution and used its lexis in order to insult.<sup>10</sup> Linnane (2003); Emerson (2002); and numerous books by Burford (1973; 1976; 1993) provide a good overview of prostitution in historic London. Browner (1994), in a useful introduction to the main themes of the subject, and Burford and Wotton (1995) deal more specifically with the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Mowry (2004) explores political pornography of the Restoration, analysing pornographies in their political context with the support of archival material. As we can see, much of this scholarship focuses upon life in London which, as we mentioned in the last chapter, reflects the concentrations of printed

material published in the city in the period. Quaife (1979), using depositions to the Quarter Sessions of the County of Somerset in the first sixty years of the seventeenth century, is one of the few historians to direct his research away from the capital and, in doing so, has significantly contributed to our knowledge of illicit sexual activity among the rural peasantry.

We must acknowledge, of course, that it is limiting to consider prostitution purely in relation to the seventeenth century; reading about scholars' treatments of prostitutes in other periods raises our awareness of the moral arguments surrounding prostitution as a practice and the differing ways in which the state attempted to counter the selling of sex.<sup>11</sup> Hence, in this chapter our chronological coverage, while centring on the seventeenth century, stretches beyond it. A selection of the best studies are Karras' (1996) excellent monograph on medieval prostitution and Griffiths' (1998) research on Elizabethan London; Henderson (1999); Rubenhold (2005) and Rosenthal's (2006) eighteenth-century studies; and Walkowitz (1982) and Attwood's (2011) work on the practice in Victorian society. Some scholars have contributed to the subject by compiling illuminating case studies of individual prostitutes.<sup>12</sup>

Scholars of women's history and the history of gender have done much to expand knowledge of the identities and experiences of early modern women and we can use their research as a framework in order to better understand the social and economic constraints faced by women working as prostitutes.<sup>13</sup> Hughes (2012: 2–3) has explained the differences between women's history and the history of gender: 'Where women's history focuses on the nature, roles and experiences of women in the past, gender history attempts to make gendered definitions of identity and gender hierarchies central elements in all historical problems and periods.' One of the major strengths of gender history is that it considers what it means to be male as well as female, and regards the relationships between the genders as key to unlocking our understanding of societies. In this book, we endeavour not to view female prostitutes in isolation: we will examine them in relation to their interactions with men as well as other women, with their clients, facilitators, punishers and other men in their communities who might judge or make use of them.

In Chapter 4, in the first stage of our corpus-based analysis, we will show that there was a large variety of seventeenth-century nicknames for women who worked as prostitutes. This ambiguity in contemporary language increases the difficulty for scholars seeking to establish, for example, the numbers of prostitutes working in England during a certain period. At a time when even walking unaccompanied at night could lead to a woman being locked up in

Bridewell, it is often unclear whether women were selling sex commercially, were engaged in adulterous affairs or had simply annoyed the wrong person. Historians researching the practice of prostitution and the lives of prostitutes living in medieval and early modern England have not eschewed exploring diachronic change in concepts and terminology. The importance of recognizing the changing meanings of vocabulary in historical studies was advanced in the 1950s by the German historian Reinhart Koselleck, who was paramount in shaping the field of *Begriffsgeschichte*, usually translated as conceptual history. Quentin Skinner, a historian associated with the historiographical movement known as the Cambridge School, is also linked to the advance of conceptual history. Believing that speech, rather than the written word, is the primary linguistic model, Skinner emphasized that context is fundamental to the understanding of historical texts and that words must be studied in terms of how they were understood by people living at the time a particular text was produced.<sup>14</sup> Skinner's own studies of the changing concepts of the state and liberty have proved influential though his beliefs have also received criticism.

Social historians have been influenced by this 'linguistic turn' of history and are increasingly producing studies which, at their core, address what concepts people living in the past had in mind when they used certain words; it is now considered essential to resist applying concepts and terminology familiar to our own time without investigating whether these were conceived of in the period of study, and if so, in what ways. Wrightson (1991), for instance, in his exploration of the concept of social class in early modern societies, has influenced the work of Hitchcock (2012), who analyses the language used by authority figures in Warwickshire in the sixty years after 1670, and Shephard (2008), who examines how poor people described their own financial status during appearances as witnesses in court cases in the early modern period.

Tadmor (2001) was one of the very first scholars of early modern English history to investigate linguistic concepts by means of corpus methods. She showed how eighteenth-century language relating to the family, including words such as *mother*, *son* and *sister*, contained meanings specific to the period. Her second monograph, *The Social Universe of the English Bible* (2010), also explored word meaning. Withington (2013), mentioned in Chapter 1, has examined the semantics of *peace*, while research into the changing meaning of *commonwealth* as a 'keyword in a conceptual field' has been undertaken by an interdisciplinary group of scholars (Knights 2010). Within scholarship specifically relating to medieval and early modern prostitution, historians have discussed the contemporary meanings and implications of such terms as *nightwalker*, *harlot*,

*bawd*, *prostitute* and *whore* but, other than an engaging paper by linguists Nevala and Hintikka (2009), no scholar has analysed these terms using the full apparatus of corpus linguistics, most notably collocation.

Many historical investigations into early modern prostitution are based upon archival research, mostly of secular and church court reports. Bridewell records of the seventeenth century refer to harlots, vagrant nightwalkers, lewd women and whores. Paul Griffiths (1998: 212–38) has undertaken a diachronic study of the term *nightwalker* in early modern England. He explains that the term was fluid – used by different people, in different places and to mean different things. Before the seventeenth century, *nightwalker* tended to be used as an umbrella term to refer to suspicious people who were out of doors after dusk. Nightwalkers might be accused of being involved in disreputable activity but they were just as likely to be prostitutes' male clients, as they were the women themselves. However, Griffiths claims that, in the seventeenth century, the meaning of the term changed in metropolitan moral discourses. In London, it was increasingly appropriated by people targeting sexual immorality and, in the prosecutions of the Bridewell, was almost exclusively used to refer to females.<sup>15</sup> Griffiths believes that this reflects the increasing scrutiny of female sexual identities in the period. However, outside of the capital, it was still men who were more likely to be prosecuted for nightwalking and they were accused of an array of disorderly and antisocial behaviour, including instigating riots, intimidating neighbours and stealing animals or crops.

Karras (1996: 11–12), in research on medieval Britain, has commented that writers did not carefully define the terms they used and that the law of the time 'often assumed a general understanding'. For instance, the term *meretrix*, the most frequently used Latin term to be translated as prostitute, was not always used to mean a woman involved in commercial exchange; it had a number of meanings, including a woman who had a large number of sexual partners.<sup>16</sup> In other words, in medieval times, there was a fusion between the concepts of a woman who accepted money in return for sex and a woman who was judged to be sexually promiscuous. However, these concepts were also conceived separately as medieval people were aware that transactional sex took place.

McSheffrey (2006: 176–7), also looking at sexual reputation in the medieval period, has argued that a man deemed guilty of inappropriate behaviour might be referred to as a *harlot*. Both men and women could be called a *bawd* but only men were accused of being *strumpetmongers* or *whoremongers*. She argues the Anglo-French term *putour*, the male form for whore of *putayne*, was used in the fifteenth century to suggest a man who was sexually licentious or who facilitated

prostitution. This term only appears a handful of times in the seventeenth-century section of the EEBO corpus and all of these mentions reproduce the same snippet of text, defining a *putour* as a ‘man-bawd or woman-bawd, common Hazarders, Contector, Maintainer of Quarrels, Champertours of Embracers of Inquests, or other common Mildoers.’<sup>17</sup> As we will argue in Chapters 5 and 6, by the early modern period, both *bawd* and *harlot* tended to be used as feminine terms. Greene (1592: 3) declared that a harlot is one ‘whose quiver is open to every arrow, who likes all that have fat purses, and loves none that are destitute of pence’, which suggests that harlots are female and that a transactional element is included in their sexually transgressive behaviour.

Other historians have isolated the terms *prostitute* and *whore* for comment; as Chapters 5 and 6 will show, the use and versatility of these terms by seventeenth-century writers has perhaps been underestimated by historians. Rosenthal (2006: 2, 25) finds little distinction between the uses of the terms *prostitute* and *whore* in the Restoration period – both terms consistently referred to females. Amster (2007: xi) has commented that *prostitute* was in use by the late sixteenth century to describe a woman who engaged in transgressive sexual activity, usually for money, but observes that the word appears in verb form only in the contemporary texts included in her collection. Turner (2002: xiv, 21) appears to suggest this process was reversed, noting that both *whore* and *prostitute* mutated into verbs from nouns. We will explore whether terms meaning *prostitute* appeared in noun or verb form in seventeenth-century texts in Chapter 6.

It appears that the intermeshing of perceptions of promiscuous women with those who charged for sexual intercourse recognized by Karras (see above) in medieval England continued well into the early modern period. Henderson (1999: 180) has written that in the late seventeenth or early eighteenth centuries, the term *prostitution* was not in common usage; nor did any other word exist that pertained to sexual activity of an exclusively commercial nature. He adds that if a woman was described as being a *whore*, she was being accused of extramarital sexual activity but not necessarily of accepting payment for sex. He cites Mandeville’s *Modest Defence of Publick Stews* of 1724, which argued that prostitutes did not participate in sexual relations in order to satisfy uncontrollable lusts but were motivated by economic necessity, as the first delineation of ‘public’ and ‘private’ whoring in print. Rosenthal (2006: 4) agrees that seventeenth-century writers did not view prostitution as a form of work unless the tone of their work was comic or ironic.

It does appear that the insult *whore* was used as a convenient weapon against any woman who had provoked the ire of an acquaintance. Nash (1994: xv) contends, very simply, that “‘whore’ was used to describe any woman not liked”<sup>18</sup> and Turner (2002: 5) refers to the term as a ‘fighting word’. Allegations of whoredom were a particularly useful means of publicly shaming women who were believed to have transgressed the conventions of respectable society. Such infringements were not restricted to commercial prostitution but included females who harboured pregnant single women in safe, albeit frequently insalubrious, houses, those who acted as a look-out during illicit sexual activity and those who were suspected of promiscuity. Hughes (2012: 22) has also described how accusations of whoredom, alongside those of cuckoldry, effeminacy and sodomy, were particularly useful weapons in the mid-seventeenth century against a backdrop of immense religious and political conflict. Freist (1995: 469, 474) has discussed how the phrase *whore of Babylon*, a popular insult directed towards the Catholic Church from the time of the Reformation, was borrowed by nonconformists attacking the Anglican High Church. She notes that terms such as *whore*, *gossip* or *whoremaster* were employed by both men and women to discredit political enemies during the Civil War and gained their power through the subordinate social status of women.

Women fought against sexual slurs. In 1633 70 per cent of the consistory court’s cases dealt with slander and defamation. Sharpe (1980: 15, 17) has shown that the use of the word *whore* in abuse constituted the basis for most litigation by women and that, among the lower orders in particular, there was great concern for the maintenance of a good sexual reputation. Gowing (1993: 2–4, 15), researching defamation cases in the consistory court in London, agrees that women’s sexualities were central to this kind of litigation, often provoked by the accusation *whore*. Gowing argues that the term might be voiced as an introduction to a further series of insults or was incorporated as part of a more detailed condemnation of a woman’s behaviour. Men were not accused of being whores; instead, they were insulted with words, such as *bawd*, *whoremaster* or *cuckold*, which related to the sexual behaviour of the women in their lives, or were targeted with the more general terms of *rogue* or *knave*. Gowing claims that the term *whore* ‘does not carry the financial implications of prostitution’, but does cite a number of cases where women accused of whoredom were thought to have received goods or money as a reward for sexual favours and also acknowledges that married men who socialized with such women were perceived to have threatened the economic well-being of their own household. In Chapter 5, Section 5.4.9 we will look more closely at the form of insults that contained

the word *whore* to ascertain if such verbal attacks were usually directed towards women who had engaged in transgressive but non-transactional sex. We will also explore in Chapters 5 and 6 whether the word *whore* in general did, or did not, denote a woman who has sex for money.

Chapter 5, Section 5.4.6 explores the meaning of the phrase *common whore* which has been identified by Mowry (2004: 6) as a specific term meaning prostitute. Henderson (1999: 180) agrees that the use of *common whore* ‘narrowed the field somewhat’ but argues that it was just as likely to be used to mean sexual immorality as it was to refer to commercial sex. He adds that *common whoring* was also used to describe the activity of male clients of prostitutes. Fouassier-Tate (2014: 79) has observed that the ‘obsessive recurrence of the word “common”’ evoked both the notion that a woman was socially inferior and that she was shared by many. Turner (2002) has explored the friction between the early modern binary categorization of a woman as either chaste or whorish, and the different ways in which women involved in the sale of sex were conceived. A kept mistress, for instance, was not viewed with the same level of disdain as the common whore who operated from a back alley. The notion that early modern prostitutes might be arranged in a hierarchical social structure, with the women who could demand the highest fees at the top, will be explored later in this chapter.

## 2.2 The regulation and punishment of prostitutes

Organized prostitution was introduced to England with the opening of whorehouses and bagnios in Roman times. In later times, Gropecuntlane, an Anglo-Saxon street name that was frequently to be found in the centre of English towns and cities, suggested the presence of prostitutes throughout the small kingdoms. The name described an area inhabited by prostitutes who had resorted to making a presumably meagre living by allowing clients to grope beneath their skirts.<sup>19</sup>

In the medieval period, official attitudes concerning the regulation of prostitution were inconsistent and this was due, in part, to the contradictory behaviour of the Christian Church in relation to the practice of commercial sex. The church had established a stronghold on morality by the ninth and tenth centuries and had formulated a rigorous definition of what constituted acceptable sexual activity, teaching that the prostitute was a reprobate who was forbidden burial in consecrated ground. However, leading ecclesiasts showed a

resigned acceptance of the trade from its earliest years. St Augustine believed that prostitution was morally wrong but viewed it as a necessary evil: 'If you do away with harlots, the world will be convulsed with lust.'<sup>20</sup> Likewise, in the thirteenth century St Thomas Aquinas compared prostitution with a sewer in a palace, albeit applying questionable logic: 'Take away the sewer and you will fill the palace with pollution. ... Take away prostitutes from the world and you will fill it with sodomy.'<sup>21</sup> He furthermore argued that it was not immoral for the authorities to profit from prostitution as they could put the money to good use. Prostitution was usually prohibited in English towns but it seems that this was a half-hearted attempt to pay lip service to church teachings. Regular fines of brothel-keepers amounted to licensing fees and were fixed at a manageable rate.<sup>22</sup>

Indeed, members of the early church proved to be willing accomplices in the business of prostitution. The most notable example of ecclesiastical involvement with prostitution is the Southwark brothels known as stews, legally operating under the jurisdiction of the bishops of Winchester from the early twelfth century.<sup>23</sup> By the mid-fourteenth century, the Bankside brothels, upstream from the bridge and running along the foreshore, had become so notorious that the whole neighbourhood had achieved the nickname 'Le Stuwes'.<sup>24</sup> Gangs of criminals operated alongside the prostitutes, frequently taking field trips to the city and sneaking back to Southwark with their ill-gotten gains. Unsurprisingly, the mayor of London had petitioned for jurisdiction over Southwark for many years. Pearson (1949: 112–13) notes that prostitutes operating in Southwark were known as *Winchester Geese*.<sup>25</sup>

In medieval times, the official stance on brothels oscillated depending on the views of individual monarchs but even those kings who favoured a sterner approach and attempted to outlaw prostitution and banish those involved in the sex trade were not able to curb the practice. In 1393 a city ordinance illustrated the authorities' willingness to tolerate the presence of brothels in Cock's Lane (now known as Cock Lane) in Smithfield as well as the liberty of the Bishop in Southwark. A manuscript of regulations of the Southwark stews based on the ordinances passed by Parliament in 1162 but dating from the fifteenth century has been reproduced by both Karras (1989) and Post (1977); the former has modernized the English text of the ordinances. These regulations provide a great deal of information about how the stews were managed and give some indication of official attitudes towards brothels and the women who worked in them. Like many of the laws governing prostitution in other European countries, the fifteenth-century ordinances show that prostitutes were restricted to certain areas and banned from wearing certain clothing.<sup>26</sup>



Henry VIII was arguably the most determined of all the English monarchs to stamp out prostitution and, during his reign, something resembling a state of war raged between city authorities and whorehouses. In 1513, probably concerned about military unrest, the king ordered that any woman caught selling her body to a soldier would be branded on the face with a hot iron.<sup>27</sup> In 1519, partly because of the vociferous outcry from respectable inhabitants who were weary of Southwark's grubby reputation, Cardinal Wolsey ordered a thorough search of London and its suburbs for unemployed men or loose women. Wunderli has written of the increased drive in the 1520s, particularly in 1520, 1523 and 1526, to prosecute pimps and prostitutes. The reforming zeal and harsh punishments of this time may account for the decline in the numbers of pimps and prostitutes who were charged around the turn of the sixteenth century.<sup>28</sup>

Towards the end of his reign, in 1546, Henry VIII officially overturned the legality of the Southwark and Cock's Lane stews. The 1546 legislation was ostensibly aimed at reducing instances of crime and disorder and many historians have suggested that the closure of the public brothels was aimed at preventing the spread of syphilis. Increasingly staunch religious condemnation of prostitution was becoming more influential.<sup>29</sup> In the mid-sixteenth century a number of mayors pursued personal campaigns against prostitution. John Cotes, the mayor in 1542, ducked prostitutes in the Thames. Seven years later, the first Protestant mayor, Rowland Hill, punished many offenders by carting (a shame punishment entailing transporting someone through the streets in a cart), including, unusually, some male citizens of high social standing. Hill was also one of the founding members of the Bridewell which is discussed below. The introduction of the Bridewells demonstrates how the punishment of immorality was no longer believed to be solely the remit of the ecclesiastical authorities.<sup>30</sup>

Although the legislation put in place during the reign of Henry VIII meant that it became unwise to manage a brothel openly, the suburb of Southwark retained its notorious reputation. Thomas Nashe described some of the colourful tricks employed by brothel-keepers to evade the law: 'back-doores, to come in and out vndiscouered. Slyding windowes also, and trappe-bordes in floars, to hyde whores behind and vnder, with false couterfet panes in walls, to be opened and shut like a wicket.'<sup>31</sup> The Cardinal's Cap and the Bell, both mentioned by the historian John Stow, survived into the time of Shakespeare.<sup>32</sup> A number of contemporary observers, including Thomas Nashe and John Taylor, believed that the entire metropolitan area had suffered as a result of the legislation. Bawds and prostitutes, finding it easier to operate more discreetly in places such as alehouses and taverns, were now scattered across the city.<sup>33</sup>

Henry VIII died in 1547 and his child successor, Edward VI, reopened the Southwark brothels in 1550. At this time, Southwark was finally incorporated into the City of London and the authorities immediately attempted to curb its excesses. Around this time, the Bridewell, a former palace on the banks of the Fleet River, was given its charter as a house of correction and orphanage. The mayor and his officials were granted the authority to search suspected houses of disrepute in London and Middlesex and commit 'all ydell ruffians and taverne haunters, vagabonds, beggars and all persons of yll name and fame'.<sup>34</sup>

The church court had been made officially responsible for punishing sexual misdemeanours in 1286 but when these crimes threatened public order, the secular courts, presided over by Justices of the Peace, might also become involved. Most Protestant countries no longer adhered to the authority of the old courts of the bishops after the Reformation but, as Wiesner-Hanks (2000: 70) has discussed, England continued to use church courts when Henry VIII broke with the papacy. They now operated under the ultimate authority of the monarch rather than the pope and were presided over by the same judges because most of the clergy had embraced Protestantism at the same time as the king. The boundary between ecclesiastical and secular jurisdictions was never fixed. Prosecutions for soliciting and prostitution were usually considered the business of the church courts but if a woman was accused of keeping a bawdy house or nightwalking, she stood a greater chance of being indicted in a secular court.

The legislation of 1576 ordered the introduction of houses of correction in all counties. By the early seventeenth century, a network of houses of correction had been established and these were referred to by the generic name of Bridewell. Although the houses of correction were sometimes used as conventional prisons where defendants could await a formal trial, the majority of their inhabitants were convicted by summary justice. Justices of the Peace tended to favour summary convictions because they constituted an inexpensive and flexible means of justice and ensured that the offender would genuinely suffer. The houses of correction were stinking, damp and filthy institutions. Inmates lived a savage and miserable existence and many died during their incarceration, some as a result of malnutrition. By the reign of Queen Mary, inmates were required to work in the Bridewells, such as labouring on the treadmill or beating out hemp with wooden mallets. By the mid-seventeenth century, they might even receive a salary for this work. Indeed the Bridewell aimed to reform its inmates by means of discipline, including physical beatings and hard labour.<sup>35</sup>

Offenders were committed for an indefinite time but most were discharged within a week. However, those prisoners who were not able to pay the substantial

discharge fee usually had their sentences extended by around a fortnight. Justices ordered that around half of convicts be whipped immediately rather than await an order from sessions. Ironically, many prisoners preferred this as it increased their chances of a rapid release; those who had to wait for sessions to meet and determine their fate stayed on average for six weeks in Westminster where sessions met four times each year.<sup>36</sup> In his eighteen-part monthly publication, *The London Spy* (1698–1700), Edward Ward, who had visited both the men's and women's quarters of the London Bridewell, decried the manner in which half-naked women were publicly whipped.<sup>37</sup> The whipping post in this Bridewell was elevated in 1699 in order to give spectators a better view.<sup>38</sup> It was not unheard of for an offender to be thrown into a house of correction and forgotten about. Disease was rife to the extent that inmates, parish officials and even some Justices petitioned for an early release for many pleading ill health.

Life in the houses of correction was particularly dire for women. Rather than protecting the inmates, guards were usually brutal and expected bribes in order to provide basic provisions while fellow inmates – sentenced for all manner of crimes – posed an additional danger. Men and women were not kept apart and women were sometimes forced to sell their bodies in order to feed themselves. Some women who were awaiting trial for a more serious crime actively sought sex in the hope that a pregnancy would spare them the death penalty. How likely was it that a suspected prostitute would end up in the houses of correction? Although prostitution was an ecclesiastical offence and not strictly punishable by Justices of the Peace, the boundaries were sufficiently fluid to allow many women suspected of prostitution to be thrown into the houses of correction as 'idle and disorderly' persons who threatened public order. Robert Shoemaker has compiled statistics of commitments to the houses of correction between the years 1660 and 1725. He has found that 16 per cent of commitments referred to specific sexual offences such as soliciting, frequenting bawdy houses and picking up men or women. Moreover, those people accused of 'lewd' behaviour or 'nightwalking', 90 per cent of whom were female, could expect much longer sentences.<sup>39</sup> Occasionally, when the streets of London started to empty of prostitutes, men would raid the Bridewells and free women in order to allow them to return to their work.<sup>40</sup>

Shoemaker has shown that women were twice as likely to be committed to the houses of correction as men, particularly if they were unmarried. Judgements were made on flimsy and circumstantial evidence. *Nightwalkers* were people, according to John Bond, who were 'suspected, or of ill fame, such as sleep in the day time, and in the night season haunt houses suspected for bawdry, or use

suspicious company'.<sup>41</sup> Although many women apprehended as nightwalkers, some repeatedly, were operating as prostitutes, any unaccompanied woman out of doors during the night could be charged under the term. A woman might be arrested because a constable believed that she was dressed like a prostitute or because she was walking in a street favoured by prostitutes. Others were apprehended simply because they had a history of prostitution. Shoemaker has commented on the double standard of justice as women charged with sexual offences, including adultery, tended to be committed to the houses of correction while men were usually bound over by recognizance or completely let off.<sup>42</sup>

The Bridewell was regarded by moral commentators as a 'godly foundation' and its governors were characterized as 'men of much worship and wisdom'.<sup>43</sup> There is evidence that some people regarded the houses of correction as reform schools where unruly apprentices and ungrateful children could learn to better their behaviour. Some parents committed their own children. By the early seventeenth century, the Bridewells had essentially abandoned their attempts to reform inmates and became just another set of prisons.<sup>44</sup> There is little to suggest that women committed for sexual offences were at all likely to change their ways. Shoemaker has shown that the rates of re-offending were high: in 1700, 35 per cent of the 422 women convicted of prostitution were recidivists, including 5 per cent who were convicted five or more times in that year.<sup>45</sup> The social stigma at having endured a sentence in the houses of correction was considerable and it meant that many convicts found it very difficult to obtain legitimate work on release. Some prostitutes became further indebted to controlling bawds as the latter had paid their discharge fees.<sup>46</sup> Prostitutes who were also charged with a more serious crime, such as theft or murder, would most likely spend time in prison, such as the Clink, located beside the Bishop of Winchester's Palace, or the Fleet, on the eastern bank of the Fleet River.

If a convicted prostitute managed to avoid a spell in prison or the houses of correction, it was unlikely that she would be released without any penalty. In 1553, the year of her accession, Queen Mary ordered that prostitutes and brothel-keepers should be punished in cages, pillories and stocks. These instruments of justice were installed in every London parish and became objects of fear for ordinary people. Prostitutes might also be carted as an additional social deterrent and, during this period, the punishment became considerably more perilous. Crowds would surround the cart banging metal bowls and, in some cases, the offender would be flogged. Carting could result in death: in 1599 Philip Gawdy reported: 'Ther is heavy newes out of Brydewell. For Mall Neuberry and Mall Digby haue bene carted three dayes together, when one of

them had lyke to haue bene killd with a blowe of a stone vppon her forehede.<sup>47</sup> Prostitutes were also sometimes grouped together with women who disturbed the peace under the category of scolds. A frequent punishment for this type of offence was the cucking-stool to which the unfortunate woman would be tied, either outside her home or at the place where she allegedly committed her crime. Ducking-stools seem to have fulfilled a similar purpose but usually involved the victim being dipped into the nearest pond or river until she struggled for breath.

Elizabeth I, perhaps in an attempt to appear her father's natural successor, reinstated legislation initially put in place during the reign of Henry VIII, including closing the stews. In 1565, the authorities ordered that re-offending whores who had already spent time in Bridewell should have their heads shaved, be whipped and imprisoned.<sup>48</sup> In the winter of 1576–7, a purge of spectacular proportions, provoked by an upsurge in moralism, resulted in a barrage of charges against workers in London's brothels, although the numbers of male clients prosecuted dropped proportionately at this time.<sup>49</sup> Philip Stubbes is often referred to by historians as an Elizabethan moralizer who condemned a generous array of sins. In *Anatomie of Abuses* of 1583, he denounced card playing, playhouses and gambling but he believed that prostitution was the greatest social problem of all. His proposed solution was unswervingly harsh: after wistfully concluding that execution was unacceptable, he advised that any woman caught selling her body should be 'cauterized and seared with a hote iron on the cheeke, forehead' or some other visible body part to ensure she be distinguishable from chaste women.<sup>50</sup> However, as Griffiths (1993: 54) argues, the existence of prostitution and its four major components – pimps, bawds, whores and clients – had earned its place in Elizabethan London and induced a 'certain fatalism' in the authorities.<sup>51</sup>

### 2.3 Official attitudes towards prostitutes in the seventeenth century

In the late sixteenth century, prostitution on the Bankside was more readily available, indiscreet and outrageous than ever. During the reign of Henry VIII, the King's Bailiff of Southwark, William Baseley, had bought the lease of the Manor House of Paris Gardens and obtained royal permission to convert it into a gambling club. Elizabeth I presented the Manor and its land to her cousin Henry Carey, Lord Hunsdon, who proceeded to grant licences to stew holders.

The Paris Gardens brothels tended to be classier establishments, catering for wealthy clients and offering dice and refreshments as well as sex. In 1603 the Manor House was taken over by the incorrigible Donna Britannica Hollandia who was arguably the most infamous bawd of her time.<sup>52</sup>

After the Reformation, citizens were not only expected to adhere to the official brand of Christianity but to maintain the highest standards of Christian behaviour: to be sober, chaste, compliant and conscientious. Some historians have identified the period from the middle of the sixteenth century to the Civil War in the 1640s as being particularly hazardous for women because a general obsession with social disorder meant they were under enormous pressure to conform to accepted gender roles.<sup>53</sup> The growing influence of the Puritans from the beginning of the seventeenth century resulted in a massive spurt in prosecutions for sexual impropriety. In 1604, at the beginning of James' reign, a revised canon law obliged church-wardens to report to the courts 'all persons who offended their brethren by committing adultery, whoredom, incest or any other uncleanness or wickedness in life'. Most accusations are thought to have been made on the basis of rumour or gossip. In the larger towns, it is likely that prostitutes were among those accused of fornication. The convicted 'fornicator' was forced to walk in the Sunday parish procession, wearing a white sheet and carrying a candle.<sup>54</sup>

This punishment was an example of the problem faced by the church courts. They were not permitted to fine or imprison offenders and moral reformers were frustrated by their 'soft' stance towards vice. Shame punishments were deemed to be ineffective and threats such as excommunication, while possibly instilling fear in some members of the community, were disregarded by hardened pimps and prostitutes. It has been argued that because ordinary people were accustomed to being socially disciplined by means of a variety of tribunals and attended court hearings regularly, they found the experience less galling than we would today.<sup>55</sup> In 1646 the church courts were temporarily suspended, partly because it was believed that the secular authorities were more capable and inclined to counter sin.

Draconian views held by earlier commentators such as Stubbes had clearly influenced the highest authorities: James I, who had a reputation for heavy drinking and immoderate spending but no personal interest in whores, revived the practice of branding incorrigible rogues with a large letter R and considered extending this punishment to prostitutes.<sup>56</sup> In an attempt to impede a marked increase in the numbers of brothels in the capital, James approved of a series of mass raids of bawdy houses in the 1620s. On one day in August 1620 nineteen

women were convicted of keeping brothels at Middlesex Quarter Sessions; sixteen of them operated in the Cowcross area. The raids proved ineffective in the long term.

An ordinance of December 1622, containing a special clause aimed at preventing beadles and headboroughs conniving with prostitutes in return for bribes, suggests official corruption was a serious problem. If those charged with curbing the activity on the frontlines were complicit in its continuation, then commercial sex was simply unstoppable. A second ordinance of January 1624 stated that no person charged 'of Bawdrys and Whordome' would be released on bail unless two sureties came forward. It further listed the places that were targeted for raids: Cowcross, Cock's Lane, Smithfield, St John Street, Clerkenwell, Norton Folgate, Shoreditch, Wapping, Whitechapel, Petticoat Lane, Charterhouse, Bloomsbury and Ratcliffe. Burford (1973: 218–20) draws attention to the absence of the Bankside stews and Old Paris Garden in both ordinances: although these continued to flourish in the reign of Elizabeth, it seems that many London inhabitants now preferred to spend their free hours on the other side of the river.

Charles I, noted for his elevated morals, came to the throne in 1625 and, like the monarchs that had ruled before him, attempted to address the widespread 'open bawdry' that dominated much of the city. In a directive of July in the year of his accession, he requested that the Lord Chief Justice take the matter in hand. Despite harassment at the hands of the Lord Chief, the brothels and their workers continued to burgeon and, in many cases, to prosper.

Griffiths (2008: 202–3, 217, 225) has written of a change in crime prosecutions after 1600 – although more women were prosecuted overall, the numbers charged with prostitution slumped, with the lowest ratio of sexual immorality crimes in Bridewell's overall caseload coming between 1648 and 1652. Londoners were keen for their city to be reformed, but many inhabitants believed that it would be more effective to target vagrants and improve shoddy buildings than it would be to round up prostitutes. Indeed, Griffiths shows that vagrancy prosecutions soared in the same period. Bridewell itself suffered from a poor public image and some citizens found its moral crusade against sexual transgression to be pointless and intrusive. Moreover, its unique ability to 'police, prosecute, and punish in a single sweep' was not supported by any parliamentary act which gave its critics further ammunition.

In 1641, on the eve of the Civil War, there was a softening in legislation affecting English prostitutes. Parliament decreed that prostitution itself was no longer a crime but only a 'Nuisance if committed in public'. The penalty for

prostitutes usually consisted of a whipping and a short stay in prison. However, this relaxation was abandoned during the Civil War wars and attitudes hardened to a greater extent in the wake of the eventual Puritan triumph. The Civil War was a challenging time to live through. Hughes (2012: 4–5) has described how society was dislocated and divided: taxation spiralled, military requisitioning was common and families were often expected to provide board and lodgings for soldiers. Whores were often to be found wherever there was a dense concentration of soldiers, and some prostitutes certainly made a living following the Royalist army which was headquartered at Oxford. Charles I made clear his contempt for the common whore, loathing the ‘general licentiousness, profanity, drunkenness, and whoremongering of the army’. Those prostitutes who disguised themselves as men were threatened with ‘the Severest punishment which Law and our displeasure shall inflict.’<sup>57</sup> In his satirical pamphlet of 1642, *St Hillaries Teares*, John Taylor described how prostitutes were suffering a slump in trade: ‘If you step aside into Coven-Garden, long Acre, and Drury-Lane, where those Doves of Venus, those Birds of youth, and beauty, (the wanton Ladies) doe build their nests, you shall finde them in such a dump of amazement, to see the hopes of their trading frustrate.’ These ladies could no longer afford to have their hairs styled, their clothes had been pawned and they were living on a modest diet of cheese and onions.<sup>58</sup>

In 1647 the Long Parliament, dominated by Puritans, finally closed the Southwark stews. Three years later, the Rump Parliament passed an act bringing all types of sexual immorality under the jurisdiction of the lay courts. Incest and two consecutive prosecutions for adultery were henceforth punishable by death. Those found guilty of running a brothel were to be whipped, branded on the forehead with the letter B and sentenced to three years of imprisonment. If they continued to trade in the same business after their release, they would forfeit their lives.<sup>59</sup> The period of Cromwell’s leadership proved difficult for prostitutes living in the capital. Many brothels were taken over by merchants and reopened as warehouses while alehouses and taverns, regular haunts for whores, were placed under strict regulations and frequently raided. Popular entertainments such as plays, gambling and bear-baiting were also prohibited; actors who continued to perform were publicly whipped and anyone caught attending a play was heavily fined. In 1655, in what was probably a sign of the times, the Hope Theatre, which was often used for animal-baiting entertainment, was pulled down possibly to make way for tenements, and the seven bears who appeared there on Tuesdays and Thursdays were shot. The theatre was subsequently rebuilt as the Beargarden in the 1660s and was visited by Pepys.



This policy of no toleration was a striking and authentic attempt to wipe out immorality and it was most likely effective in the short term. No records of the numbers of brothel-keepers apprehended exist. Many whores probably returned to the capital after the Royalist defeat, but, according to pamphlets of the time, it seems that trade was less than buoyant. Linanne writes that, after 1652, many whores chose to operate from coffee houses rather than taverns.<sup>60</sup> *A Dialogue Between Mistris Macquerella, a Suburb Bawd, Mistris Scolopendra, a Noted Curtezan, and Mr. Pimpinello, an Usher ... Bemoaning the Act against Adultery and Fornication*, published by Edward Crouch in 1650 complains of the lack of customers and the constant need for vigilance against official raids. The characters express a wistful nostalgia for the old days:

When citizens each day  
Were glad to pray and pay:  
Most eager for to sease  
Upon the French disease ...<sup>61</sup>

The constant Puritan endeavour for high standards of public morality tended to irritate those people who were not directly involved in its conception. The Interregnum legislation against actors only succeeded in forcing theatre troops out of the capital proper and into surrounding villages such as Knightsbridge.<sup>62</sup> Certainly, the fact that the act of 1650 was not renewed with the Restoration of the monarchy suggests that it was either unpopular or ineffective. The only woman to be executed for a sexual offence was Ursula Powell who was hung in August 1652 for whoredom (in this case adultery rather than prostitution) with an unknown man after the birth of her baby. Her death prompted public outrage. Indeed, despite Puritan determination to flush out and eliminate sexual immorality, jurors of the period became increasingly reluctant to treat female defendants harshly. In the last decades of the seventeenth century, Justices were far less likely to impose shaming punishments, such as the pillory, stocks or a public whipping, on convicted offenders. At the beginning of the eighteenth century they turned instead to sentences involving spells in the houses of correction where the whipping would, at least, take place in private. In 1660 the powers of the church courts were reinstated but they were never able to regain their former authority.<sup>63</sup>

Arnold (2011: 90) writes that when Charles II arrived in London to claim his throne in May 1660, 'the city erupted into one giant party which was to last the rest of his life'. The king did show a certain willingness to increase state control over the movement of prostitutes. From 1388 onwards, the English state had

issued a series of laws which attempted to prevent vagrancy and begging, and by the sixteenth century, sturdy (able-bodied) beggars, vagabonds and rogues were widely condemned in literary discourse. Prostitutes were perceived as belonging to this group of social outcasts. Thomas Harman, a landowner who lived near Dartford, published a popular pamphlet in 1573 identifying twenty-three different kinds of vagabonds he claimed to have personally encountered. They included those who feigned illness, disability; insanity or calamity in order to obtain alms (palliards or clapperdudgeons; counterfeit cranks; Abraham men; dommerars; demanders for glimmer; whipjacks or freshwater mariners). Autem morts were female adulterers who travelled with thieving children and doxies were women who teamed up with a succession of male rogues. Whether or not Harman was embellishing the existence of these very specific categories of vagabonds, it is likely that there were wandering prostitutes, perhaps known as doxies in some cases, whom both local and central authorities were keen to restrain.<sup>64</sup> On 9 May 1661 Charles II invoked the earlier poor laws by issuing *A Proclamation, For the due Observation of certain Statutes made for the Suppressing of Rogues, Vagabonds, Beggars, and other idle disorderly persons, and for Relief of the Poore*, which gave the authorities the power to return the offending vagrant back to their parish of legal settlement.<sup>65</sup> This act affected the movement of a wide variety of people who were considered to live on the outskirts of society, including prostitutes, Irish travellers and others whose major crime was their destitution.<sup>66</sup>

One wonders if Charles II connected the prostitutes detained under the 1661 act as idle disorderly persons with the ones to whom he made personal visits. It was well known that the king enjoyed spending time in whorehouses; one of his many mistresses, Louise de Querouaille, accused him of infecting her with syphilis. Charles had his own personal pimp, William Chiffinch, who presented him with a fresh supply of girls from brothels and playhouses. This atmosphere of liberation could not fail to spread into the public domain. Playhouses were reopened, often offering bawdy productions and bawds found, to their delight, that business was once again booming. The Restoration years saw the establishment of a wealthy merchant class in London, which resided in well-decorated houses and had their domestic needs met by small crews of servants. This new estate sought escapism in London's traditional entertainments of plays, gambling and whoring and was responsible, particularly after the destruction wrought by the Great Fire of London in 1666, for the relocation of many whorehouses to fashionable Covent Garden in the west of the city.<sup>67</sup>

The succession of James II, who preferred a more sedate atmosphere at court, did little to reverse the public taste for bawdry. His establishment of the fortnight-long May Fair, off Piccadilly, was partly an attempt to divert trade away from Bartholomew Fair which had acquired a reputation for satisfying its visitors' baser urges. However, debauchery followed money and, soon enough, the May Fair became almost as famous for its newly arrived prostitute population.<sup>68</sup> Yet the Restoration period can be viewed as a cultural blip where a nation in flux experimented with greater freedoms and openness. It did not last. In the last decades of the seventeenth century a new kind of punishment awaited prostitutes who had been convicted of theft or some other meagre charge: transportation, a fate that was dreaded by some more than even the gallows.<sup>69</sup> A vagrancy act of 1597 had authorized the transportation of offenders overseas and by the early 1620s several hundred young people had been banished abroad.<sup>70</sup> Most of those transported, usually to the American colonies, were not given a choice in the matter. Transportation had already been used as a weapon against prostitution in 1656 when several hundred whores were sent to the West Indies in order to boost the region's birth rate. In 1697 the English government was so keen to rid itself of troublesome women languishing in London jails, that it paid £8 a head to get fifty women shipped to the West Indies. Descriptions of the arduous journey across the seas were widespread to the extent that in 1789 four women, horrified by the prospect of the journey, shocked the country by choosing death over transportation.<sup>71</sup> Many women who suffered transportation had been prostitutes and during the journey they were expected to service the male crew free of charge; if they were lucky, such an arrangement would entail better food and accommodation. The remainder of the passengers were forced to spend the vast majority of their time below decks where thirst and air deprivation often proved fatal.

## 2.4 Policing seventeenth-century London

Neither the ecclesiastical or temporal courts had much success in prosecuting prostitutes: 'pitiful police methods and abject poverty ensured a constant supply of willing women on the streets, so that, like Hydra's heads, for every prostitute put out of business several more appeared in her place' (Wunderli 1981: 98). The term 'policing' should be used with care with regard to this period: the policing that did exist was rudimentary, amateur, volunteer and reluctant.<sup>72</sup> By the sixteenth century, London had developed a number of

regulatory institutions. Their effectiveness depended on the zeal and ability of the agents involved in the running of the local government. In 1614, for instance, the Lord Mayor wrote to the Lord Chamberlain emphasizing his commitment to cleaning up London. He did not shirk from getting his hands dirty, visiting brothels personally in disguise and arranging for their prostitutes to be whipped, carted or banished.<sup>73</sup>

After 1285, a public watch system was installed in London, whereby every householder, under the leadership of a constable and beadle, was required to take part in a watch. Only the beadle himself held a salaried and uniformed position. Constables were unpaid, part-time officers who had been elected to their position by the wardmote and the Court of the Common Council. In addition to supervising the watch, they were expected to arrest vagrants and oversee curfews. Twenty-six wards employed the services of a beadle and were subdivided into precincts. In London, there were 242 precincts served by constables who were charged with maintaining the peace.<sup>74</sup>

Male heads of households became increasingly unwilling to take part in the nightwatch voluntarily: the growth of London's population meant that the night-time streets became a more threatening environment for an untrained volunteer. From the late sixteenth century, paid deputies often replaced the amateur nightwatchmen, although their reputation for efficacy was scarcely any better.<sup>75</sup> It was mainly the watchmen who interacted on a nightly basis with prostitutes. Part of their duties entailed arresting whores but it was common knowledge that many preferred the warmth and security of their sentry boxes. Many of the watchmen were old and infirm and too afraid to arrest a woman in case her friends defended her; others preferred to drink and chat with prostitutes rather than control their behaviour. If a watchman did persist in an arrest, he was responsible for pressing the charge the following morning in court. This was not necessarily a straightforward procedure and it was not unheard of for a woman charged with disorderly behaviour to sue for wrongful arrest.<sup>76</sup>

At any rate, it tended to only be the loud and outrageous women on the streets who got the attention of the watchmen: those who were able to conduct their business more discreetly indoors were able to avoid prosecution and, in some cases, quietly amass a considerable fortune.<sup>77</sup> Archer has described how some keepers were protected by high-ranking or wealthy patrons; brothels were popular among members of the nobility or foreign merchant community. 'These patterns of clientage meant that Bridewell's investigations often stirred muddy waters near the centre of power.'<sup>78</sup> Nashe declared that prostitution had 'great patrons' and 'almost none are punished for it that have a good purse.'<sup>79</sup> Beadles

and constables continued to receive terrible press in the seventeenth century. It was widely believed that they accepted bribes in order to turn a blind eye to the presence of a brothel, sometimes in the shape of free intercourse with a prostitute.

## 2.5 The road to prostitution

In the seventeenth century, the majority of prostitutes were probably not tricked or enticed into entering the trade. By far the largest contributing factor in refreshing the ranks of prostitutes was poverty. To understand the challenges facing seventeenth-century women, we must be aware of demographic and economic changes occurring much earlier, from the late fifteenth century, which meant that poverty became a more visible and threatening phenomenon in England.<sup>80</sup> Throughout the sixteenth century, poorer members of society struggled against an array of challenges to their economic well-being which was compounded by restrictions on traditional types of poor relief.

Unemployment became a major problem in areas of the country that did not develop as major manufacturing centres: the south-east and parts of the Midlands prospered while the economy of the north, particularly the north-east, stalled. Larger landowners began to employ more efficient methods of agricultural production which often required fewer workers. The expansion in agricultural commercialization meant that very small landholders struggled to turn a profit and many found their land absorbed into the estates of nobles or more successful yeomen. Indeed, small landowners, particularly those who lived in open-field villages, faced intolerable pressures throughout the sixteenth century. Beier (1985: 21) has given the example of the Cambridge village of Chippenham where the percentage of landless householders increased from 3.5 per cent in 1279 to 32 per cent in 1544. By 1712, 63 per cent of Chippenham villagers were landless. As smaller farmers decreased in number, wage labourers were less able to fall back on working on their parents' farms in times of hardship.

The practice of enclosing open-field areas, which frequently meant the loss of common grazing rights, reached its height in the 1490s but persisted throughout the seventeenth century and beyond. The effect of enclosure upon small farmers and landless wage labourers has been the subject of much historical debate but it can safely be identified as a leading factor in population displacement and the cause of very real hardship, particularly for those without land.<sup>81</sup> The practice of enclosing was connected to the realization by many landowners that they could

make an easier profit by turning their land over to pastoral farming. Up to around 1520, farms and sometimes entire villages were given over to pasture, frequently by means of engrossing whereby a number of farms were amalgamated.<sup>82</sup> Sheep breeding, which northern farmers in particular turned to, required far less labour than arable agriculture and found an easy profit by means of the country's expanding cloth industries. Meanwhile, those who worked in the cloth industries had a greater degree of job security in general but were still vulnerable to long economic slumps between 1550 and 1640.<sup>83</sup>

Harvest failure was common and increased pressure on people who were already facing severe economic challenge and food riots were not out of the ordinary. Harvest failures that took place in consecutive years, such as the four years in the middle of the sixteenth century and those between 1586 and 1588, led to mass starvation. Historians have identified inflation as a further cause of economic hardship. Over a course of nearly 150 years, prices rose by an average of around 4 per cent each year.<sup>84</sup>

Another significant contributing factor to widespread poverty was population increase throughout the century. There is debate over when this demographic change began: some historians argue that renewed growth started in the 1450s but others believe the population remained stagnant until the 1520s.<sup>85</sup> Beier (1985: 19) has calculated that from the mid-sixteenth to the mid-seventeenth century, the population grew from around 2.7 to 5.2 million. It is certainly safe to say that the sixteenth century saw a significant increase in population size and that this growth was not accompanied by a similar expansion in job opportunities. Instances of plague, albeit actually reducing the population, compounded the predicaments of poorer members of society. Plague was a recurrent problem from its first appearance in England in 1348 and during the sixteenth century many areas of the country were afflicted. Urban areas were often more badly affected: Norwich, for instance, lost at least one third of its population in the two years between 1579 and 1580 and continued to experience an outbreak every five years until the end of the century. The death of a primary breadwinner was often disastrous for the remaining members of his family. Moreover, in times of plague, employers were able to flee to safer areas, taking opportunities for work with them. Rural inhabitants were by no means immune to the effects of plague: even if their village remained free from infection, farmers were unwilling to travel into affected areas to sell surplus produce which reduced their incomes.<sup>86</sup>

Leonard (1900: 16) defined this period as a time of transition: manufacture was expanding in the beginning of the sixteenth century but feudalism was ebbing away and many long-established occupations started to disappear.

Large-scale peasant migration to urban areas meant that many cities, particularly London, became crowded with unskilled male labourers seeking work. The women and children who accompanied them fared no better. Between 1600 and 1700, the suburbs north of the Thames increased by 76 per cent. McMullen (1984: 20–1) has provided some occupation statistics for the period around the turn of the seventeenth century: approximately 90 per cent of London's inhabitants were 'artisans and urban poor' and 13 per cent of these were working as domestic servants. Refused entry to guilds and crafts, women found it almost impossible to acquire permanent employment. London, along with other cities in Western Europe, is estimated to have had between one-quarter and one-half of its inhabitants surviving on incomes below subsistence level. McMullen (*ibid.*) estimates that around one in every seven people was unemployed or unemployable.

In 1536 an act entitled *For Punishment of Sturdy Vagabonds and Beggars* for the first time ordered that voluntary alms were to be collected and distributed each week by collectors of the poor in every parish specifically for the relief of the indigent poor. Begging was outlawed entirely and casual almsgiving was also largely prohibited. Instead, the charitably inclined were invited to place donations in a common box. This rudimentary form of state welfare developed throughout the century, culminating in the introduction of the Old Poor Law in 1597 which underwent minor revisions in 1601. Wealthier inhabitants of each parish were charged a compulsory tax which was collected by parish administrators and directly distributed to the local poor. However, people without the means to feed themselves or their families were not necessarily eligible to receive poor relief. The very nature of the system, in which payments were collected and distributed at a local level, meant that decisions regarding eligibility directly affected the economic well-being of individual parishes. The overseer of the poor, the official who determined which members of the community should receive relief, was expected to make his decisions with great care. Meanwhile, throughout the seventeenth-century, reformers such as Samuel Hartlib, Thomas Firmin and John Bellers were troubled by the increasing cost of national welfare and proposed schemes for making poor people pay for themselves. People living in poverty were divided into the deserving and undeserving, and this categorization effectively governed who would receive outdoor relief, such as food, clothes and money, and who would get nothing. Deserving cases included some elderly people, orphans and those burdened with young children, particularly if they had been widowed. However, not all elderly people, nor those with disabilities, nor those in poor health, were automatically pensioned: every

person was expected to work in any capacity possible for as long as they could manage or until they died.

Single childless women were not considered deserving of poor relief: they were expected to be kept by their families or to support themselves by earning a wage, preferably by working for a member of their own family or as a servant. Unmarried women were not permitted to manage businesses of their own or to work independently, although a handful of female entrepreneurs did thrive in this period. In research on the position of single women in early modern England, Froide (2005: 35–7, 218) has concluded that they led exceptionally difficult lives. In terms of education, the most that poorer girls could hope to receive was a few years of training in an informal classroom setting and those who went on to find work usually earned a third to a half of men's wages.<sup>87</sup> Those women who were unable to support themselves – and many full-time wages of the period did not cover basic living expenses – were enrolled to labour on urban stocks of flax, hemp and wool. Younger girls whose parents were unable to feed them were customarily forced into apprenticeships in sewing, spinning and housewifery. In official documents, a number of female parishioners were recorded as making a living through prostitution or 'in bawdry'.<sup>88</sup> Indeed, local officials occasionally suggested that pauper women work as whores or beg locally to prevent them becoming a burden on the parish. In 1751, officers refused to provide relief to Mary Johnson of Bishopgate, declaring that she 'might go a whoring or a thieving' to support herself. In this way, many women were pushed into the trade for want of any alternative.<sup>89</sup> It appears then that it was sometimes more socially acceptable to work as a prostitute than to claim poor relief.

The 1690s, in particular, was a decade of intense economic deprivation, with immigrants competing for insecure and scanty employment opportunities, bread prices being unusually high and there being a disruption to trade as a result of war. Consecutive years of harvest failure between 1695 and 1698 contributed to growing numbers of destitute poor and fuelled the belief in the necessity of establishing workhouses.<sup>90</sup> The political upheaval of the mid-seventeenth century had a dire effect upon families: as Fraser (1984: 193) has argued participation in warfare meant that women and children were robbed of their natural protector and also their economic provision. After the Civil War, there was a noticeable excess of women over men in the population of England and many young gentlewomen struggled to find a suitable marriage.<sup>91</sup> A high-class whore with whom Dunton's (1696, October edition) narrator converses explains that as a result of the wars and of nature producing more girls than boys, 'It is impossible that there should be a Man for every Woman, and



therefore of necessity some of our unhappy Sex must be exposed to languish for want of such Conversation as Nature hath fitted them for.' Cavalier daughters, in particular, suffered as a result of reduced social status. The political conflict often compromised their education, which was primarily designed for the acquisition of social accomplishments designed to improve their marriageability. Moreover, they now faced stiff competition from middle-class girls offering fat dowries.<sup>92</sup>

Those gentlewomen who were unable to find a husband may have found safe harbour in a respectable position such as a lady's companion or a housekeeper. However, others were less willing to swallow their pride, preferring the option of mistress to a wealthy guardian.<sup>93</sup> Keeping a mistress was not only regarded as entirely normal for rich men, both married and single, it was thought to be appropriate behaviour: Francis North, Lord Guildford, earned disapproval among his peers for failing to 'keep a whore'.<sup>94</sup> Moreover, some gentlewomen who had the potential to secure an offer of matrimony much preferred the financial and social independence life as a courtesan made possible. Fraser (1984: 398) has argued that even young girls who managed to find suitable marriages had low expectations for happiness. In 1695 Lady Russell wrote a revealing letter to her teenage daughter, advising her that 'life is a continual labour'.

Of course, the position of a mistress was by no means secure. If a kept woman had not managed to accrue financial independence by the time her beauty was perceived to have faded, she might find herself in grim circumstances.<sup>95</sup> To succeed as a courtesan, a woman usually required a certain level of education and gentility. The most successful of these women did not simply rely on their looks: as Linnane (2003: 125) has described, by the eighteenth century, courtesans were regarded as the supermodels of their day and offered their wit, knowledge and elegance along with sexual favours. There were well-known cases of women from distinctly lowly backgrounds acquiring wealthy beaux, the most famous being Nell Gwyn, but, for the most part, a woman from the ranks of the masses was unlikely to attain such a status.

Fortunately for the mistress, it was expected that an admirer would shower his lover with more clothes, food and entertainment than she could possibly require as a symbol of his own economic prowess. Just as a courtesan differed from a regular prostitute in terms of being able to select her clients with a view to their financial viability, she also took a distinct approach with regard to payment and might have accepted presents in lieu of or in addition to hard cash. As Rubenhold (2005: 47–8) notes, to the dismay of disapproving moralists, many professional ladies lived in a manner that rivalled the lavishness of their lovers' wives: they wore beautiful clothes and jewels, rode in private coaches and

lodged in some of the most fashionable and beautifully decorated residences in the country. Moreover, if their admirer was unmarried, they stood a decent chance of eventually becoming his wife. Some lowly born mistresses adopted their lovers' surnames rather than use their own unexceptional names. As shown above, the rudimentary welfare system in seventeenth-century England guaranteed no automatic right to poor relief. It was common, therefore, for mistresses to be financially supporting a whole host of needy relatives and friends; as a result, they were often just as trapped in their situations as their married contemporaries.<sup>96</sup>

It was sensible for these ladies to maintain flirtations with numerous men of their acquaintance – some had affairs with several men at the same time – in case their primary beau became bored and looked for another conquest. Nell Gwyn's fame outlived her but a number of lesser known ladies frequently featured in contemporary news articles and everyday gossip. Fraser (1984: 399–410) has documented the lives of Catherine Sedley, an heiress who chose the life of a mistress, and the beautiful Jane Myddelton, daughter of Sir Robert Needham, who despite an early marriage, enjoyed dalliances with several wealthy men.

Some kept women were fortunate in their choice of protector (or, probably more accurately, their protector's choice of them), but others found their position as a mistress to be fragile and unhappy. Henry Sidney, created Earl of Romney in 1694, demonstrated particular brutality when dealing with his mistresses. Although he never married and was a man of substantial means, Sidney sired numerous children and did not feel it necessary to provide for any of them. His longstanding mistress, Grace Worthley, was a widow of severely reduced circumstances, her husband having died during the second Dutch War in 1665. After twenty years of being his lover, Grace was abandoned by Henry Sidney in favour of the glamorous Diana, Countess of Oxford, and, in one instance, conducted away from the doorway of his residence by a constable and beadle. A more shocking example of mistreatment is the case of Ann Bell who was raped and slashed with a penknife by her wealthy keeper. He broke her hands before dumping her in an upmarket brothel in Covent Garden.<sup>97</sup>

Rubenholt (2005: 91–2, 95, 99, 196) has written of another danger to which high-class ladies of pleasure were susceptible: although it was arguably wise for them to possess no real regard for their lover, their hearts were frequently engaged elsewhere. The subject of their affection was often incapable of providing for them financially being, for instance, a younger son, half-pay officer or poor clergyman who was himself reliant on snagging a wealthy bride. It was very much in the best interests of a mistress to make absolutely sure that any additional

affairs were conducted with the utmost secrecy. One woman, Charlotte Hayes, made a fatal mistake by flaunting a second relationship in public: on the death of her wealthy keeper, she received nothing more than five pounds in his will for the purpose of purchasing a mourning ring or other token of remembrance.

No doubt predating the earliest mentions of the phenomenon in the early sixteenth century, children – commonly between the ages of seven and fourteen – were sold into prostitution by poverty-stricken parents right up until the nineteenth century. Other children, abandoned by their parents or orphaned without an inheritance, had little choice but sell their bodies in order to survive. Former peasants, who had migrated to cities in order to find work, had little use for children who would previously have been able to provide a useful service as a farmhand. Stone (1981: 216–31) believed that most parents in this period paid little attention to their children and held no real affection for them. He argued that although there is no simple linear progress in the parent–child relationship, it being necessary to trace change country by country, and class by class, it was not until the eighteenth century that upper-class families became loving and nurturing. The lot of poorer children did not improve until the nineteenth century as a result of improvements to the welfare system, schooling and a healthier economic climate. Stone's work kick-started scholarly interest in early modern families but his views on parental lack of affection have since been contradicted many times. Laurence (1994: 90–2), for instance, believes that by looking at the diaries, personal papers and letter of parents, it is evident that they loved their children as much as we do today. She argues that high infant mortality made parents more inclined to expect and accept death, but that the loss of a child remained a devastating blow to a family.

The vast majority of prostitutes were born into peasant or working-class families. Although some girls entered the trade in order to escape parental alcoholism or abuse, others viewed the money they made from commercial sex as the only means of keeping their families together. Having often shared one small room with their parents, they were already in possession of a thorough sexual education even if they managed to maintain their virginity into their teenage years. 'Their demoralization was a gradual process. Most likely they would begin by giving away that which they would later be instructed to sell.'<sup>98</sup>

In 1275 the age of consent for heterosexual acts was set at twelve and, in the latter half of the sixteenth century, this was lowered to the age of ten.<sup>99</sup> The demand for child prostitutes was inflamed by clients' belief that intercourse with a virgin was the only real safe form of sex or that, if they were already infected, they could free themselves of venereal disease by passing it on to a clean body.

The procuress whose own words supposedly informed *The Devil and the Strumpet: Or, the Old Bawd Tormented* (1700) receives violent visitations from the Devil as a result of her ‘having been a Leud, Notorious, and Wicked Liver for many Years, and Bawd to above 20 young Women, to their utter Ruin’. By selling the maidenheads of these women, the bawd – named as Jane Freeman – raised such ‘vast Contribution-Money’ she was able to establish her own brothel. In the 1675 pamphlet *The Ape-Gentlewoman, or the Character of an Exchange-wench*, clients flock to a brothel after hearing a fresh face is due to arrive, ‘as to an East-India Sale, and bid as fast for her Apprentices Maiden-head as if it were to be sold by Inch of Candle’. Once the auction has ended, the bawd instructs her new girl to deliver linen to the chamber of the highest bidder and, once there, comply with his desires.

Of course, once a new girl was known to have been deflowered, her price dramatically decreased. However, the maidenheads of many prostitutes were sold several times over. The subject of John Taylor’s *A Bawd* (1635: 18) sells one maidenhead three or four hundred times. Procuring a girl who was a virgin was extremely difficult since most girls willing to work as prostitutes had already experienced sexual relations. In many instances, bawds satisfied themselves with providing girls they could convincingly pass off as not having been sexually active. There were several tricks employed to restore the appearance of virginity. Charlotte Hayes told the sexually eccentric MP George Selwyn, ‘that a Maidenhead was as easily made as a pudding’. From the earliest times, astringents were made of boiled up concoctions of herbs such as myrtle and plantain and applied by women to tighten their vaginal walls. More theatrical deceptions included the use of a small bladder of animal blood to mimic the effect of a broken hymen or the employment of a sponge soaked in blood.<sup>100</sup>

## 2.6 Prostitutes and sexuality in early modern England

In the early modern period, women were not only regarded as being weaker, less intelligent and easily corruptible, but as having much stronger sexual passions than men. Once a woman had experienced sexual intercourse, it was believed that she was forever lusting carnal pleasure and was vulnerable to surrendering herself to immoralities such as marital infidelity. Widows were particularly regarded as being controlled by an unpleasant and unbridled sexuality. In their study of oral culture, Mendelson and Crawford (1998: 62) show how women were stereotypically presented as less than fully human: ‘Instead of being obedient,

pious, chaste, and silent as they ought, women were said to be insubordinate, hypocritical, lustful, and garrulous by nature.’

The existence of prostitutes appeared to validate this belief. As Amster (2007: ix–x) has commented, it was perceived that a woman became a prostitute because of who she was, not because she was pursuing a living. Prostitution was construed not so much as a profession but as an identity. The common belief was that prostitutes had chosen their work because they simply enjoyed having a great deal of sex with a multitude of partners. *A Catalogue of Filts* (Anon. 1691: 2) lists the details of ‘Mrs. Sarah H – th, a very black Woman, who has several times attempted to turn honest, but her itching flesh won’t let her, and so is forced to continue a Crack in her own defence’. Such beliefs concerning women’s uncontrollable sexual appetites gave would-be rapists all the justification they needed. Their victims, often accused of giving consent and crying rape as an afterthought, suffered additional social exclusion, while some had little choice but to start charging for something that had initially been taken from them by force. Edgar (1632) asserted that a married woman, or *feme covert*, had no legal rights distinct from those of her husband. The treatise should not be accepted as a true rendition of early seventeenth-century law but it does indicate how rape was regarded at this time to be a theft against the man who ‘owned’ the victim.<sup>101</sup> It is possible that recent scholarship has placed too much emphasis on the social importance of female chastity, but there is no doubt that an individual woman’s sexual history was deemed to be of great interest to her community and, once a woman had suffered a ‘fall’, her place in society usually altered for the worst.<sup>102</sup> Moreover, the daughters of women judged guilty of sexual impropriety often inherited the social stigma that surrounded their mothers.<sup>103</sup>

Of course, it was not only acts of rape that could permanently savage a woman’s reputation. Some women consented to sex in the genuine belief they would later marry their partner. The story of the seduced girl, taken to London and abandoned by her lover, was not purely invented. Girls were sometimes duped into absconding to the capital with soldiers, perhaps driven by intolerable circumstances of poverty or abuse at home, but had their hopes of a respectable marriage dashed upon arrival. Saunders Welch, the former grocer who served as high constable for Holborn in the 1740s, described how brothel-keepers employed agents to stalk wagons and carriages for the arrival of fresh faces. Procurers also frequented register offices that displayed advertisements for domestic servants in the hopes of tricking new female immigrants into accepting bogus positions; it only became clear to them that their new home was a brothel once they had settled in. Marie Donnolly recounted being tricked initially by a

porter and then being lured to a keeper based in Clerkenwell by a gentleman from Norfolk.<sup>104</sup>

Married women were sometimes persuaded to engage in prostitution in order to acquire financial independence from a disagreeable or sexually unresponsive husband, and in some cases prostitution was the family business with the husband not only being aware of his wife's activities but actively seeking clients for her. A pamphlet of 1608 detailed the exploits of Margaret Ferneseed who was burnt to death for murdering her husband. Ferneseed admitted procuring married women who were dissatisfied with their home lives, persuading them that 'they were not beloved of their husbands', or that 'their husbands maintained them not sufficiently to expresse their beauty'. Of course, once these women had entertained their first client, Ferneseed could force them to continue by threatening to expose their infidelity to their husbands.<sup>105</sup>

Foreign women were another rich source for procurers. From the fifteenth century onwards, the nicknames of some prostitutes suggest distant origins: 'French Jane'; 'Nan a Parys'; 'Spanish Nelle'; 'Christine that cam from Romanyn'; 'Joan Greke'; and 'Anne Ireland'. Occasionally, procurers were instructed by a wealthy client to target a specific girl. Rubenhold (2005: 58–62, 183–6, 263) recounts the case of a woman who went by the name of Charlotte Spencer, a pretty daughter of a Newcastle coal merchant with no dowry of which to speak, who caught the eye of Lord Spencer. Dispatched to Newcastle by Spencer on the payment of five hundred pounds, Jack Harris, a pimp, wooed Charlotte and persuaded her to elope with him to London. After their fake marriage ceremony, Charlotte and Harris retired to their bedchamber and proceeded to make love in the dark. In the morning, Charlotte was horrified to find that she had relinquished her virginity to Spencer rather than Harris and that, moreover, she had blindly walked into a new life of prostitution. Charlotte's experiences could have been even worse – there are several well-known cases in the period of low-born women being held against their will as a prelude to being forced into prostitution.<sup>106</sup>

Despite a significant proportion of women being forced or tricked into prostitution, the majority of prostitutes probably entered the trade with some level of willingness in order to make a living. Some women, finding themselves between jobs, used prostitution to bridge the gap in employment. Others who worked found it impossible to survive purely on their wages so occasionally sold their bodies on the side. Disability was not necessarily a bar to supporting oneself in this way; Wunderli (1981: 100) gives two examples of fifteenth-century prostitutes whose physical disabilities limited their means of providing for themselves: 'Johanna with the one hand' and 'Bette cum yoldeforte [clubfoot]'.

In short, while there were doubtless some career prostitutes, the picture painted by Griffiths (1993) is plausible – prostitution was a ‘highly volatile milieu’: women entered and left the trade frequently and regularly moved lodging houses. Some women gave up prostitution on marriage; others were forced to stop working temporarily as a result of a baby that was carried to term. The life of Mary Knight, documented on the *London Lives* website, is typical. Mary was born in 1685 in Yarmouth and raised by her uncle, moving to London in the early 1700s where she worked as an apprentice to a fish woman. After seven years, she established her own business in Billingsgate and married a seaman whose profligacy helped reduce her to poverty. She claimed she turned to prostitution to ‘keep herself from starving.’ In October 1705 Mary was sentenced to hard labour for being a ‘lewd person’ and a ‘common nightwalker’ and, the following month, received a similar sentence after first being sent to St Bartholomew’s Hospital to be treated for a severe bout of venereal disease. Mary Knight then disappears from the records for almost a decade: it is possible that she managed to evade the authorities during this period but more likely that she found other means of making a living. In 1715, a woman named Mary Knight, not necessarily the same person, was included on the calendars of prisoners at New Prison and the house of correction in Clerkenwell three times. In each instance, she was ordered to pay a discharge fee of one or two shillings and discharged. This pattern of leniency was discontinued after an accusation of theft in January 1716. Mary, and another woman named Margaret Hopkins, were indicted for stealing nine guineas and fourteen shillings from William Cane, a seaman. Cane claimed that, while under the influence of drink, he agreed to allow Mary to accompany him to his lodgings. Rather than take him home, Mary confessed to leading Cane to the Ship Tavern in Church Lane and, after he had retired to bed, robbing him. Both women claimed to be with child in order to avoid the highest penalty: pregnant women were given a temporary reprieve until their baby was born and, particularly from the Commonwealth period onwards, they often received a general pardon.<sup>107</sup> Mary was executed at Tyburn on 27 January but Margaret, having had her pregnancy confirmed, was spared.<sup>108</sup>

## 2.7 A hierarchy of prostitutes

Most histories which focus on early modern prostitution restrict their study to London, probably because contemporary writers provided very few details about commercial sex outside of the capital.<sup>109</sup> Prostitution did take place throughout

England, however, and is documented accordingly in archival records in areas such as crime, apprenticeships and poor relief. Officials in Norwich, England's second largest city in the period, attempted to close its many brothels in 1668 and 1681 without success. Prostitutes were also identified as working in Leith near Edinburgh and the town of Deal in Kent in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries respectively.<sup>110</sup> It does appear that the experiences of the rural prostitute differed from that of her urban counterpart. The rural prostitute was more likely to operate on a casual and opportunistic basis. She might work primarily as a barmaid in the village alehouse or be a wandering vagrant, soliciting male villagers as she passed through the community following the route of a travelling fair or market. Quaife (1979: 150–3) has discussed how some vagrant females accompanied one man on a journey for weeks at a time, passing themselves off as wives, until they teamed up with another traveller. Other prostitutes were passed between the members of a small group such as the clergy of the diocese. Another type of village whore operated discreetly from her home and accepted payment in the form of work such as milking or harvesting; she was sometimes a widow and, although a source of ready gossip, tended to be tolerated by the authorities.<sup>111</sup>

Some prostitutes working in London did not differ a great deal from their rural counterparts in their scope and methods but others considered themselves to be professional, full-time whores.<sup>112</sup> Perhaps the most obvious disparities in the experiences of prostitutes can be attributed to the category of whore to which a woman belonged. We have already examined the lifestyle of the courtesan who perched precariously at the top of the prostitution rank hierarchy but it is essential to understand the way of life of prostitutes lower down the pecking order: the whore operating from the relative safety of a brothel; those renting a room in a lodging house; and the bottom of the heap streetwalker conducting business out of doors. Very little is known about another type of prostitute, the outwardly respectable woman conducting business on a clandestine basis, perhaps from her own home.

Even contemporaries struggled to differentiate between properties that operated as brothels and those that housed tenant prostitutes who worked independently and this confusion is reflected in official records. Bridewell records have provided historians with a much greater depth of knowledge about prostitutes who worked in bawdy houses than those at the lower end of the market, enabling a clearer picture to emerge of the location of such places, brothel owners and their degree of collaboration with one another, and the involvement of pimps. Literary accounts such as John Dunton's monthly



series, *The Night Walker*, also give a wealth of information on the activities of London prostitutes and suggest, in their descriptions of savvy madams and their comfortable houses of disrepute, an impressive level of organization.

Alongside the well-known courtesans living in fine private dwellings, other women of superior education and high fashion were also available for a high price. Some women discreetly advertised themselves as being in search of a companion but the most sought-after were the 'commonwealth of ladies' who entertained clients for agreed lengths of time, often long term. These consorts were members of a loose society, sometimes meeting to swap knowledge, and often making contact with new customers in converted manor houses or smarter inns in places such as Pall Mall, Hatton Garden and Saint James Street. Many of these high-end prostitutes operated from private dwellings but others rented rooms in luxurious pleasure houses or paid madams in private brothels to introduce them to suitable clients. Having a vested interest in mirroring themselves on ladies of respectable society, these ladies of fashion were careful to avoid haunts frequented by lower-class prostitutes and instead favoured Covent Garden addresses. Their clients were always wealthy and sometimes possessed a political influence that could protect them from any unwanted interest by the authorities. Some women worked in league with a number of hangers-on, such as procurers, male protectors or bullies, and negotiators who spread animated reports of their skills (see Chapter 5, Section 5.4.5 which discusses the near synonymy of the terms *pimp* and *bawd*). High-class prostitutes working on a part-time basis for the more superior establishments have been referred to as 'ape-gentlewomen' but this term does not feature in the EEBO corpus.<sup>113</sup> These women behaved like ladies and, despite exchanging sexual favours for money, preferred not to be classed as professional prostitutes. Meanwhile, *pensionary misses*, a name used in *The Night Walker* and *The Female Fire-Ships* but which does not appear elsewhere in the EEBO corpus, made contact with their customers in affluent areas but were not full-time prostitutes and resided at a distance from the popular soliciting streets.<sup>114</sup>

### 2.7.1 Bawds and bawdy houses

The depiction of bawds in contemporary literature is, to say the least, unflattering. One can almost guarantee that the bawd will be female, haggish and utterly immoral. In *A Bawd*, Taylor describes his subject as having been deserted by whoring before she was willing to leave it and, with an underlying suggestion of

her brutality, taking great pains to style country girls in a manner appropriate for a whorehouse:

She casts and hammers her wenchs into all fashions; she hath them burnished, polish'd, punsh'd and turn'd, and if any of them by a fall, or too much heat bee bruis'd, crack'd, or broken, shee can soder them together againe, and make them marketable.

Taylor highlights the double standard in popular attitudes towards his bawd: she is an object of contempt while drunkards, villains and other wretches are embraced. She does not care for any man but can ingratiate herself with people of all 'nations, degrees, conditions, mysteries and occupations', providing they can pay for her girls' services. Her finest characteristic is her discretion. The Bawd is brimming with friendly toleration and charity because 'her whole trade and course of life is to hide and cover the faults of the greatest offenders.'<sup>115</sup>

The anonymous pamphlet *The Devil and the Strumpet: Or, the Old Bawd Tormented* (Anon. 1700) renders Taylor's musings rather flattering by comparison. This bawd, named Jane Freeman, can no longer make a living as a 'Hackney Jilt' because her clients think her 'not worth throwing their Legs o'er' so takes up the business of deluding 'poor Innocent Creatures, to satisfie the Lust of ungrateful Sinners, almost as bad as her self'. However, because she becomes so physically repellent to her clients, her business fails and she is forced to seek aid from the parish. In her new lodgings, she receives terrifying visits from the Devil himself, who recognizes her as one of his own, which culminate in him beating and hurling her round her chambers. The author provides graphic particulars of the manner and outcomes of the Devil's violence, including a description of the bawd's severe injuries and a lurid aside informing us that the lady lost control of her bladder and bowels in sheer terror.

In reality, female bawds demonstrated remarkable survival skills. They had not only managed to avoid premature death during their years of prostitution, but they had actually managed to carve out a business for themselves in the process. These women did profit from the exploitation of other members of their sex and were unlikely to be bleeding hearts but most of them had no other economic opportunities open to them. Contemporary depictions of bawds becoming so haggish that they are effectively forced to isolate themselves from the rest of society are unconvincing. Most middle-aged Londoners in early modern England were, by our standards, probably physically unappealing but most successful bawds took care over their appearance and were aware that the better they plied their charms, the more money they would make.

As Chapter 3 will show, literary texts often depict bawds as being female – is this an accurate representation? The Southwark regulations governing official brothels banned unmarried women from managing brothels but Karras (1989) has shown in several jurisdictions between 1338 and 1544, between 34 and 59 per cent of individuals, as opposed to couples, accused of keeping illicit brothels were female. She believes these figures may be unreliable because the authorities, working on the assumption that men would be more able to pay a fine, were more likely to blame the husband for an operation run by a couple or even by a married woman alone. The role of brothel-keeper did hold a great deal of financial promise for women, who were largely unable to participate in other businesses, but many of these women were only managing houses owned by men.<sup>116</sup> Keepers often managed more than one property and had no other means of making a living: Mistress Blunt, for instance, kept six bawdy houses, collecting twenty shillings in weekly rent from each establishment.<sup>117</sup>

By the end of the sixteenth century, pimps, themselves not tied to one particular establishment, frequently moved prostitutes around different bawdy houses to cater for demand. The prostitutes who found their way into the Bridewell records are usually referred to as ‘laying’ at a brothel and paying a weekly rent. The brothel-keeper would take a percentage of their earnings, often half of what they made, but sometimes seizing their entire income. In Head (1675) we are told of the ‘continual feuds’ between whores and bawds over the division of the ‘wages of iniquity’. In reality, both bawds and pimps made money ‘beyond the wildest dreams of day-labourers’. Griffiths (2008: 150–2) cites the example of a manager of a brothel near Aldgate making £100 in a period of three years. Pimps, meanwhile, could charge up to four shillings for their services. Some establishments made no use of pimps but others relied on them to secure clients of generous means. While many seventeenth-century procurers were female, the vast majority of pimps were male.<sup>118</sup>

One of the most important duties of a brothel-keeper was the protection of their workers from prosecution, mostly accomplished by blackmailing and bribing constables and beadles. Many of the higher-end brothels enjoyed immunity before the law by means of protection by powerful figures at court. In addition to recruiting new workers and managing difficult clients, bawds would also have a host of more humdrum responsibilities such as overseeing cleaning and washing, maintaining their property and ensuring the medical health of their girls. Many bawds enjoyed a profitable sideline in disposing of stolen property.<sup>119</sup>

Pimps offered a number of services alongside procuring clients, including protecting prostitutes from aggressive clients, delivering bribes to the constables and, if necessary, the magistrates, and finding a so-called surgeon to cure or, at best, to hide symptoms of venereal disease. The latter might also offer abortion services. The level of expertise of any medical practitioner from this time would compel a present-day patient to run for their lives: at best, the doctor was a conman who disappeared soon after taking his fee; at worst, he would try to do the job he was paid to do. Some independent prostitutes viewed their pimp with something akin to affection; it was not unheard of for a professional lady to be married to her agent or to regard him with something verging upon daughterly love. In a period when the rape or assault of a prostitute held absolutely no interest for the authorities, it is little wonder that some of these women viewed their pimps with a higher regard than they perhaps deserved.<sup>120</sup>

While pimps were, for the most part, unpleasant people who frequently ended their days violently or riddled with disease, like the women they so readily exploited, they were themselves victims of a brutal struggle for bare existence.<sup>121</sup> They probably did not relish showing deference to wealthy clients. Regularly fleecing clients in much the same manner as they did the girls appearing on their lists, as Rubenhold (2005: 55, 67–8) has described, was a perk. Pimps frequently double-booked prostitutes, having a girl excuse herself in order to satisfy a second client, while the first awaited her return in a nearby room.<sup>122</sup>

Harlots residing in lodging houses faced challenges. They may have had the freedom to refuse threatening clients but they also had little protection from people who wanted to profit from their labour. As Burford and Wotton (1995: 60–1) explain, these women were overcharged by the legitimate businessmen who supplied their food while their pimp, procurer and the beadle took a great deal of the rest. The situation of those residing in a bordello was hardly better. Although shelter and food were, for as long as the prostitute was able to work, guaranteed and the girls living together may have enjoyed some sense of camaraderie, they were obliged to accept every client, no matter how violent or repulsive and had little choice over which services they were prepared to perform or the length of their working hours. Their most defining loss was that of their personal freedom: successful bawds were constantly suspicious and imposed strict restrictions on the movements of their workers.<sup>123</sup> Once a woman had accepted a placement in a brothel, it was difficult breaking free – frequently, even the clothes on her back were owned by the bawd.

New girls entering the trade were supplied with instructions concerning keeping their beds and their bodies clean and fragrant, dressing stylishly and learning how to conduct a conversation in an informed and well-mannered way. Bawds also carefully tutored their girls in how to give as much sexual satisfaction in as little time as possible and how to extricate themselves from difficult situations that might escalate into violence. The girls working for Charlotte Hayes received tutoring on carrying themselves in a ladylike style and were given music and dancing instruction. They were not, however, taught how to read and write. The intention was to maximize their profitability rather than endow them with genuine social power. The existence of lavish houses such as those managed by Elizabeth Holland and Mrs Cresswell overshadows the plethora of lower-end brothels that were a prominent feature in several city wards. At the lower end of the market, madams prepared country girls for their first encounter by washing their face with brandy and applying a heavy application of make-up. Even the girls based in establishments that were little more than hovels were taught how to encourage their customers to spend as much as possible, whether this be for additional sexual services or on other amenities such as alcohol, food, gambling or music. Linanne (2003: 19) estimates that in some of the poorer houses, the girls would be expected to entertain over fifty men per night.

At first bawdy houses were hardly distinguishable from ordinary residences but, during Tudor times, they came to resemble inns. On the ground floor there would be rooms for receiving clients, for dining, and perhaps a gaming area with kitchens at the rear. The first floor rooms contained the bedrooms. The constant requirement to be obliging along with long, irregular hours must have taken its toll on the residents of bawdy houses. Living alongside a bawdy house keeper meant prostitutes stood little chance of avoiding harsh discipline and were often obliged to hand over virtually all of their earnings.<sup>124</sup>

Many bawds became famous in their own right. Let us consider one here, by way of illustration, Damaris – sometimes known as Damarose – Page. Her fluctuations in fortune illustrate how chequered the life of a bawd could be. Samuel Pepys, who often visited her premises on the Ratcliffe Highway, referred to Page as ‘the great bawd of the seamen’. She also ran a more elite establishment in Rosemary Lane for naval officers. Born in Stepney in 1620 as Damaris Addesell, Page seems to have spent her twenties as a prostitute and then a midwife and brothel-keeper. Like many women offering midwifery services, Page also operated as an abortionist. In October 1640 it appears that she married a man called William Baker and then, in April 1653, she married

James Dryer at St Mary Magdalen Church. On 7 October 1655 Page was charged with two offences: first, for bigamously entering a marriage contract with Dryer and, secondly, for attempting to abort the unborn child of a woman named Eleanor Pooley by thrusting a fork into the unfortunate woman's stomach. The bigamy charges were dropped on the grounds that her marriage to Baker had not been sanctified but the charges relating to Pooley could not be shaken off so easily. Page, no doubt being aware she could successfully avoid the death sentence by revealing that she was pregnant, pleaded guilty to manslaughter and was sentenced to be hanged. She then revealed her pregnancy. After a panel of matrons confirmed that she was indeed pregnant, her sentence was reduced to three years' imprisonment in Newgate, during which time she gave birth to a stillborn baby. On her release she returned to brothel-keeping, specializing in the importation and sale of expensive Venetian prostitutes who supposedly were greatly skilled in their love-making. Page died a very wealthy woman in her house in Ratcliffe in September 1669.<sup>125</sup>

### 2.7.2 The wandering whores

Unlike the higher-end prostitutes who tended to establish longer-term relations with a limited number of select men, 'wandering whores' serviced as many men as possible and received payment solely for their participation in the sexual act. Some of these women plied their trade at fairs while others stationed themselves at the docks awaiting the arrival of willing sailors. Cock's Lane, by a law of 1393, had been the only place north of the Thames where brothels could operate with legal immunity. It was located in Smithfield and this entire suburb continued to remain an important hub for lower-end prostitution. Notorious streets included Turnbull (now Turnmill) Street<sup>126</sup> in Clerkenwell and nearby Picket-Hatch (east of Charterhouse on Goswell Road), St John's Street and Chick Lane. In the pamphlet *Heavens Speedie Hue and Cry sent after Lust and Murther*, Goodcole (1635: 14) provides a list of locations where 'harlots watch their opportunities to surprise men'. The first place to be identified is West Smithfield and Duck-lane end. He also names 'Smithfield Pond, and the sheepe-pens'; 'by the little conduit in Cheapside in the evening'; 'St Antholins Church<sup>127</sup> when the shops are shut up' and the 'Cloath-faire'.<sup>128</sup>

The 'Cloath-faire' referred to Bartholomew Fair, held annually over three days in late August within the precincts of the Priory at West Smithfield. Burford and Wotton (1995: 54) note that the prostitutes working for one famous bawd, Mrs Cresswell, became known as *Bartholomew Babies*. A Bartholomew baby

was a carved wooden doll, usually without arms or joints, sold at Bartholomew Fair. The phrase only appears sixteen times in the EEBO corpus (see Chapter 4, Table 4.1) so does not appear to have gained widespread usage at the time. Moreover, although some of the concordances do appear to refer to women who are dressed in gaudy clothing, there is nothing in particular to suggest that these women are engaged in transactional sex. This conclusion is supported by the definition provided by the *Chambers Slang Dictionary*, which restricts itself to the dolls sold at the fair and ‘one dressed in tawdry finery’.

Smithfield was not the only place known for its high levels of prostitution. The characters Thomas Tell-troth and Plaine-Dealing in *Wonderfull Strange Newes from Woodstreet Counter* refer to a number of locations, including ‘Covent-Garden, Groaping Lane, Tower Hill, St Giles in the fields, Bloomesberry, Drewry Lane, Westminster, [and] Bankeside’.<sup>129</sup> *The Merrie-Mans Resolution* of 1640 provides an excellent insight into London’s red-light districts as its young author travels through them. He begins his journey in the Liberty of St Giles, a notorious slum that was later cut through by New Oxford Street, then bids farewell to Turnbull Street which contained many alleys and was densely packed with tenements reaching as high as four stories. The author passes through Long Acre, Drury Lane and Covent Garden and into ‘Sodom’. The last name did not, of course, appear on maps but it seems likely that it was in the St Giles/Long Acre district.<sup>130</sup> Our guide pauses in ‘Shore Ditch and Moorfeildes’ for refreshments and continues on his way to Ratcliffe Highway, home of Damaris Page, and to Rosemary Street, where the Royal Mint now stands. He then crosses over London Bridge to the bawdy houses of the Bankside and ends his journey back over the Thames, stopping first in ‘Luthner Lane’ and Cherry Garden, before returning to Smithfield.<sup>131</sup>

Baer (2007: 43–4), in research into London’s early modern retail history, has explained how the city’s shopping Exchanges suffered from shady reputations due to their connection with whoring. Indeed, in his expanded survey of London, John Strype (1720: Book 4; ch. 7: 120) tells us that the Middle Exchange, located near the Strand, attained the unfortunate nickname of the ‘Whores-nest’. Shop girls were thought to engage in transactional sex on a casual basis while professional prostitutes advertised themselves in the streets outside the Exchanges.<sup>132</sup>

The whores plying their trade at the lower end of the market often rented cheap rooms in slum lodging houses; these houses were similar to brothels because every room tended to be occupied by a prostitute. The owners of these tenements frequently mistreated their lodgers and demanded a large percentage

of their takings. Some lodging houses also operated as taverns, with the owner taking rent and a percentage of takings from as many prostitutes he could manage to squeeze into spare rooms. Other prostitutes chose to hire a room in a 'night' or 'accommodation' house where they could take their clients for a few minutes or hours. Taking a room on this basis was often cheaper and meant that ladies in the trade did not have to live and work at the same location. Such rooms ranged from well-equipped and comfortable spaces with fashionable Hatton Garden or Pall Mall addresses to the back room of a tavern or coffee house where the business conducted was brief and perfunctory.

McMullan (1987: 125) refers to 'pennyrent whores' who lived in shoddy tenements that housed up to a dozen women at a time. The phrase *pennyrent whore* does not occur at all in EEBO but it does seem a fitting name for these types of prostitutes who often worked as a team, some of them sleeping in parlours and kitchen areas. They would typically make contact with a client on the street or in an alehouse and bring him back to their room in order to complete business. Living arrangements were unstable for such women and they regularly moved accommodation. At the lowest end of the scale were women who not only picked up men on the streets, but also carried out their transactions in courts, alleys and streets. These women might rely on a barn or shed as their only shelter. Dunton's *The Night Walker* makes reference to sexual activity in outside locations, for instance, the author witnessing 'Lustful Assignations' in Cupid's Garden.<sup>133</sup> Many prostitutes who had no easy access to inside space conducted their clients to one of London's parks.

It has been argued that there was greater solidarity among female streetwalkers than those working in brothels but the nature of independent prostitution meant that the former were competing for business against one another. Despite this, it is likely that prostitutes shared a sense of community, particularly when one considers that they were often the subject of condemnation by more outwardly respectable women and had most likely experienced a significant degree of unhappiness at the hands of men. Sometimes women who boarded together for protection and company were members of the same family.<sup>134</sup> Others preferred to live together in order to share expenses, such as rent or even the cost of a carriage, and came to regard one another as family.<sup>135</sup> Women who chose to live in an exclusively female household were objects of suspicion. McMullan (1984: 123) has described instances of young apprentices joining up with more experienced prostitutes in order to learn the trade properly and obtain an introduction to clients alongside a certain degree of protection. Such pairings tended to be known as 'aunt and nieces'; however, it appears that these particular



relationships were rarely based upon genuine affection, the younger partner being regularly replaced by a fresh 'niece' by procurers.

Streetwalkers' slang referred to the *game* or *town* while identifying one another with phrases such as *one of my cousins*; *one of us*; or a member of the *sisterhood*. A distinctive vocabulary that was a mixture of thieves' argot and vulgar slang has been attributed to prostitutes, many of whom were at least familiar with other sections of criminal society. The terms *diving*, *foyling*, and *lifting* were often used by prostitutes to mean pickpocketing and stealing. Customers were nicknamed *rumpers* and *dicks*. Prostitutes themselves enjoyed the use of aliases and often adopted fancy names like Petronella or Juliana. 'Fair Rosamund sugar cunt' was a real-life lower-end prostitute but more expensive whores preferred to title themselves 'Lady'. Mrs Cresswell, for instance, was often lampooned as Lady Cresswell because of her lofty social connections and political aspirations.<sup>136</sup>

How much could a streetwalker hope to make from each transaction? In the 1590s Thomas Nashe described how 'sixe-penny whoredom' was common in the suburbs but gives the figure of half-a-crown (two shillings and sixpence) as the 'sette price of a strumpet's soule'. Ungerer (2003: 165) writes that the greater the sum invested in a brothel, the higher the fee expected by the brothel-keeper. Work-related expenses such as medical fees and fashionable clothing were taken into account. It was easier for a client to haggle over price when faced with a streetwalker with no keeper or pimp to insist on a higher fee. Dunton (1696, October issue) recounted how he successfully persuaded a whore to reduce her price from half-a-crown to a shilling. He was told that, in term time, a particular bawd would hear of nothing less than a crown but at other times, she would accept a shilling. By the 1690s it appears that the standard price remained at around two shillings and sixpence.<sup>137</sup>

It is more difficult to estimate how many prostitutes were operating in London in the seventeenth century, particularly as many of these women were careful to maintain an outwardly respectable façade. Thompson (1979: 57) highlights some figures mentioned in contemporary literature: Part Five of *The Wandring Whore*, published in early 1661, lists 269 common whores. A similar publication, *The Ladies Champion*, meanwhile, estimates 1500 in 1660. In the same year, *The Practical Part of Love* asserts that a comprehensive list of names would cover thirty pages which, as Thompson (*ibid.*) has calculated, would make a total of 3600. The population of London had reached over 350,000 by this time. The magistrate Saunders Welch rather conservatively estimates that, by 1758, over

3000 women were working as prostitutes in London from a rapidly expanding population of about 675,000.<sup>138</sup>

### 2.7.3 Places of assignation: Playhouses, alehouses and coffee houses

During the reign of Henry VIII many members of the nobility chose to downsize their household expenses and residences. A footnote to Thomas Dekker's *The Belman of London* explains that around 1580, 'Great men had the fashion of keeping no house and reducing their households, especially in the country, which led to a decay in hospitality and was a common subject to complaint among the workers because of unemployment.'<sup>139</sup> Rather than entertain at their more moderate living quarters in London, the nobility preferred to seek pleasure outside of the home. Accordingly, brothels, playhouses and taverns all prospered.

Goodcole (1635) lists the places where the prostitute Elizabeth Evans accosted men, in order of importance: playhouses, taverns, inns, alehouses, open streets, fields. This list comprises practically the entirety of the city, but it is significant that playhouses and drinking establishments top the list.

By the late sixteenth century, the London playhouses were a major venue for prostitution. Playwrights such as Thomas Dekker, Thomas Middleton and Robert Greene frequented the stews and their writing provides rich information about the lives of prostitutes, confidence-tricksters, thieves and bawds. Many of the most eminent theatre-owners, including Philip Henslowe and Edward Alleyn, shared ownership of nearby brothels, effectively operating as pimps.<sup>140</sup> The public theatres usually charged a penny entrance fee, which meant that they were a viable entertainment option for most Londoners.<sup>141</sup> John Taylor, the self-proclaimed 'water poet', reported that three or four thousand people were being carried over to watch the plays on the Bankside every day.<sup>142</sup> Audiences did not sit in respectful silence during performances: if they enjoyed a production, they would yell their approval; if not, the unfortunate actors might get hissed at or bombarded with the fruit that was sold as refreshments. The content of the plays was designed to satisfy such a rowdy crowd: Ben Jonson admitted in 1607 that 'now, especially in drama, or, as they term it, stage poetry, nothing but ribaldry, profanation, blasphemy, all license of offence to God and man is practised. ... Foul and unwashed bawdry is now made the food of the scene.'<sup>143</sup> Other audience members had little interest in the production: they came to the playhouse to see or be seen, to socialize and gossip with their friends and, in the case of whores, to pick up clients.

In *The Female Fire-Ships: A Satyr Against Whoring* by Ames (1691a: 8), the connection between playhouses and prostitution is made most explicit:

The *Play-house* is their Place of Traffick, where  
 Nightly they sit, to sell their *Rotten Ware*;  
 Tho' done in silence and without a Cryer,  
 Yet he that bids the most, is still the Buyer;  
 For while he nibbles at her *Am'rous Trap*,  
 She gets the *Mony*, but he gets the *Clap*.

While some actresses were available to those who could afford them, orange sellers – girls who provided refreshments – also acted as intermediaries between whores and clients and were often ready to sell their own bodies for a modest price. The most famous former orange girl was Nell Gwyn, who bore two sons of King Charles II. Whores also made up a significant proportion of the audience. Just as the richer members of the crowd patronized the pit and middle gallery, the whores able to demand the highest prices frequented the best seats while the common strumpets jostled with the hoi polloi in the upper gallery. Even picking up the cheapest whore at a playhouse would probably have been a more expensive venture than using a brothel or side street venue because the woman would have passed on the cost of her admission to her client.<sup>144</sup>

Plays promoted an alternative morality where the exploits of thieves and prostitutes were celebrated while members of the respectable upper class were ridiculed. Many young men and women received much of their knowledge about sex and politics at the playhouse.<sup>145</sup> The City Fathers argued that plays encouraged the truancy and corruption of apprentices and provided cover for whores and thieves. In 1597 the troupe of actors, Pembroke's Men, staged Thomas Nashe and Ben Jonson's play *Isle of Dogs*. The Privy Council deemed the performance so offensive that Jonson was imprisoned and the Swan Theatre's licence was revoked.<sup>146</sup> It continued to operate without a licence until February of the following year but only held irregular performances.

Puritan critics were irked by the practice of actors impersonating female characters but found the presence of real women on stage utterly intolerable. In 1629 an audience watching a performance by a French travelling company showed its displeasure by hissing at the actresses.<sup>147</sup> In August 1660 a royal warrant gave permission for women to perform onstage and thus launched a new female profession. The first actresses were risk-takers with an admirable ability to manage hecklers and improvise on the spot and they inspired a series of plays about lascivious and wanton women. Fraser (1984: 419–23)

claims that many of these new actresses came from the high ranks: acting prerequisites such as singing and dancing were also considered part of a young lady's education. The financial rewards of acting were decidedly poor so it is little wonder that many attractive women used the stage as a means of securing a rich admirer.

There is actually little evidence to suggest that many early English actresses also operated as prostitutes and it appears that most of them viewed themselves as respectable professionals. However, in a list of eighty Restoration actresses compiled by Wilson (1958), three-quarters of them were judged to have had sordid private lives, either being mistresses of one man or selling their body to whoever could afford it. Certainly, there was pressure on actresses to market their sexuality: Romack (2009: 12) has argued that after the warrant of 1660, the biggest draw for audiences was the 'whorish performativity' of the actress.

That some respectable ladies and gentlemen avoided the playhouses was a source of merriment for those who preferred an edgier way of life. In the mid-1600s a number of petitions from groups of women were delivered to Parliament demanding, above all, the end of religious disputes. Henry Neville, the republican author best known for his dystopian desert island novel, *The Isle of Pines*, satirized such petitions in three pamphlets: *The parliament of ladies* and *The ladies, a second time, assembled in Parliament* in 1647 and *Newes from the exchange, or, the common-wealth of ladies* in 1650. In these libels Neville pretended to be leading ladies of the royalist court; in his second satire the ladies vote, among other things, in favour of a motion for 'putting down of playes'.<sup>148</sup>

Unsurprisingly, most Puritans found the stage to be utterly without merit. Phillip Stubbes declared, 'The blessed word of GOD is to be handled, reuerently, gravely, and sagely, with veneration to the glorious Majestie of God ... and not scoffingly, flowtngly and iybingly, as it is vpon stages in Playes & Enterludes'.<sup>149</sup> In September 1642 the Puritan Parliament issued an ordinance suppressing all plays. In 1647 this extended to having all playhouses demolished and any person attending a play being fined. Many actors were whipped at the cart tails – in other words, they were tied by the hands to the back of a cart and were whipped as it travelled along. This ban was conscientiously imposed until the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660 but clandestine performances continued in private houses so long as the actors could evade prosecution.

For the clients of prostitutes, purchasing sex formed part of a wider array of leisure choices. Indeed, most of the time a client spent with a whore was probably taken up with chatting, drinking and eating rather than directly engaging in sexual relations. Seventeenth-century commercial sex was a social

pastime and thrived in a number of places where men and women congregated: alehouses, taverns, coffee houses and gaming houses alongside playhouses. Many inns and hostelries eventually became brothels; these establishments had never provided their customers with privacy and most travellers opted to sleep in the nude. Bear-baiting, bull-fighting and cock-fighting were all considered forms of entertainment and, where crowds congregated, prostitutes found business.<sup>150</sup> Maddern (2012: 59) has referenced a number of inns, in London, Rochester and Greenwich, that had shady reputations connected with sexual immorality. She believes that women with illegitimate offspring may have found it easier to obtain employment in inns than in private households and that, in some cases, domestic staff working at inns worked partly as servants and partly as prostitutes. As early as 1499, the inn-keepers of the 'Cornish Chough' in Greenwich, Roger and Alice Buclande, were accused of arranging transactions between their servant Elizabeth and customers.

City houses of magnates were frequently converted into taverns, bowling alleys or gaming establishments. In September 1618 the Privy Council informed the Lord Mayor that there were now over four hundred taverns open in the City of London. The clientele of alehouses appears to have been less socially respectable than those who patronized taverns. John Earle remarked that a tavern was 'a pair of stairs above an Alehouse, where men are drunk with more credit and apology'. In London the distinction seems to have been one of social class in the sense that wine was more expensive than ale or beer. Gambling with dice or cards often took place within alehouses and some establishments even accommodated an illegal bowling alley within their parameters.<sup>151</sup> Clark (1983a: 145–8) shows that, at the start of the seventeenth century, wary commentators responded to the growth of alehouses with alarm, believing that they were centres of political opposition, crime and sexual vice. Some alehouse-keepers certainly deserved their reputations as receivers of stolen goods or as harbourers of known criminals. Thieves, meanwhile, found alehouses to be useful places in which to plot their next venture or divvy up the ill-gotten gains of their last. However, in the vast majority of cases, those alehouse owners who acted illegally were not organized criminals but amateur opportunists. Allegations that alehouses posed a threat to family life and social respectability in general perhaps warrant a greater degree of scrutiny. Drinking establishments provided a place where people could meet, away from their families or masters, to gossip, brawl or take part in an illicit liaison. For younger males in particular, the alehouse lent a sense of escape from routines which were frequently based on social inequality, repression and poverty.<sup>152</sup>

Prostitutes spent a great deal of time in alehouses, picking up clients and socializing for their own entertainment. Many were alcoholics themselves or found it required less effort to arouse the interests of a man if he also happened to be drunk. Clark (1983a: 235–6) argues that in early seventeenth-century London, most instances of commercial sex that took place within the alehouse did not form part of a highly organized business led by the owner, but were casual encounters by non-professionals such as maids, female lodgers or even the wife of the landlord. However, as the century progressed, the professional alehouse whore had become a more recognizable figure, perhaps because legislation targeting the stews meant more women of easy virtue chose to operate from drinking establishments or, more simply, because a growing number of migrant labourers meant higher demand for their services. Interestingly, after the Restoration, Clark (*ibid.*) notes that references to prostitution and other kinds of sexual activity in an alehouse setting became less common and most related to shabbier and more old-fashioned establishments. He believes this may have been because organized brothels were taking the trade of the alehouse whore and that some victuallers worried about prostitutes operating on their premises. Those who had dabbled in prostitution on an opportunistic basis may have moved away from the trade altogether: the spread of consumer industries and trades meant they had wider economic opportunities available to them.

The coffee house was another establishment that came to have strong connections with prostitution. In 1652 the first coffee house was established in London's St Michael's Alley, off Cornhill, by Pasqua Rosee, a native of Smyrna. Such was its popularity that, by the end of the century, there were around 2000 coffee houses. For Londoners, coffee houses provided an important gathering place where patrons could read the latest newspapers and pamphlets, exchange ideas and discuss current affairs. The London coffee houses acquired a specialist clientele depending on their location: for instance, those situated around the Royal Exchange were frequented by businessmen while politicians congregated in those located in Westminster. Not all coffee houses were places of respectability and learning; they were sometimes frequented by highwaymen or robbers who carefully listened for tips regarding whom to target next. Other low-class establishments were simply houses of assignation or rapidly devolved into fronts for whorehouses. Tom and Moll King's coffee house, running the length of one side of the arcade known as the Piazza, was one of the most well-known establishments of the 1720s and 1730s and attracted a more fashionable class of whore.<sup>153</sup>

## 2.8 The consequences of prostitution

Normally, the longer we stay in a job, the greater our expectation of a good salary, high level of regard and a reasonable pension pot. For early modern prostitutes, this was seldom the case. Thompson (1979: 62–3) has noted that although there were cases of prostitutes managing to save sufficient funds to open their own bawdy house or tavern, or managing to persuade a lover to purchase a lease on a property for them, it was more usual for a prostitute to head downhill all the way in the profession. *The Catalogue of Jilts* includes an entry for Mrs VV-----by, ‘formerly Miss to Col. S-----field in Ireland’, who used to regularly refuse the offer of five guineas for her services, but who is now willing to ‘take up with any ordinary Fellow’ for a mere shilling.<sup>154</sup>

Alcoholism was a common occupational disease of prostitutes. The constant presence of alcoholic beverages in bawdy houses normalized their consumption and no doubt provided a source of nullification for women obliged to present an artificial façade to their clients. Streetwalkers, perhaps already heavy drinkers as a result of time spent in brothels, might understandably turn to alcohol as a means of comfort. *The Catalogue of Jilts* informs its readership that Mrs Eliz. B-----w is modest and pleasant enough until she has consumed her third bottle. Meanwhile, Mrs Dorothy R-----t, red-faced from drinking too much whisky, ‘will allow a Man her company for a bottle.’<sup>155</sup> Just as present-day prostitutes are sometimes manipulated by pimps who supply them Class A drugs, their seventeenth-century counterparts were made vulnerable by their desire for drink.

Henderson (1999: 47–8) believes that most prostitutes left the profession by the time they had reached their early to mid-twenties, after which time, in most cases, they returned to poorly paid menial work. Some of these women became servants to more successful prostitutes or got married. It is difficult to estimate how many former prostitutes went on to make decent marriages but the low likelihood of them having saved much of a dowry must have hindered their chances. Once a woman was perceived as having started to lose her looks, it was usually only a matter of time before her days in the trade were numbered or, should an alternative not present itself, she was obliged to increasingly lower her price.

Those reduced to offering brief gropes in back alleys for a few pennies were victims of a life characterized by fear and suffering. Common whores endured filthy living conditions and were worn down from regular bouts of venereal disease and amateur abortions. Periods confined in damp and miserable

houses of correction meant that many prostitutes suffered from consumption throughout their adult lives. It is impossible to estimate the life span of these women, but one can imagine that premature deaths from disease, violence or even suicide were common. The ones who endured probably had the toughest attitudes or simply the better luck.

At a time when contraception was rudimentary, pregnancy was an occupational hazard and one that most prostitutes avoided at all costs. Contraception was more likely to be used by married women and the most effective methods were coitus interruptus, extended breast-feeding or sexual abstinence. There are very few references to abortion in contemporary literature which probably indicates the general disapproval surrounding terminations rather than their infrequency. Pepys described the king's personal physician, Dr Alexander Frazier, 'being so great with my Lady Castlemaine and Stewart at court in helping to slip their calves when there is occasion'.<sup>156</sup> In the *School of Venus*, Suzanne even more vaguely refers to her knowledge of 'certain remedies which leave absolutely nothing to be desired'.<sup>157</sup> These remedies probably consisted of various mixtures of herbs and powders, available from an apothecary, which could be used in a vaginal douche to prevent conception or to bring on a miscarriage. If such measures proved ineffective, London had a ready supply of surgeons and midwives who were willing to perform illegal abortions for a price.

We have already discussed how some higher-class prostitutes decided to make the most of their pregnancies by demanding an annuity from several 'fathers' at the same time but many babies born to seventeenth-century prostitutes were in grave danger even if they survived their own births. The anti-heroine in *The Character of a Town Misse* is a thirteen-year-old country girl engaged in sexual relations with both her father's labourer and his landlord. When she becomes pregnant, she has the good sense to accuse the latter of being the father and he promptly dispatches her to London, 'the goodliest Forrest in England to shelter a great Belly', in order to save his reputation. She proceeds to leave the newborn on the steps of the parish church, a common fate for unwanted babies.<sup>158</sup> In 1615 an order was issued 'for the finding out of Queans that leave their children in the streets ... whereof some by reason of the cold and lack of sustenance have died'. The very existence of this legislation suggests that prostitutes abandoning unwanted babies had become a common occurrence.<sup>159</sup>

Humphrey Mill's collection of poems, *A nights search: Discovering the nature and condition of all sorts of night-walkers; with their associates*, of 1646 contains a section about a child who is murdered by its prostitute mother. He provides



a graphic description of the poor infant's corpse and savagely condemns its murderer: 'They're worse than beasts who do destroy their owne.' Wrightson (1975: 11) has written that in seventeenth-century society, infanticide was primarily associated with mothers trying to dispose of illegitimate babies. He examined records of the surviving assize files of Essex between 1601 and 1665 and found sixty cases of infanticide, including two sets of twins, drawn from fifty-three parishes. Fifth-three of the sixty-two children were described as being illegitimate and, in all but one case, the mother was accused of the child's murder. Most of the babies were killed on the day of their birth and by forms of asphyxia rather than by more violent methods. Infanticide of illegitimate infants was thought to be so widespread a practice that a statute was passed in 1624, 'to Prevent the Destroying and Murthering of Bastard Children'. Inherent within the act was the presumption that an unmarried woman who had concealed the death of her child had murdered it; the onus was upon the mother to provide a witness to swear the baby had been stillborn. The burden of proving infanticide in cases of deaths of legitimate children meanwhile rested with the crown. This law was aimed at controlling sexual morality as well as protecting the lives of babies: one section made it illegal for unmarried women to attempt to conceal a pregnancy.<sup>160</sup>

There were other methods of disposing of unwanted children that drew less attention. Illegitimate children were often farmed out to nursemaids, usually older women living in filthy hovels, who cared for little other than their fee. Indeed, those who charged a one-off initial payment had a vested interest in the child suffering an early death. Susan Long, when given a child by its mother, proceeded to carry it for eleven miles in 'extreame cold frosty weather' without nourishing it so that it died. Another common tactic by a father, realizing he would be deemed financially liable for the maintenance of the child, was to give it to a vagrant woman, sometimes without the consent of its mother. In 1626, a Lancashire glover named Cuthbert Mason gave his illegitimate child to a travelling woman, despite a neighbour warning 'beofre yow putt yor child of a Begger in this cold weather digge a hole and bury it quicke'. The woman, Isabel Smith, already had a second baby in her care and agreed to return Mason's child after a fortnight when he had arranged for a better nurse. She walked to the village of Bretherton and stayed the night in a barn, feeding both babies with some boiled milk and butter. By the following morning, Mason's baby had died. It is probably the case that Cuthbert Mason knew he would be unlikely to see his child alive again.<sup>161</sup> In the case of Isabel Smith, the second baby in her care was retrieved by its mother the next day. Those babies who managed to survive

despite the odds against them might have ended up as one of the abandoned children who begged in London's streets.

Frequent sexual activity meant prostitutes were vulnerable to contracting venereal disease. It remains uncertain when the first cases of syphilis appeared in England: in 1161, an ordinance legalizing the Southwark brothels referred to 'the perilous disease of burning'<sup>162</sup> and the founding of the Lock Hospital in Southwark by Edward II in 1321 suggests that gonorrhoea and syphilis may have posed a threat to the health of England's population at this time.<sup>163</sup> The Lock Hospital ostensibly assisted lepers but many medieval patients who were treated for leprosy were actually suffering from syphilis. Later Lock Hospitals, the first of which was opened in Grosvenor Place in 1746 by William Bromfield, openly specialized in its treatment.<sup>164</sup> By 1836 this hospital had treated 44,973 sufferers.<sup>165</sup> London had four main hospitals in the seventeenth century: Christ's for the care of orphans and urchins; St Thomas's and St Bartholomew's which cared for the adult sick; and Bridewell which, as we have seen, housed the criminalized poor. With the exception of Christ's, sufferers of venereal disease might be treated at any of these institutions. Bridewell residents were frequently transferred to St Thomas's or St Bartholomew's and were then sent back once their treatment had been completed. It was not unusual for prostitutes to require treatment time after time.<sup>166</sup>

Although the mechanics of infection were not entirely known, the connection between sexual contact and contraction of the disease was quickly established. In 1530 Dr Simon Fish, in an address to Henry VIII, complained of those who 'catch the Pockes of one woman and bear them to an other; that be BURNT with one woman and bare it vnto an other; that catch the Lepry of one woman and bare it to another'.<sup>167</sup> The most obvious method of avoiding syphilis was complete abstinence but, in an environment where sex was readily available, this proved almost impossible for many people. Pepys' diaries, for instance, contain many entries confessing his struggles to abstain from the services of prostitutes.<sup>168</sup> Dunton's *The Night Walker* (1696, October edition) described how one bawd offered to search her girls for signs of venereal disease in front of wary new clients for an additional charge. Prostitutes were frequent sufferers of venereal disease for obvious reasons and their clients often went on to infect their own wives. In the short broadside *A Satyr against Whoring: In Answer to a Satyr against Marriage*, published in 1682, the author condemned men who damaged the health of their wives in such a way.<sup>169</sup> He expressed the hope that men who frequented prostitutes died slowly and painfully before their final descent into hell. The last page of

the broadside, however, admitted that men were naturally lascivious and that, after all, marriage was rather tedious: 'That Name call'd *Husband* is of Terror full, The State Uneasie, Melancholy, Dull.'

Fraser (1984: 411) believes that, by the seventeenth century, venereal disease was so common that it had acquired a certain amount of social tolerance.<sup>170</sup> Indeed, many social satirists of the seventeenth century utilized the dreaded 'pox' as a source of humour. *The Female Fire-Ships: A Satyr Against Whoring*, published in 1691, warns its young male readers against all types of prostitutes, particularly the playhouse whore who is riddled with infection. Meanwhile, at the stews: 'Aches, Buboes, Shankers, Nodes and Poxes, Are hid in Females Dam'd Pandora's Boxes.'<sup>171</sup> Other writers take the opportunity to warn men against venereal disease in a more direct manner. The final entry of *A Catalogue of Jilts* lists Mrs Eliz. (alias Betty) S\_\_\_\_ds, a former orange girl who works at the playhouse, charges 5s. 'and a Clap she gives into the bargain.'<sup>172</sup>

The fear of venereal disease hugely influenced public attitudes towards prostitutes. Bernard Mandeville's *Modest Defence of Publick Stews* presents prostitutes as 'dirt', having the power to contaminate men with a 'Seminal Weakness'. It is women, he argues, who spread venereal disease to men and not vice versa.<sup>173</sup> Preachers and pamphleteers regarded venereal disease as a direct punishment from God for immoral behaviour.<sup>174</sup> Many sufferers were acutely alarmed and bewildered by their ill health. Quaipe (1979: 186) gives the example of a Sutton Mallet husbandman who was so shaken by his symptoms he assumed he was dying. Seeking help from the local curate, he declared that 'he had received hurt by knowledge of a woman in his privy parts and said if he might have help it should be a warning for him as long as he lived'. Rural communities tended to favour proactive measures in terms of isolating the carrier and issuing medical treatment. The inhabitants of one village coerced a man into fleeing after he had passed on the disease to his wife.

There was a wide array of treatments for venereal disease in the early modern period, and many sufferers turned to professional healers for relief. *The Prentices Answer to the Whores Petition* muses:

For why, so long as Rogues and Whores are trading,  
The *Surgeons* will have work, who in such wars  
Gain more by *Venus*, then they do by *Mars*.<sup>175</sup>

James Boswell, the lawyer and diarist who is probably best known for his biography of his friend, Samuel Johnson, found genuine relief at the hands of a physician. His friend, the surgeon Andrew Douglas, recommended sexual

abstinence, fresh air and exercise and a course of medicine. After treatment, Boswell was satisfied he was cured of all but 'a gleet' which caused no pain.<sup>176</sup> Quaife (1979: 187) writes of a Wiltshire man who operated throughout Eastern Somerset so successfully that any male villager who visited the area was the immediate subject of gossip and rumour. Another man, after contracting the disease from a married woman, was ill for around nine weeks until his symptoms were eased by a physician.

From the beginning of the sixteenth century until the 1830s, sufferers were given mercury in oral doses, a vapour bath, or had it applied directly to rashes, scabs and ulcers. Patients who were particularly unlucky endured the pain and indignity of a mercury ointment being injected into their noses and genitals. Although mercury was thought to be effective, its side-effects rivalled the actual symptoms of the disease itself.<sup>177</sup> Other remedies were more inventive but were completely useless. In 1541, Dr Andrew Boord's *Breviary of Health* instructed sufferers to wash their private parts two or three times a day 'with white wine or ale or else with Sack [fortified wine] and Water'.<sup>178</sup> Many prostitutes believed that urinating as much as possible prevented syphilis, gonorrhoea and even pregnancy. Homemade treatments included the use of sarsaparilla, opium, walnut, ammonia, sulphuric and nitric acids and a herb that was made from the bark of trees from the guaiacum family. Treatments that were advertised in the press included the Lisbon Diet Drink, Dr Solander's Vegetable Juice or Leake's Patent Pills.<sup>179</sup> Some people believed that a diet rich in prunes provided a failsafe cure; it may be more than coincidence that prune dishes were frequently offered in brothels.

The eagerness of many men to bed virgins may be partly explained by their assumption such girls would be clear of infection. Moreover, as noted, the myth that one could cure oneself of syphilis by sexually penetrating a healthy person increased the demand for child prostitutes. The belief that sex with a virgin can cure disease persists in the twenty-first century: in sub-Saharan Africa the fiction that such an act can cure AIDS has furthered the spread of HIV, particularly to infants. A more effective – and less repugnant – attempt to avoid venereal disease involved the use of the condom. Condoms made from sheep's bladders were available in London from the late seventeenth century. They were not comfortable to wear and Boswell complained that they dulled his satisfaction. It seems that most whores, perhaps because of the expense involved and their clients' unwillingness, neglected to carry a condom but they did become fashionable in court circles. The Earl of Rochester published a pamphlet in 1667 named *A Panegyric Upon Cundum* which hailed the sheaths as a barrier to both syphilis and pregnancy.<sup>180</sup>

## 2.9 Conclusion

There is evidence of prostitution in London from its earliest days as a city. Organized brothels were established by the Romans, with many prostitutes operating from Southwark along the line of the Thames. In later times, high-ranking ecclesiastics showed a surprising amount of tolerance for the commercial sex trade and, in some cases, were directly complicit in its operation. Legislation aimed at curbing the spread of the industry appeared in fits and starts, depending on the stance of individual monarchs and the advice – from their close circle, judicial leaders and reformers among others – they chose to heed. As the early modern period progressed, the numbers of prostitutes massively increased: upper and middle class men were able to spend their expanding disposable incomes on women who had nothing to sell but their own bodies. Although prostitutes did suffer a plethora of brutal punishments alongside some more moderate restrictions, no regency or administration proved capable of preventing the expansion of the profession in the long term.

The vast majority of prostitutes operating in seventeenth-century London were motivated by the sheer necessity of making a living. By the end of the century, there were approximately four women for every three men and many women from the ranks of the upper and middle classes, by choice or circumstance, found themselves without husbands. While many of these women preferred the respectable option of becoming a servant, governess or ladies' companion, some opted to be a mistress or high-class whore. During the Restoration, it was socially acceptable to employ the services of a courtesan and a wealthy man would be judged on the beauty, wit and fashion sense of his mistress. A small number of actresses used the stage as a means of obtaining a rich sponsor while the popular playhouses proved excellent hunting ground for stylish harlots seeking their next client. These ladies were often relatively well educated and had accrued sufficient wealth to allow them a degree of independence that was hitherto unheard of for an unattached woman.

However, all prostitutes were not created equal. It may be tempting to view – or, for historians, to present – prostitution as a free choice made by empowered women who wanted to take charge of their own destinies. Sadly, in most cases, the evidence does not support such a theory. The majority of prostitutes entered the profession with very little and left it with even less. High numbers of unskilled workers in seventeenth-century London resulted in a density of poverty-stricken women, some of whom were married, who had no choice but sell their bodies. Others used prostitution as a stopgap in their working lives, dipping in and out

of the profession according to their circumstances. Abandoned girls, sometimes the daughters of these women, followed a similar route, often making a massive profit for procurers who sold them to the highest bidder. Indeed, upper-class men viewed underprivileged girls as fair targets for assault which resulted in more and more women being pushed into the sex industry.

Some women working as prostitutes did so on a casual and opportunistic basis but others worked full-time, operating from a brothel, a lodging house or soliciting from the streets. Women who worked in brothels suffered a loss of personal freedom, being expected to accept every client while their fees were paid directly to a bawd. In contemporary literature, managers of brothels were depicted as physically repulsive manipulators only concerned with the amount of money each of their girls was bringing in. In reality, most successful female bawds were charismatic managers who expected the prostitutes under their control to take care over their manners and appearances. In the seventeenth century, a small number of individual bawds began to acquire personal celebrity and enjoyed immunity before the law but lowly prostitutes were far less able to protect themselves from prosecution.

Although prostitutes in lodging houses enjoyed a greater sense of independence, they also relied on procurers to secure them clients and pimps to protect them from the same men. At the lower end of the trade, women carried out transactions in cheap rented rooms, in taverns or grotty tenements. Wandering whores sold their bodies at fairs or waited at the docks for clients. Others completed business out of doors, in alleys, courts and streets, negotiating long periods of cold and wet weather. Life was particularly difficult for these women: they were vulnerable to disease and alcohol addiction and permanently balanced on the edge of destitution. A minority of prostitutes were able to use the trade as a springboard for more financially rewarding ventures, such as becoming a long-term mistress or bawd, but many women left the profession more broken and desperate than they were before they turned their first trick.

Prostitution cannot simply be regarded as a type of work – it had a ‘social meaning’ beyond the experiences of prostitutes themselves.<sup>181</sup> Early modern women who engaged in prostitution were categorized and largely condemned by their society. In the next chapter, we will begin to explore representations of women who sold sex in early modern texts.



# Popular Attitudes towards Prostitutes

## 3.1 Introduction

In this chapter we will look at evidence from a range of sources, including the existing research literature, that indicates the attitudes prevalent in society at large towards prostitution in the seventeenth century. At the end of the chapter we will tie some of those attitudes back to what we found in Chapter 2. To begin, let us consider what a close reading of some texts in which prostitution prominently figures show us about the representation of prostitutes in the literature of the time.

## 3.2 The depiction of prostitutes in seventeenth-century literature

Prostitution was a subject that fascinated contemporary writers. An abundance of broadsides or broadsheets, pamphlets, sermons and petitions, journals and diaries, books and newspaper articles all help us understand seventeenth-century male views of prostitutes and women in general.<sup>1</sup> The spread of literacy during this period attracted a new readership that extended to tradesmen, merchants, manufacturers and skilled craftsmen. Pamphlets catered to a wide range of interests and some were so inexpensive that even poorer workers could afford them. Social satires based around popular news stories were plentiful, as were narratives relating to murder and witchcraft trials. In the late sixteenth century, a genre that became known as rogue literature peaked in popularity, which purported to describe the activities of a real-life counter-culture of rogues, beggars and prostitutes. The authors of these tales delighted in divulging the professional tricks of these social outsiders, such as cony-catching (thieving or confidence tricking), card-sharpping (cheating at cards and dice games) and



cozening (scamming). Although rogue pamphlets were regarded as an inferior means of publication and their content was often lifted from previous works, authors such as Robert Greene and Thomas Dekker were very talented writers who became household names.<sup>2</sup>

One of the persistent historiographical debates concerning rogue literature concerns the extent to which it accurately reflects contemporary lifestyles and circumstances. Earlier pioneering scholars such as A. V. Judges (1913) and Frank Aydelotte (1930) were more inclined to accept information offered by writers such as Harman, whose work is mentioned in Chapter 2, as a genuine anthropological representation of life on the outskirts of early modern society. Recent writers urge a greater degree of caution.<sup>3</sup> Although even successful pamphleteers such as Greene made little money from their writing, we must bear in mind that writers were beginning to respond to the demands of their readership. Respectable people enjoyed reading about pimps, prostitutes and bawds and the notion that such salacious tales could be realistic gave them a gratifying sensation of fear.<sup>4</sup>

State censorship of printed works took place throughout the early modern period and was strengthened during the reigns of both James I and Charles I. As McEnery (2006: ch. 3) has shown, the primary motivation behind censorship remained economic or political. James I demonstrated a willingness to accommodate moderate Puritans who found sexual obscenities, bad language and blasphemy outrageous. Works that contained mild forms of 'lasciviousness', such as bawdy songs and humorous satires, were roundly condemned by members of Puritan pressure-groups and were often the target of official censorship and legislation. Translations of classical and continental works reveal the extent of censorship: explicit references to sexual activity were abruptly omitted or words were changed to dilute the meaning of the whole piece.<sup>5</sup>

Hughes (2012: 6–8) has written of a decisive shift in the 1640s whereby the numbers of publications spiralled and changed in nature, many tending to be shorter, topical works such as sermons and newsbooks. She explains that a prominent theme in these new publications was gender tension: 'One of the most basic ways through which people order and comprehend their worlds is through the construction of binary contrasts, and the female/male contrast is the most enduring of all binaries, with the male pole almost always seen as the more valuable or positive.' Sexual accusation and insult were increasingly used as a potent method of belittling political adversaries and political satires of the time were saturated in sexual imagery.<sup>6</sup> Royalist pamphleteers, driven underground, must have obtained a consoling sense of satisfaction by

besmirching the reputations of Puritans who prided themselves on their chastity and moderation. The notion of women themselves voicing political opinions and, worse still, committing those thoughts to paper, contradicted the idealized version of the quiet, humble and obedient female which dominated popular culture. On the eve of the Civil War, however, women increasingly took part in political discussions and a determined minority began to publish mainly religious writings. As Freist (1995: 459) has commented, these women were condemned in print as being lewd, gossips or scolds.

In the mid-seventeenth century, there was an upsurge in obscene and licentious publications and some literature became markedly crude and brutal in the following decades. Thompson (1979) has argued that the growth in pornography cannot be explained simply in terms of a change in official ideology because the 'filthy run of books' had begun before the death of Cromwell. Instead, he believes it arose as a result of the absorption of Puritanism into popular consciousness: sex was now seen as something shameful and Restoration writers were duly infected with a sense of guilt that led to a blossoming of perversity.<sup>7</sup> Restoration writers of pornography were usually more interested in revealing the political loyalties of their protagonists than in stirring a sexual response in their readership. It has been argued that publications such as *The Wandring Whore* and *Select City Quaeries*, while ostensibly being in the business of cataloguing London's practising whores, were produced in order to expose certain individuals who had purportedly sided with the antimonarchists during the civil war period. Unsurprisingly, before the last decade of the seventeenth century, most authors elected to remain anonymous rather than be subjected to libel action.<sup>8</sup>

Restoration society may have celebrated greater sexual freedoms and even permitted a tiny number of individual women public success as writers, explorers and even scientists, but it remained a highly masculine and misogynistic age.<sup>9</sup> It has been argued that the position of women actually declined during the Restoration period because Puritan values, such as marital fidelity and mutuality between spouses, were disregarded. Certainly, women were presented as objects of contempt in Restoration literature. Writers operated in intimate circles and were writing for the amusement of one another as well as for a wider audience. They often used their work as a means of fuelling feuds or cementing friendships. Some works appeared as a response to others while many more acknowledged the existence of one another. Prostitutes featured heavily in many obscene works and were easy targets for the kind of uproarious and bawdy humour that dominated at the time.<sup>10</sup>

In the present day, the names of early modern fictional whores such as Moll Flanders or Fanny Hill are better known than any real-life women who were involved in the public sale of sex. However, as the discussion of the life of Damaris Page in the previous chapter showed, a number of whores and madams found considerable fame towards the end of the seventeenth century. References to active prostitutes started to make an appearance in 'ladies directories' such as *A Catalogue of Jilts, Cracks & Prostitutes, Night-walkers, Whores, She-friends, Kind Women and others of the Linnen-lifting Tribe, who are to be seen every Night in the Cloysters in Smithfield, from the hours of Eight to Eleven, during the time of the Fair*, published in August 1691, which lists twenty-two prostitutes by name. Some of the characters who appear in the salacious books of the Restoration period were also real bawds and prostitutes. In *A Strange and True Conference Between Two Notorious Bawds, Damarose Page and Pris Fotheringham, During their Imprisonment and lying together in Newgate*, two well-known madams gossip about the sexual activity in other brothels and establish twenty rules for Fotheringham's establishment.<sup>11</sup>

Literature of the period delighted in descriptions of whores who were skilled manipulators and liars. These prostitutes were incapable of understanding or experiencing love but deceived their clients into believing they felt genuine emotional attachment to them. It would seem that the stock character of 'tart with a heart' that is easily recognized by present-day audiences was less familiar to their seventeenth-century counterparts. While slightly predating 1600, Thomas Nashe, the Elizabethan playwright and poet, roundly condemns prostitutes in *Christs Teares Over Jerusalem* of 1593. Despite Nashe having first-hand experience of being shunned by respectable society – he was viewed with distaste after having published an erotic poem in the early 1590s – he presents brothels as places of unnatural iniquity and whores as possessing almost witchlike powers.

The discussion of Nashe is relevant as it allows us to see how some of the attitudes in his work predated but were present through the seventeenth century. John Taylor, the 'Water Poet', worked as a Thames waterman ferrying passengers across the river. Living to the ripe age of 80, he published over 150 pieces of work, inspired by the characters and activities of Londoners around him. Unsurprisingly, whores – in his opinion, shameless and unfit to be seen in the society of respectable women – regularly strutted through his pages: in *A Common Whore: With all these graces grac'd: Shee's very honest, beautifull and chaste*, first published in 1622, prostitutes are damned as 'the Hackneys which men ride to hell'. Taylor is amused by the tendency of these 'vicious' women to take virtuous names such as Prudence, Temperance, Faith, Grace or Mercy.<sup>12</sup>

*Amanda: or, the Reformed Whore*, with its serious tone and moralistic conclusion, attempts a more nuanced portrait. Published in 1635 by Thomas Cranley, who claims to be a prisoner in the King's Bench on his title page, it offers a familiar tale of sin and redemption. Cranley's godly narrator spies on the beautiful and fashionable Amanda through her bedchamber window and quickly becomes obsessed with her. He proceeds to follow her around town and sends her letters, the last detailing his knowledge about her debauched way of life and demanding her repentance. Mortified at being thus exposed, Amanda immediately gives way. She confesses her sins and goes to live with the narrator's chaste sister and mother for two years of prayer and reflection before a fever takes her life. The reader gets the impression that Amanda must already be nursing doubts about her chosen profession to be so easily swayed by a letter from a stranger. Although Amanda is willing to change her way of life, the author's hostility to prostitutes is overwhelming. He imagines Amanda's fate: how she will be stripped and whipped should she face prosecution; how she will catch venereal disease; will lose her good looks; and be forsaken by her companions. Amanda is told that she is so shameful that her family must deny her existence and that she is to blame for other people's drunkenness, theft, destitution and disease. Throughout, one cannot escape the impression that the narrator is excited by his proximity to the elegant Amanda and derives considerable enjoyment from imagining the extent of her sins.

Rosenthal (2006: 18; 2008: ch. 1) believes that in the Restoration period, prostitutes were portrayed as insatiable sexual beings – pursuing a myriad of sensual encounters and enjoying the fine clothing, sumptuous accommodation and luxurious food that accompanied their lifestyles. They were driven by a desire for 'luxury, power, prestige and wealth' as well as transgressive sexual passions. The notion that these women were engaging in work and were driven by economic necessity did not appear until the first decades of the following century. *The Miss Display'd, with all Her Wheedling Arts and Circumventions* of 1675 provides a good example of a lascivious and manipulative prostitute. Written by Richard Head, author of the better-known novel *The English Rogue*, the story borrows liberally from Nicholas Goodman's *Holland's Leaguer* and centres on a wealthy Irish girl, Cornelia, who, growing bored with her life in the countryside, moves to Dublin. We are told that Cornelia is exceptionally beautiful but her external appearance belies her lack of contentment, her vanity and her haughtiness. She becomes sexually involved with the master of the family with whom she lives, and eventually becomes his paid mistress. After experiencing illicit sex with one man, she is eager to entertain other suitors: 'Lust is a Gangrene, and having once

poison'd a member, never leaves spreading till the whole body be confounded.' Cornelia is then taken under the wing of an older woman named Polyandria who uses her to extort a great deal of money from several men. Her former master agrees to a large payout when Polyandria threatens to leave Cornelia's bastard baby at the gates of his home. When Corneila marries an elderly, wealthy man and tells him she is having a child, he realizes that the child cannot possibly be his as her pregnancy has progressed far too quickly. He is bullied into silence and, for peace, offers her five hundred pounds and a further two hundred should he die before her. On his death, the now exceptionally wealthy Cornelia decides to become a bawd herself, 'making others sins maintain her own.' Although Head's narrative is full of the usual disgust at the wickedness of whores, Cornelia's story ends with her victorious and completely unrepentant.<sup>13</sup>

A similar theme runs through the six-page pamphlet of the same year, *The Ape-Gentlewoman, or the Character of an Exchange-wench*. The satire narrates how a young girl comes to town in order to work as a shop apprentice, but becomes a whore at the behest of her mistress. The author describes the anti-heroine as 'a Beast in a Womans Skin, A Whore in Masquerade, or a trick the Devil intended to put upon the City', whose main occupation is ruining men. Again, it is assumed that the young men in the narrative are noble souls who have given the exchange-wench their hearts; she, on the other hand, is described as being totally void of sentiment. No sympathy is expressed towards a young girl living away from her parents and in the care of an exploitative guardian. There is no understanding that the mistress juggles more than one man because she is aware that her current beau might soon become bored of her charms and move on to another girl.

Also printed in 1675, the penny broadsheet *The Character of a Town Misse* described the progress of a kept woman: 'A certain *Help meet* for a Gentleman, instead of a Wife; Serving either for prevention of the Sin of *Marrying*, or else as a little *Side Pillow*, to render the Yoke of *Matrimony* more easie.' She differs from a regular prostitute only in terms of her limited clientele. We are informed that the Miss fatally bewitches a gallant gentleman into providing her with an annuity of 150 pounds, swearing 'a Thousand dissembling Oaths' of love while seeing two or three others on the side. Her ability to manipulate improves over time: she persuades a new conquest to settle on her an annuity of 300 pounds for life and then abandons him within the month.

The Town Miss is particularly dangerous to inexperienced lovers: 'She is a Caterpillar that destroys many a hopeful Gentleman in the Blossom, a *Land-Syren*, far more dangerous than they in the Sea: For he that falls into her hands,

runs a *three-fold* hazard of Shipwrecking *Soul, Body, and Estate*.’ She is forced to take treatment once a year ‘to Wash and Tallow, and Refit her Leaky Bottom’ but returns, as brazen as ever, having completed her therapy. The author concludes with a particularly spiteful taunt against his now ageing leading lady: ‘She becomes a *Loathsome* thing, too unclean to enter into *Heaven*, too *Diseased* to continue long upon Earth; and too foul to be *toucht* with any thing but a *Pen* or a *Pair of Tongs*: And therefore tis time to *Leave* her; For *Foh* how she stinks.’ It is perhaps unsurprising that these barbed comments roused a ‘defence’ of the prostitute in *The Town Misses Declaration and Apology* in the same year. The author reasons that it is better to enjoy a relationship of affection with a sparkling and fresh mistress than be shackled to a ‘dull, silly’ wife. This satire continues the tradition of poking fun at whores but its wit takes a gentler form: the mistress, it declares, is never out of humour unless she wants a new coach.

Thompson (1975) has studied *The London Jilt*, a popular Renaissance rogue tale at one time attributed to Alexander Oldys, about a merchant’s daughter who is forced into prostitution as a result of her father’s financial ruin. Thompson explains that the central theme of the work is the anti-heroine’s readiness to swindle and deceive. Her skills vary from faking sexual climax in order to hurry along her client’s own orgasm with the aim of getting rid of him as soon as possible, to pretending to be the sole mistress of one client when in reality she is seeing fifteen other regulars. Like the eponymous heroine in *The Old Troop*, the jilt uses a pregnancy to buy a £60 annuity from her main partner. After he conveniently dies twelve days after signing the paperwork, she takes another lover and agrees to have his child providing she is compensated with a large lump sum.<sup>14</sup>

In 1683 a popular satire was printed with the title *The Whores Rhetorick, Calculated to the Meridian of London And conformed to the Rules of Art. In Two Dialogues*, under the pseudonym of Philo-Puttanus. This was a re-working of *La Retorica delle Puttane* by the Italian satirist, Ferrante Pallavicino, who was beheaded for blasphemy in 1644. The English version of *La Retorica* is also written in the form of a conversation between an elderly woman, named as ‘Lady’ Cresswell and Dorothea, the beautiful teenaged daughter of a Cavalier gentleman. Dorothea is living an impoverished existence in a room in Covent Garden when she receives a ‘charitable visit’ from the haggish Cresswell, a real-life bawd who attained a high degree of notoriety. The older woman comes armed with the ‘fittest remedies’ for Dorothea’s condition, being a set of fifteen instructions that will allow her to excel in the art of becoming a professional

lady of pleasure. She offers no pretence that Dorothea must conduct herself with integrity and kindness, instructing instead that she must be willing to ruin a million unhappy clients before she can retire a wealthy woman: beauty and a charming mien are less important than a sense of cunning, artfulness and good luck.<sup>15</sup> Dorothea, Cresswell urges, must pretend to spurn financial reward, be able to entertain multiple lovers with good conversation and fake both sexual climaxes and insatiability. Cresswell recommends caution, however, advising the girl to dress with modesty and behave with decorum and sobriety: her customers will respect she who respects herself. Despite the book including later passages regarding exciting impotent customers, it is seldom sexually graphic. Contemporary opinion considered it to be unacceptably lewd and its printer was convicted and fined.<sup>16</sup>

In the last decade of the seventeenth century, *The Female Fire-Ships: A Satyr Against Whoring* of 1691 presents whores as monsters who use their feminine charms to ensnare ‘unexperienc’d Youth’. The verse is spread over nineteen pages and was probably composed by the little known poet Richard Ames. Damned by modern scholarship as a man of limited talents, Ames maintains a tone of scandalized and righteous anger throughout, asserting that he is not writing for retribution over a personal injury but is spurred by the death of a close friend. While the kept mistress in the work swears to her lover that he is her sole beau, she is giving her favours to countless other men. If the client later withdraws his attention – and pension – the jilt will ‘curse you to your Face’.<sup>17</sup>

As we can see, many of these works – which are spread over the seventeenth century – share similar themes: the whore of this period existed in the popular imagination as a ruthless and corrupting influence. Not only does she manipulate, infect and steal from her naïve clients, she viciously revels in her immorality. Away from literature, what attitudes to prostitutes were prevalent and how closely did they align with the literary attitudes? To explore this we will focus upon two episodes in the century where a wealth of material evidence allows us to explore attitudes by sections of the public at large to prostitution – the Apprentice Riots and the rise of the Society for the Reformation of Manners (SRM).

### 3.3 The Apprentice Riots

How did everyday Londoners view the plethora of brothels on their doorsteps? The answer is that, at times, they responded with violence. Hostility towards prostitutes spanned back centuries. In 1381, during Wat Tyler’s Peasant’s Revolt,

rioters set about 'despoiling the brothels on the bankside'. In 1449, rebels led by Jack Cade, looted London and burnt down all the bankside brothels and 'reviled the women'.<sup>18</sup>

Between 1606 and 1641 there were at least twenty-four ritualized attacks on brothels by London apprentices on Shrove Tuesday, their traditional holiday. Another more serious disturbance took place in the Easter of 1668, over a five-day period between 23 and 28 March, during which brothels in East Smithfield, Moorfields and Shoreditch were attacked. The 1668 unrest is sometimes referred to as the Bawdy House Riots or the Messenger riots after one of its principal ringleaders, Peter Messenger. The riot involved as many as 40,000 people, including artisans and servants and, most notably, apprentices and led to four ringleaders being hanged, drawn and quartered.<sup>19</sup>

Apprentices came to London from all over England and were usually bound to their masters for a term of seven years. Some of them were orphans or from very disadvantaged families and found a place with a master desperate for free labour; others had wealthy parents who secured their apprenticeship to a prominent businessman by means of a hefty donation. The relationship between master and apprentice was supposed to mirror a father-child bond but, in reality, mistreatment was not out of the ordinary and it was considered acceptable for masters to physically discipline their charges. Smith (1973) describes an array of horrific abuses by masters, on both male and female apprentices, documented in the records of the Middlesex Sessions of the Peace and of the Mayor's Court. Almost three fifths of London apprentices dropped out of their agreement prematurely which supports research by Archer (1991: 217-18), characterizing the relationship between master and apprentice as potentially highly fraught.

After the Interregnum, London became overloaded with an 'overworked, underpaid host of raucous apprentices many of whom were Puritan zealots'.<sup>20</sup> Sporadically employed and poorly paid when working, it is unsurprising that these apprentices advertised their dissatisfaction. Smith (1973: 153-8) has explored how apprentices viewed themselves as belonging to a separate order or subculture. There was a wealth of literature that both celebrated and vilified the apprentice while providing evidence that they assembled regularly; perhaps most importantly, these youths shared the experience of being both an apprentice and an adolescent. Apprentices viewed themselves as 'moral agents', prepared to protest in the streets in favour of Puritan reform or to target prostitutes whom they viewed as being dissolute. Seager (2008: 25-32) has argued that the attacks on theatres as well as brothels represented an expression of the apprentices' moral values which were shared by older members of the London community.<sup>21</sup>



The apprentices who took part in the 1668 riot received more public sympathy than condemnation. On 24 March Pepys wrote:

Back to Whitehall, where great talk of the tumult at the other end of the town about Moorefields among the prentices, taking the liberty of these holidays to pull down bawdy houses. ... And some young men we saw brought by soldiers to the guard at Whitehall, and overheard others that stood by say that it was only for pulling down bawdy houses. And none of the bystanders finding fault with them, but rather of the soldiers for hindering them. And we heard a Justice of Peace this morning say to the King that he had been endeavouring to suppress this tumult, but could not; and that imprisoning some in the new prison at Clerkenwell, the rest did come and break open the prison and release them. And that they do give out that they are for pulling down of bawdy houses, which is one of the great grievances of the nation. To which the King made a very, poor, cold, insipid answer: 'Why, why, do they go to them, then?', and that was all, and had no mind to go on with the discourse.<sup>22</sup>

A number of satirical petitions appeared in the aftermath of the Messenger riots. *The Whores Petition to the London Prentices* of 1668 criticized the behaviour and hypocrisy of the rioting 'little boys'. Another whores' petition appeared four years later, in 1672 on the eve of the third Dutch War, called *The Poor Whores' Complaint to the Apprentices of London*. It describes the long-term consequences of the disturbances on prostitutes: they are dressed in rags, their rents are high and their clients have disappeared. Moreover, they are overrun with the pox because their Dutch and French physicians have deserted them.

Both Whores' Petitions are witty and callous and it is highly unlikely that their authors were working as prostitutes in London. Indeed the light-hearted tone of the petition somewhat diminishes the anguish the Messenger riots must have provoked in women involved in transactional sex. In John Taylor's satirical tribute of 1635, *A Bawd: A vertuous Bawd, a modest Bawd: As Shee Deserves, reprove, or else applaud*, the heroine meets the violence and prejudice of the Shrove Tuesday rabble with unending patience and reasonableness. However, it is likely that bawds and whores awaited Shrove Tuesday with dread and looked upon the wrecking of their properties and trade with real distress and frustration. The health of Damaris Page, the infamous madam whose brothel was destroyed in 1668, was much affected by the riots and she died the following year. Madam Page was aware of the possibility of being targeted by rioters much earlier; in 1659 she commented that 'she would not go on building new Houses with what she earned by being a common *Hackney Jade* and now the *Oldest Bawd*, lest they

be burned down.<sup>23</sup> Brothel managers, like the bawd in Taylor's satire, probably realized that appealing to the authorities for assistance or recompense would be futile.<sup>24</sup> Fouassier-Tate (2014: 84) believes that the authorities quietly condoned the Apprentice Riots in the belief that they guaranteed social order.

The first whores' petition of 1668 was followed by a reply in the same year, *The Prentices Answer to the Whores Petition, and a further broadsheet, The Citizens Reply To the Whores Petition, and Prentices Answer*. In the former, the apprentices declare that they were not responsible for the destruction of whorehouses but add that the prostitutes are not blameless:

You at your doors doe stand Poxed and Painted  
 Perfum'd with powder yet with all vice tainted.  
 You with your becks and damn'd alluring looks  
 Are onto men just like to tenter hooks  
 To pull them in, and truck with such base Jades  
 And so to make worke for the Surgeons trades.

*The Citizens Reply to the Whores Petition, and Prentices Answer* condemns both the apprentices for their bad behaviour and the whores, 'the citties pest-house' for making a living from sin.

A second set of petitions began with a mock appeal from the 'undone company of poor distressed whores, bawds, pimps, and panders,' headed by Damaris Page and Elizabeth Cresswell, to Barbara Villiers, Countess of Castlemaine. The most notorious of Charles II's mistresses, Castlemaine was despised by the public for her scandalous sexual life, her profligacy and her Catholicism. *The Poor-Whores Petition* begs the lady to provide protection against the London apprentices, reasoning that she may be their next target. The author of the petition was rumoured to be the diarist John Evelyn who had previously denounced Castlemaine as 'the curse of the Nation,' but this was never proven. Certainly, the petition infuriated Lady Castlemaine sufficiently for her to implore the king to pursue the perpetrators; no doubt she suspected the author was among her enemies at court. Pepys commented on the wide dissemination of the petition while Roger L'Estrange, the Surveyor of the Press, was frustrated in not being able to proceed with a prosecution because, in his opinion, any jury would be receptive to the petition's satirical tone.<sup>25</sup>

A reply, *The Gracious Answer of the most Illustrious Lady of Pleasure, the Countess of Castlem----- to the Poor-Whores Petition*, followed soon after, ridiculing Castlemaine's rise and criticizing the crown for giving her and her offspring financial support. Interestingly, it slanders the archbishop of

Canterbury, Gilbert Sheldon, for his refusal to support a policy of religious toleration and his failure 'to declare the Church of Rome to be the Ancient, Uniforme, Universall, and Most Holy Mother Church.'<sup>26</sup>

It is far from certain whether the author/s of these petitions actually took part in the Easter week riots or if they were just using the disturbances to publicize their own agenda. Scholars have widely dismissed the notion that the Messenger riots can be explained simply in terms of young men blowing off steam. After all, as Charles II commented, the apprentices themselves were well-known frequenters of brothels. Harris (1986) has written that the disturbances were perceived by contemporaries to be a political and religious protest against the policies of the court organized by former Cromwellian soldiers. Certainly, the rioters marched behind green banners, the colour associated with the Levellers, and there is evidence they targeted specific brothels, such as those owned by James, Duke of York. Pepys mentions the ire of the duke, who 'complained merrily that he had lost two tenants by their houses being pulled down, who paid for their Wine Licenses fifteen pound the Year!' The severity of the punishment for the ringleaders who were found guilty of high treason does suggest that contemporaries believed the riot was politically motivated. Harris argues the riots represented a response by non-conformists who experienced persecution in the years immediately following the Restoration.<sup>27</sup> The protestors, he believes, targeted bawdy houses because they were furious the crown was benignly tolerating the sins of whores while continuing to persecute dissenters acting according to their own consciences.<sup>28</sup>

While some scholars, notably Mowry (1999: 82–3; 2004: ch. 3), have questioned whether the mob was primarily made up of apprentices, we are inclined to agree with Romack (2009: 1–4): there is no reason to discount contemporary reports, including broadsheets and legal records, which do suggest most of the rioters were apprentices or belonged to the working poor. Romack believes the apprentices were not simply motivated by a moral objection to sex as a commodity, but were instead lashing out with growing feelings of alienation and disenfranchisement on a group that was just as exploited as they were themselves. *The Citizens Reply to the Whores Petition* refers to the apprentices, most of them adults, as boys.<sup>29</sup> This apparent infantilization of apprentices mirrored popular fears that the morality of such youths was particularly vulnerable to corrosion from older female sex workers. In *Strange & true Nevves from Jack-a-Newberries Six Windmills*, the whores belonging to Pris Fotheringham's establishment get rich while ruining the young apprentices who visit them daily. These youths have no one to care for them or discourage them from 'unlawful living'. *The Ape-Gentlewoman, or the*

*Character of an Exchange-wench* continues the theme with its eponymous anti-heroine deliberately targeting apprentices as part of a master plan of revenge.

Respectable people feared that the influence of prostitutes would lead gullible youths astray, encouraging them to steal from their parents or masters in order to pay for sex. A real-life testimony of Fulk Mounslow, a client of a prostitute named Jane Harding, accused her of 'allureth and entyceth many yonge men to their utter ruyne and decay, not only in expendinge & consumynge their goodes & good name but also in entisinge them to such inconveniences that are & be abhominable & detestable before the face of god'.<sup>30</sup> Whether this was true or not is debatable, but Mounslow clearly hoped the Justice would be swayed by his words. Servants were considered particularly susceptible to immoral influences. During this period, the demand for servants was increasing and suspicion surrounded young women in service who frequently changed employer. Male servants, meanwhile, were accused of gambling and frequenting brothels.<sup>31</sup>

Prostitutes were often despised because they were deemed to pose a threat to the stability of the social order. As Griffiths (1993: 40–1) has described, the world of prostitutes and the pimps and bawds who kept their company, was 'a corrupt inversion of so-called conventional society'. It was believed that prostitutes avoided church and spurned family life.<sup>32</sup> A husband who visited a prostitute neglected his own wife and betrayed his marriage contract; moreover, he misused money that might otherwise have been spent on his family and his home. Brothels, meanwhile, were perceived as places where unsavoury characters congregated.<sup>33</sup> In *Amanda: or, the Reformed Whore*, the narrator described how all 'honest women' abhorred prostitutes and became embarrassed at the very thought of their existence. He expressed some understanding that most prostitutes entered the trade simply in order to avoid poverty but presented prostitution as upsetting a social equilibrium established by God.

The notion that all women who did not sell their bodies despised those that did was bound up with the belief by some that the clothing of prostitutes should be regulated. This would not only make prostitutes readily identifiable but also separate them from their 'respectable' counterparts. Although the Southwark regulations did not attempt to distinguish prostitutes by forcing them to wear certain clothing, some medieval towns, such as Bristol, did impose a dress code.<sup>34</sup> Of course, when given the choice, prostitutes usually elected to dress as flamboyantly as their purses allowed. It was in their best interests not only to maximize their personal allure but also to appear as convincingly wealthy as possible. Burford (1973: 94) suggests that prostitutes aped the finery of wealthy ladies in order to avoid being pursued by beadles and constables, though it is

likely that any law enforcement agents were very much practised in the art of distinguishing those who sold their bodies from those who did not.

High-class whores sometimes wore coloured veils and masks. In *The Night Walker*, Dunton describes the typical attire: 'Hat cock't up, long wigs powdered, flannel shoulder cloak powdered, beau muff, perfumed gloves, sparkling rings.'<sup>35</sup> The poorer streetwalker also attempted to dress as flashily as possible, using paints, powders and perfume.<sup>36</sup> In *Amanda: or, the Reformed Whore* of 1635, the narrator lists the possessions of a whore. We are told that she adorns herself with 'Bracelets, Pearle, and Amber' and owns a box of 'counterfeited haire' of various natural shades. She uses glasses of 'rare water' to improve her appearance, 'dainty powders' for her hands and hair, sweet perfumes and potions to scent her body and breath, marshmallow root to whiten her teeth and paint for her face. The prostitute is obsessed with her own appearance and spends hours at her mirror perfecting it. When Amanda repents of her whoredom, she declares:

Here, take my clothes, and sell them all away,  
They are not for my wearing anymore ...  
They are for Ladies, and for wives of Earles.  
Not fit for Strumpets, and for light heel'd girles.<sup>37</sup>

Respectable ladies were advised against wearing elaborately designed garments in order to avoid being mistaken for a prostitute. Cosmetics, in particular, were looked upon with outrage and horror. However, the notion of women dressing in a particular way in order to be easily identifiable as belonging to a certain group extended far beyond society's desire to separate prostitutes. In 1285 the corporation of London forbade common women to wear silk or miniver (the best squirrel fur) in order to ensure marks of distinction between classes were preserved. Dunton (1696) advises tradesmen's wives who dress like ladies, with elaborately arranged hair and painted faces, to return to the simple headdress and apron of a good housewife. In attempting to emulate the dress of their social superiors, he laments, city dames earn nothing but scorn from true ladies and are a major cause of the nation's moral collapse.<sup>38</sup>

Complaints regarding prostitutes also extended to more practical concerns. Sex workers tended to operate in the evening when most other householders were craving peace and repose. Indeed Cranley observed that prostitutes actively avoided going outside during daylight hours because they feared attack by hostile members of their community. He wrote that acquaintances were ashamed to publicly recognize such women while the latter were forced to regularly move lodgings or change their names in order to keep a low profile. At the trial of the

infamous madam, Elizabeth Cresswell, a number of 'hostile informants' living near her brothel at St Leonard's in Shoreditch testified that 'many Persons well-habited have resorted by Nyght as by Daye and have continued there Drinking, Ranting, Dancing, Revelling, Swearing and much demeaning Themselves as well upon the Lord's Day and Fast Days'. Neighbours complained that they were considering moving out of the area as their daughters and servants were frequently mistaken for Cresswell's whores. Cresswell was duly sent to the house of correction.<sup>39</sup>

Shoemaker (1992) has explained how the social character of certain areas of London began to change towards the end of the seventeenth century. Richer property owners left the inner West End parishes of St Giles in the Fields and Covent Garden and moved west to the new parishes of St Anne and St James in Westminster. As the empty properties were taken on by poorer residents, the numbers of brothels and gaming establishments multiplied. The respectable inhabitants left behind were appalled by their new neighbours and petitioned the authorities in a futile attempt to curb the area's decline. Local residents around Drury Lane were bitterly resentful of 'frequent outcries in the night, fighting, robberies, and all sorts of debauchery committed ... all night long'. Those living off Chancery Lane admitted they were ashamed to share their address with friends because of its proximity to a well-known brothel. In St Giles, wealthy residents in the northern part of the parish formed a new parish, St George Bloomsbury, in order to keep themselves apart from the area's worsening reputation. Gowing (1996: 101) has commented that the harshest critics of prostitutes were themselves female while those commentators based outside of London viewed the capital as a centre for vice, capable of corrupting the most unblemished of newcomers.<sup>40</sup>

Of course, those who profited from gaming houses and brothels resisted attempts to prevent the operation of their establishments. Justices of the Peace in St Giles in the Fields complained they were worn out by trying to mediate between the two groups of inhabitants. Although prostitution did take place in the east end, it did not provoke the same level of outrage from respectable citizens. Instances of sexual transgression were often curbed by neighbourly disapproval or smoothed over by means of informal mediation. In the west end, brothel owners and sex workers were far less likely to respond to community pressure and their presence was regarded as a real threat to the local area.

Local business people were probably more willing to tolerate prostitution because they were aware that the presence of prostitutes actually increased their revenues. When George Dorvel, of St Paul's Shadwell, arrested a prostitute and escorted her against her will to the watch house, one of his neighbours, the

baker's wife, told him to 'be very lenient with the person [for] you know we all get our living by these persons'. Landlords, meanwhile, enjoyed the inflated rents they could obtain from keepers of bawdy and disorderly houses so met any community push to eject such tenants with understandable reluctance.<sup>41</sup> It is also worth mentioning that although many local inhabitants huffed and puffed about prostitution in public, they were diligently hiding their own forms of avarice. Thompson (1979: 93) has highlighted the hypocrisy of Pepys who, after criticizing the king's response to the Messenger riots, proceeded to enjoy a fondling session with a Mrs Daniel in his coach the following day.

### 3.4 The Society for the Reformation of Manners

As noted in the analysis in the previous chapter, in the last years of the seventeenth century, there was widespread belief that immorality was overwhelming the nation and a renewed drive to suppress all forms of sin. A moral panic gathered momentum in reaction to the supposed increases in irreligiousness and a whole host of immorality. In 1692 William III issued a proclamation against vice which mentioned blasphemy, profane swearing and cursing, drunkenness, lewdness, breaking the Sabbath, and 'any other dissolute, immoral or disorderly practice'. With the official support of William and his wife Mary, the last decade of the seventeenth century witnessed the creation of a moral police force in London. The SRM was a peculiar offshoot of the English religious societies that were primarily concerned with salvation of their members by means of adherence to a strict moral code. The earliest religious societies were private organizations whose adult male members paid a subscription and gathered weekly to hear stirring sermons and religious instruction. During the reign of James II, the societies made efforts to publicize their existence and arranged, for instance, for sermons to be read in churches.

In 1691 a former lawyer named Edward Stephens founded a militant version of the religious societies named the SRM which actively sought to rout out sin and prosecute sinners. The primary aim of the reformers was to save the souls of the wicked but, on a more practical level, they believed that the widespread adoption of a moral way of living was the best method of ensuring a stable, peaceful society in which everyone knew and accepted their place. Societies were founded in almost forty cities and towns, including Newcastle, Hull, Leicester, Bristol and Portsmouth, but they were always most active in London where the campaign originated.<sup>42</sup>

The SRM was made up of a band of like-minded members of the middle classes, many of them Puritans, and targeted an array of supposed sinners, including those who drank, cursed, gambled and engaged in transgressive sex. The large number of branches of the SRM movement – London itself had several societies – meant that the priorities of its members were inconsistent. To achieve a successful prosecution, the law required only one witness and, moreover, this person was allowed to receive a financial reward and was sometimes granted anonymity. The SRM claimed that they had enrolled a workforce of between 150 and 200 informers from members of the public who mostly worked as skilled craftsmen. In reality, most of their convictions were achieved by means of information offered by a small number of committed informers. We should not immediately assume these informers were corrupt, however; although a proportion were no doubt stirred by the lure of hard cash, it is likely that most genuinely believed in the society's message. Yet the use of informers meant that the founders of the SRM were unable to control the number of prosecutions or the types of vice they targeted. The leaders of the SRM regarded insults that pertained directly to God, such as blasphemy and breaking the Sabbath, to be at the pinnacle of the sin hierarchy. In practice, however, the offence which was most frequently prosecuted was lewd and disorderly conduct. This might mean idleness, theft or vagrancy but was also the charge used most often against suspected prostitutes.<sup>43</sup>

The SRM published an annual report naming and shaming those convicted which was known as the Black Roll. It listed the names and offences of every person who had been accused, even if they had subsequently been found innocent, and indicated whether an offender was prosecuted for being a bawd, a whore, keeping a disorderly house,<sup>44</sup> being a disorderly person or for pick-pocketing. The names of women always outnumbered those of men on the Black Rolls. The society prosecuted between two hundred and nine hundred prostitutes a year; in the year 1699 it reported that five hundred disorderly houses had been suppressed. Most of these women were summarily sentenced to the houses of correction which was a convenient and inexpensive method of justice. It was much more expensive to attain a conviction against a bawd because such prosecutions had to be conducted by indictment; in 1698 only four women on the Black Rolls were found guilty of keeping a brothel. Towards the end of the seventeenth century, Justices sometimes chose to bypass this difficulty by summarily convicting bawds of selling ale or liquor without a licence instead.<sup>45</sup>

Shoemaker (1992: 99–100, 106–7) has offered a credible explanation of why the society targeted poor prostitutes rather than their clients. He believes that



the Reformation of Manners campaign was a response to concerns about social problems such as poverty and crime that thrived in London and other large cities. A sermon of Josiah Woodward, a zealous advocate and publicist of the society, declared that idle people, in other words, those without legal work, were 'the shame, the burden and annoyance' of London and would threaten the profits and peace of more diligent inhabitants.<sup>46</sup> Some inhabitants of London initially welcomed the society as they offered a means of ridding the streets of prostitutes, beggars, street merchants and other disorderly people. The language used by reformers revealed how they associated prostitution with other social problems: many prostitutes were also accused of theft, vagrancy, idleness or disorderly behaviour. Meanwhile, the small numbers of men who were prosecuted for using the services of prostitutes were also charged with an additional offence such as drunkenness.

In its first three decades, the society published around 400,000 books, distributing large numbers free of charge. It is difficult to establish to what extent members of the public were influenced by this literature but, given that it was most likely used in schools and read out by vicars in sermons, it was probably difficult to avoid it altogether. The society soon went into decline: its publishing activity from 1721 onwards was very small in comparison to earlier years. Its last set of annual figures was published in 1738 and totalled a mere 545 prosecutions.

At the turn of the century, the society had already begun to lose support, both from the church authorities, who viewed the involvement of non-conformists with distaste, and the wider public, which started to favour less punitive measures. It appears that the ceaseless prying by society members had begun to irritate many Londoners and the use of informers failed to gain social acceptance. Information from informers was treated with suspicion, particularly if the informer did not live locally, and there were many instances of people being beaten or threatened for informing. There was significant judicial opposition to the society, with many Justices resisting, first, the practice of members of their community being convicted by another Justice who lived outside of their division and, secondly, the society's preference for stringent punishment rather than a more meditative approach.<sup>47</sup> SRM members were easy targets to lampoon for their insipidity and lack of humour. In 1700 *The London Spy* had already categorized members of the society as avaricious hypocrites:

A Modern Reformer of Vice; Or, A Reforming Constable, Is a Man most commonly of a very Scandalous Necessity, who has no way left, but *Pimp* like, to Live upon other Peoples *Debaucheries*. Every Night he goes to Bed, he prays

heartily that the World may grow more *Wicked*; for one and the same Interest serves him and the Devil. ... He searches a *Bawdy-house*, as a *Church-Warden* does an *Ale-house*, not to punish *Vice*, but to get Money.<sup>48</sup>

It did not go unnoticed that most of the successful prosecutions were against those at the very bottom of the social hierarchy. Daniel Defoe condemned the society for persecuting the poor while allowing the immorality of the upper classes to continue unabated. Brutal punishments of convicts – whipping, for instance, was not repealed until 1817 – provoked more public disapproval than approbation. Occasionally members of the public would band together to prevent arrests by members of the SRM: in 1709 a society supporter, John Dent, was killed by a group of soldiers during a scuffle which broke out when a constable attempted to arrest a suspected prostitute named Anne Dickens. Advised by Chief Justice Holt, the court ruled that Dent's killers were guilty of manslaughter rather than murder. Holt concluded that the soldiers had reason to defend Dickens because there were insufficient grounds for her arrest in the first place.<sup>49</sup>

The society's assertion that English society was in danger of being subjected to divine damnation was an insult to the work of the church and the crown. High churchmen regarded the SRM with suspicion and resentment while William III, albeit publicly supporting its work, was uneasy at the high number of dissenter members and even ordered that some meetings should be spied on and that the SRM be placed under investigation. Perhaps the largest factor in the failure of the society was a realization among its members that they were failing to have any real impact upon the standard of morality in England. Early hopes that England would become a sin-free paradise slowly receded and were replaced by the lesser aim that people would adhere to an outward appearance of respectability. Once such disillusionment set in, the days of the society were numbered.<sup>50</sup>

One theme that has emerged in all of the case studies so far is a link between prostitution and crime – prostitutes were perpetrators of crime and were punished for it. In the section that follows we will, accordingly, take a closer look at evidence for what links existed between prostitution and crime in the period.

### 3.5 Prostitutes and crime

In moral discourse of the early modern period, whores and thieves were regular consorts and prostitutes themselves often indulged in a little pickpocketing on

the side. This construction of prostitutes as petty thieves is supported by archival evidence. We will look here at some cases from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by way of illustration. Our focus will once again be London, largely because of the wealth of evidence available for the city. Griffiths (1998: 221) has shown that in the London Bridewell, one quarter of women charged with a second offence in addition to nightwalking were accused of pickpocketing or some other form of minor theft. A client of a prostitute named Constantia Jones described, during her trial, how she stole from him: 'As I stood against the Wall, the prisoner came behind me, and with one hand she took hold of – and the other she thrust into my Breeches Pocket and took my Money.' Constantia, aged thirty but having already suffered twenty incarcerations in Newgate, was hanged.<sup>51</sup>

Another prostitute sentenced to be hanged was Lucy Johnson or 'Black Lucy', one of the many women of African heritage working in the city. In June 1779, Lucy Johnson offered to sell her recently deceased husband's waistcoat to a Suffolk schoolmaster. He accompanied her to a nearby lodging house for the purpose of completing the sale but was set upon by Lucy and several other women who held him down, ripped open his breeches and took his money. Lucy was tried and found guilty but her unborn child saved her from the gallows.<sup>52</sup>

Perhaps surprisingly, in many cases where a jury was required to decide between the word of a suspected whore and that of her client, they chose to believe the former. The Old Bailey Proceedings Online provides a number of examples. Hester Quill was accused of pocket-picking on 30 November 1719, although her trial was not heard until the following September. Thomas Bugg, her accuser, described how he met Quill in the street and accompanied her to a little room in the Standard Tavern where he proceeded to feel 'her hand very busy about his Breeches'. He later claimed she had made off with seven guineas that he had concealed in his fob under his watch. He explained to the court that he did not bring his prosecution sooner because he was ashamed of being in her company. Hester Quill swore she had stayed at home with friends on the night in question and that she only knew Thomas Bugg as a neighbour. She admitted she had accosted Bugg but only after she heard his accusation against her and when his wife had insulted her by stating, 'I love a whore, but I hate a pick pocket whore.' It is impossible to say whose account was nearest the truth but, in this case, the court decided in favour of Quill and she was acquitted.<sup>53</sup>

Similarly, Joane Lane was cleared of pocket-picking on 3 April 1695. Her accuser, Gilbert Mackauggel, described how she 'enticed' him to drink with her before stealing ten shillings and a ducatoon from his pocket. Lane, 'with the

most Solemn Asservations that could be' swore she was a poor washerwoman who had been forced by a drunken Mackauggel to accompany him that evening. Evidently, the jury believed her declaration that she was too old to be a whore for they duly acquitted her.<sup>54</sup>

Sarah Martin and Sarah Mullenux, a young whore and an older bawd, were accused of grand larceny on 30 August 1727. Their accuser, Peter Cox, described how he and another man had accompanied Martin to the house of Mullenux. His friend had taken another woman into a nearby room while he was being entertained by Martin but afterwards he realized his watch was missing. He and his friend proceeded to search Martin but not Mullenux in respect of her age. An additional witness testified that Cox was a common whoremonger and that Mullenux's establishment was not the first he had visited that evening; she claimed he had pawned his watch earlier at another bawdy house. The jury decided that the prisoner and prosecutor were all 'Persons of a very bad Character' but, as the truth was difficult to ascertain, all were acquitted.<sup>55</sup>

The website *London Lives 1690-1800 – Crime, Poverty and Social Policy in the Metropolis* has reconstructed the lives of thousands of individuals who lived in late-seventeenth- and early-eighteenth-century London.<sup>56</sup> While largely outside of the period we are studying, the biographies of three prostitutes and one bawd in the collection are of interest as they paint a picture that would probably still be pertinent for the seventeenth century. For example, Charlotte Walker, who was born around 1754, had a long career in the St Giles area as a prostitute and pickpocket. She was arrested twenty-seven times for stealing but not all of these cases made it to court. She made twelve appearances at the Old Bailey, eleven of which she was acquitted, while an additional fifteen arrests for felony were recorded in the sessions books. She was also charged with being disorderly and for assault on a number of occasions and once for being a vagrant. Her accusers usually described her accosting them in the street and taking their goods from their pockets; stealing from men while drinking with them; or accompanying them to their lodgings and stealing from them while they slept. Charlotte always defended herself rigorously and accused her prosecutors of being drunken and immoral. She was usually acquitted on the basis of a lack of evidence but in 1799, when she had reached her mid-forties, she was found guilty of stealing a silver watch from John Taylor. She had made the uncharacteristic mistake of hiding the watch in her bosom where it was found by a watchman. Charlotte was sentenced to death but her sentence was commuted to transportation for life. She arrived in Sydney in December 1801 and died there five years later.<sup>57</sup>

Although we have highlighted a number of cases where prostitutes managed to gain a relatively fair trial, they rarely obtained any justice regarding disputes over payment. If such cases reached court, the judgement was almost always reached in favour of the client who usually counter-accused the prostitute of theft. Occasionally, if the dispute occurred in a public place, the prostitute might gain more support. Isabella Roe and Grace Weedon were apprehended in Drury Lane after a disagreement about payment. Local people gathered about the two women in order to protect them from arrest. In another instance, a man named Stephen Gathern stole a watch from a prostitute, Elizabeth Hammond, claiming that she had stolen it from his friend. Witnesses supported Elizabeth and advised her to charge him with street robbery.<sup>58</sup>

A discourse linking prostitutes with crime runs through seventeenth-century literature. Contemporary writers provided numerous examples of prostitutes supplementing their income from the sale of sex by means of other types of criminal activity. Although such sources should not be regarded as a mirror on reality – their authors were, after all, in the business of entertainment – it is safe to assume that they increased contemporary prejudice against prostitutes and heightened popular fears of a criminal counter-culture. Some published sources claimed to describe real-life women and their conduct. In *Wonderfull Strange Newes from Woodstreet COUNTER* (1642: 1–3), the character Tom Tell-troth describes how he has just come from ‘one of the Damnable Baudy-houses, that this City affoordes’ which is full of ‘fresh wenches every Night’ who are ‘admirable Rascals, pure Rogues, blood-sucking Horseleeches, damnable Cut purses.’ They will ‘picke a mans pocket and give him reason for it’.

The assumption that prostitutes were thieves was strongly expressed in Restoration literature. Two satires of 1660 and 1661, authored by ‘Peter Aretine, Cardinall of Rome’, a pseudonym inspired by the Italian satirist Pietro Aretino, make similar use of fictional dialogue for humorous effect but this time it is the whores themselves who reference their practice of picking clients’ pockets. In *Strange Nevves from Bartholomew-Fair, or, the Wandring-Whore discovered* (1661: 4), three gossiping whores, Bonny Bessie, Merry Moll and Pritty Peg, are joined by the Wandring-Whore. The last provides an uproarious description of how she steals from a client:

I spread my shrouds, vnvail my Cabinet disclose my secrets, and open the pure Linnen Curtains that hang before my chief Fortress, drink a Cann or two, smoak, sing old Rose, dance, and when the Gull is elivated, I lull him asleep as *Delilah* did *Sampson*, and then turn *Philistine*, tip his Bung, and deprive him of the strength of his Estate, so he rises when he awakes as poor as *Job*, thinking he

hath been in Heaven when indeed newly crept out of the Devils Vestry. marching off like a senselesse piece of iniquity, not thinking of his losse till he comes into the Fair, to lay out his mony in Bawbles for his sweet-heart, it may be in Gloves, Ribbons, Rings, Beads, Bracelets or other such like Fancies, yet coming to pay, diving in his Pocket for Coal, he finds all as clear as a room new swept; thus by my free entertainment, I free him from the sin of covetousnesse.

In the spoof pamphlet, *Strange & true Nevves from Jack-a-Newberries Six Windmills* (1660: 3–4), the members of the chuck office created by Mrs Fotheringham establish twenty-five orders, including

that it be lawful for such as enter themselves into our community to have free leave (without being questioned for the fact) to pick any mans pockets either of gold, silver, Rings or watches, if he put his hands in their plackets.

Moreover, any theft must be afterwards denied ‘for the credit of our good-old-cause’. Another order declares that whores must be proficient at placing ‘cushions under their coats causing their Cullies to believe they are with child, and not to take under ten pound to discharge them thereof’. Indeed, rogue literature abounds with examples of prostitutes making the most from an unwanted pregnancy.<sup>59</sup> A play by Charles II’s favourite comic actor, John Lacy, entitled *The Old Troop* tells the story of the prostitute Dol Troop who makes her living by keeping company with the regiment. After realizing she is pregnant, Dol declares that she has found her meal ticket: ‘I mean to lay this great belly to every man that has but touched my apron strings.’<sup>60</sup>

Some published sources claimed to describe real-life women and their conduct. *A Catalogue of Jilts, Cracks & Prostitutes, Night-walkers, Whores, She-friends, Kind Women and others of the Linnen-lifting Tribe* (1691: 1) was the last in a series of six broadsides published in anticipation of St Bartholomew’s Fair that was to be held in August 1691. It describes twenty-two real prostitutes, giving all the details necessary for their identification except for their full names. It warns of a certain Mrs Y- -g, for example, who will cost more than her advertised 2s. 6d. if she chooses to pick your pocket.

John Dunton published his periodical *The Night Walker: or, Evening Rambles in search After Lewd Women, With the conferences Held with Them, Etc. To Be publish’d Monthly ‘Till a Discovery be made of all the chief Prostitutes in England, from the Pensionary Miss, down to the Common Strumpet* in monthly instalments between September 1696 and March 1697. Despite the titillating title and some salacious details, the serial constitutes a moral tract. Dunton’s father, grandfather and great-grandfather had all been clergymen and Dunton himself was an

active member of the SRM. *The Night Walker's* narrator describes approaching prostitutes, pimps and their clients in the guise of someone looking to buy sex and then attempting to show them the error of their ways. His moralizing does seem to have hit a nerve in some women. In the instalment issued in October 1696, the narrator meets a beautiful, high-class prostitute in St James's Park who allows him to accompany her back to her well-furnished lodgings. She recounts how she was left without an inheritance after the death of her father and, on arriving in London, a bawd 'did easily draw me a side, and delude me into this vile Practice, which I must confess I abhor when I have any calm or sedate thoughts, but when I think of abandoning this way of living, then my former Straits stare me in the Face and Weakens my Resolves'. Dunton includes a great deal of description about the backgrounds of prostitutes but also offers some useful detail on their manner of working. He describes how one particular bawd ordered her girls to fight in the street if business was slow and sent pickpockets in among the crowd as they gathered to watch. The girls regularly broke into houses and, as a last resort, would pick the pockets of drunken lechers.

### 3.6 Did prostitutes form part of a 'criminal underworld'?

It is tempting to base our theories of life in seventeenth-century London on our feelings for London today. We might imagine a more primitive, grubbier version of the city we know, set as a carbuncle of crime in an otherwise pastoral and law-abiding idyll. Shoemaker (1991: 284–5) has shown that, with the exception of the east end, prosecution rates in the urban parishes of Middlesex were much higher than in rural Middlesex between 1660 and 1725. It is possible that crime was less frequent in rural areas because villagers were more socially constrained by their families and communities or had less need or temptation to steal. However, Shoemaker believes that prosecution rates do not reflect instances of petty crime; he explains that many rural inhabitants were put off pursuing a prosecution by the distance they would be forced to travel to the nearest courthouse and instead preferred to settle their disputes by means of mediation.

McMullen (1984) has investigated the widespread belief – shared by some historians as well as contemporary observers – of London as a criminal gangland in which prostitutes and thieves were organized in a criminal fraternity. He has based his study upon members of the 'Elizabethan underworld': pickpockets, cutpurses, thieves, confidence-cheats, fences, panderers and prostitutes. He argues that the close association between prostitution and theft was not

inevitable. There was a distinct difference between those who earned their living from the sale of the sex and those who posed as prostitutes in order to steal from clients. He contends that professional organized crime did exist in London but only because the city presented a larger, more anonymous population and a denser concentration of valuable goods:

London emerged as the urban equivalent of the greenwood forest – an anonymous refuge providing routine avenues for persistent crime. The masses of consumer goods displayed in open stalls and shops made petty theft easy. The concentration of a large population living near or below the poverty line, little influenced by religious or moral ideology, provided criminal work groups with ready-made material. The institutions of leisure and entertainment were the haunts of pickpockets, confidence cheats, and prostitutes. The patrons of such pleasure resorts – the gentry and the rising professionals – were the abundant and lucrative targets of the thief and the cony-catcher.<sup>61</sup>

Whether or not London's population can be accurately depicted as wild, lawless and immoral requires much more research. Indeed, some scholars counter that the people of preindustrial London did enjoy close social bonds with one another while unique institutions such as the guilds, apprenticeship system and the ward system of local government, helped maintain public order and provide poor relief.<sup>62</sup> Levels of social cohesion were most likely tested in the second half of the seventeenth century due, as Shoemaker (1991: 10–16) believes, to the decline of the wardmote system and the guilds. Moreover, during this period, around 8,000 immigrants arrived each year to swell the population, mainly settling in the suburbs around the city, which led to high levels of unemployment and poverty. This does not necessarily mean that the inhabitants of London, particularly those newly arrived immigrants, spent their time drifting through the city committing crimes. Most of the people who moved to London were searching for legitimate work and many already had friends or family members living in the city. Once employed, they rapidly became attached to their workmates and, in their leisure time, they were able to make new social ties in places like alehouses and playhouses. However, those who failed to find jobs or whose temporary contracts ran out must have dented the city's sense of order, even if it was only in terms of the higher presence of beggars roaming the streets.

It does appear that Londoners themselves bought into the concept that they were constantly under threat. Henry Goodcole wrote six news-pamphlets between 1618 and 1637 and has been described by Martin (2009: 1) as England's



first professional crime writer. Goodcole was one of the first ordinaries of Newgate to publish pamphlets about the crimes of its prisoners. Goodcole's *Heavens Speedie Hue and Cry sent after Lust and Murther* of 1635 sold well and went through several editions. Describing the criminal behaviour of Elizabeth Evans and her lover Thomas Shearwood, who robbed and murdered three gentlemen in London between 1634 and 1635, the pamphlet made a forceful attempt to connect commercial sex with violence in the minds of its readers. Goodcole related how Evans would accost a man in the streets, often pretending to be a forgotten acquaintance, and 'with her deceitfull smiles, and salutes, so inchant, and incaptivate, and leads him unto slaughter'. Like a 'decoy Ducke', Evans would arrange to meet the victim in a secluded location where he would then be bludgeoned and robbed by Shearwood.

Goodcole referred to specific locations in London in his murder-narrative which were well-known haunts for thieves and prostitutes: Shearwood and Evans initially came across their final victim, Robert Claxton, near 'the Kings gate which is by Bloomesbury' and Evans later took him 'into Grayes-Inne fields'. Rowland Holt, murdered in January 1635, was killed in Clerkenwell field, a notorious location for illicit sex. Martin (2009: 7) has argued that Goodcole identified the murder locations by name in order to ensure that his readers, as inhabitants of London, would connect the crimes with real or imagined fears concerning their own personal safety. Goodcole tacitly purported to be offering a public service: he urged his readers to greater vigilance of their surroundings and their own personal safety.<sup>63</sup>

Capp (1996: 23), in a study of seventeenth-century serial killers, has decreed that the names of Shearwood and Evans 'passed into the popular memory as archetypal figures of evil'. Indeed, it has been argued that Goodcole's pamphlet hardened public attitudes against prostitutes. Martin (2009: 8) asserts that, from 1637 onwards, records of the Court of Aldermen and the Journals of the Common Council start to document complaints of 'lewd and idle women being common nightwalkers wandring the streets of this city to attempt and entice youth and other people to lewdness in the evenings'. From this point onwards, prostitutes were regularly identified as being 'enticers' of men in the records of proceedings by London magistrates. Minutes before his execution, Shearwood, rather ignobly, warned the onlookers 'to beware of Whores, for they were the worst Company in the World, wishing all to beware by his fall, and not to bee seduced, or blind-fold led, as hee was by such bewitching Creatures, to irrevocable ruine'.

In the last two decades of the seventeenth century, popular fears that a crime wave was underway magnified. The SRM initially targeted bawdy houses as they believed that

they are not only the nurseries of the most horrid vices, and sinks of the most filthy debaucheries, but also (as we suppose them) the common receptacles, or rather, dens, of notorious thieves, robbers, traitors and other criminals, that fly from public justice.<sup>64</sup>

Brothels did provide a focal point for a wide range of criminal activity. They provided a 'supportive background' where criminals were introduced to one another, crimes were planned and information was exchanged. Meanwhile bawds themselves often doubled as brokers, helping thieves dispose of stolen goods. Brothel owners sometimes managed a number of establishments but it is doubtful that the relationships between keepers consisted of anything beyond a loose association. They were, however, prepared to trade or pool prostitutes when necessary. McMullen (1984: 24, 130, 139–40) has shown that brothels were a lucrative investment and, as such, formed part of a wider pattern of property ownership.<sup>65</sup> Yet it appears that the perpetrators of most criminal acts were not members of professional gangs. Crime in London remained largely unorganized and opportunistic: liaisons between criminals did exist but they were informal and temporary.

Houses that lodged prostitutes attracted thieves and pickpockets and were thought to harbour forgers, embezzlers and false witnesses. In May 1576 Richard Smethwick identified six cutpurses 'with a great number more that lye commonly every saturday at night in a barne at the further ende of Tuttle street' in Westminster; another two sleeping in an alehouse in Warwick Lane; and several more gathered at a barn between Lambeth Marsh and the bishop of Carlisle's house, 'with dyverse whores thear with them'. Again, the connection between such criminals and prostitutes is amorphous: it appears that some of these men may have been involved in the everyday working lives of prostitutes as go-betweens or bullies. Others acted as accomplices by helping prostitutes steal small sums from their clients. More rarely, some lodging house brothels operated a ploy known as 'cheating nunnery' in which a client would be blackmailed with exposure – to his family or the law – if he refused to pay up. Those prostitutes who had no option other than to take their clients to a backroom in an alehouse or coffee house would be familiar with crossbiters who lived by swindle and extortion.<sup>66</sup> Whether or not there was any long-term association between the

two groups is difficult to ascertain and depended very much on the emotions and modus operandi of the individuals involved.<sup>67</sup>

However, proximity to 'pimps, panderers and bullies' also posed a danger to prostitutes and some found themselves on the receiving end of these men's criminal ventures. Blackmailing prostitutes was an easy source of revenue but some criminals preferred to sell information directly to the authorities in return for reward or reprieve. Of course, informers were not always motivated by greed: some spies were upstanding members of the community who regarded prostitution with deep disapproval. Although McMullen (1984: 141–2) has concluded that it was improbable that integrated rings of pimps and panderers existed, it is likely that many prostitutes found themselves in the clutches of parasites, consenting to their demands only through fear of violence.

Research by Griffiths (1993) into the world of petty criminals has revealed that more males than females worked as pickpockets, nippers, pickers and cutpurses. Some prostitutes were content to limit their activities to selling their bodies and regarded theft as an immoral means of making a living. One woman, Alice Sharpe, who came to London to find employment, was procured by a Mrs Green who consoled her that 'it is better to doe so then to steale'.<sup>68</sup>

### 3.7 The emergence of compassion

Public attitudes regarding prostitutes became more complex as the seventeenth century progressed. In the first half of the seventeenth century, commentators on real-life criminals tended to account for their behaviour by reducing it to the single factor of human sin. Many writers of early modern crime stories were Calvinist-trained clergymen who had encountered their subjects first-hand while administering their professional duties in county jails. These clerics presented criminals as simply having been susceptible to vices which respectable people were able to keep at bay through self-discipline or as a result of external controls on their behaviour. Martin (2009) has described how, in the 1660s, with the emergence of commercial journalism such as assize-trial reports and newspapers, crime writers began to acknowledge contingent circumstances such as poverty and unemployment. Martin has singled out Henry Goodcole's *Heavens Speedie Hue and Cry* as one of the first murder pamphlets to expand on the moral explanations of homicide. Not only does Goodcole elucidate on the lowly circumstances of the murderers, Thomas Shearwood and Elizabeth Evans, he also presents London itself, with its criminalized spaces posing permanent

danger to inhabitants, as bearing a degree of blame. Goodcole's readers would have recognized Shearwood and Evans as belonging to the large group of migrants that flooded seventeenth-century London in search of work. However, as Martin highlights, rather than present the couple as simply descending into a life of crime by choice, Goodcole looks upon Evans with something approaching sympathy. He explains that her family and friends had withdrawn their emotional and financial support after she had made the social error of losing her virginity while unmarried.

By the 1720s, influenced by writers such as Goodcole, a new narrative describing the descent of seduced and abandoned women into prostitution had been constructed.<sup>69</sup> As we have seen, the seventeenth-century whore existed in the popular imagination as a ruthless and corrupting influence. Not only does she manipulate, infect and steal from her naïve clients, she also viciously revels in her immorality. This image did persist but it was challenged by the first glimmers of compassion for prostitutes, represented by a new discourse that the prostitute was a powerless victim of unfortunate circumstances.<sup>70</sup> This change was perhaps connected with an adjustment in general attitudes to women that had begun during the Restoration. For the first time, women were being portrayed as delicate and passive creatures that were naturally modest,<sup>71</sup> an image sorely at odds with the lusty and thieving whores portrayed in earlier seventeenth-century print.

### 3.8 Conclusion

Seventeenth-century literature featured a cast of hardened and manipulative whores who delighted in ruining the lives of gullible young men. As we saw in Chapter 2, this links in to a degree with the life experience of some prostitutes, though by no means all of them. Given the evidence in Chapter 2, it is not a great surprise to have discovered in this chapter that there is evidence to suggest that respectable people regarded prostitutes as a corrupting influence on the binds of conventional family life and social discipline. Prostitutes had to walk a fine line between self-promotion – which entailed being loud, visible and flamboyantly attired – and lying low to reduce the risk of arrest. Those prostitutes who appeared to flaunt their wantonness represented a particular affront to a society which valued silence, chastity and obedience in women. On a more practical level, neighbourhoods were disturbed by the nocturnal revels taking place in bawdy houses that were concentrated in particular areas of the city. One

expression of popular hostility towards prostitutes was a sequence of ritualized attacks on brothels by London apprentices throughout the seventeenth century. A more serious disturbance, which took place during the Easter of 1668, was most likely politically motivated. As noted in Chapter 2 and reinforced here, not all prostitutes were regarded with contempt: some communities accepted and valued individual whores, particularly when their presence encouraged an influx of men eager to partake of the wares of surrounding tradespeople.

In the last decade of the seventeenth century, the SRM was founded by a group of like-minded Puritan moralists. Targeting prostitutes rather than their clients, they succeeded in obtaining the prosecutions of thousands of women. The popularity of the SRM reached into the first quarter of the eighteenth century but was ultimately curtailed by a public perception that developed that saw their methods as spiteful and hypocritical.

As was shown in Chapter 2 and emphasized again in this chapter, archival evidence, supported by literary accounts, suggests that many prostitutes engaged in petty theft in order to supplement their incomes. However, those prostitutes who did steal probably did so opportunistically. Prostitutes, no doubt, associated with male criminals, in alehouses, brothels and lodging houses, and may have teamed up with them on occasion but such ties were usually temporary and informal and the former may have emerged the worse for wear in any such arrangement. This again ties in well to the findings presented in Chapter 2. However, in this chapter we have also seen that some prostitutes eschewed theft, believing that the selling of sexual favours was a more honest and principled way of making a living.

Chapters 2 and 3 have given us the background, which will allow us to begin to contextualize what we find when we investigate corpus data in the next chapter. With this context in place, we can now turn to consider how we would look for evidence of prostitution in public discourse. The review suggests some routes into this question – might we look at words like *bridewell*, for example, to see to what extent prostitutes were discussed with relation to imprisonment? Similarly, might we choose to look at words relating to punishments, such as carting, to see to what extent the punishment of prostitutes is discussed? While both of these approaches have some merit, they are also problematic. We wish to study public discourse in general and to see how prostitutes were represented in it. We do not specifically want to focus, for example, on the imprisonment and punishment of prostitutes. These themes may, given the historical context, emerge during the analysis – but they should not be the exclusive focus of it. Hence, we decided to look for words which could refer to prostitutes. We could then explore those

words to build a more general view of the representation of the group in the EEBO corpus. In doing so, we know that we will face difficulties – we will need to determine what words to look for at the very least. We will need to consider frequent words and infrequent words. Also, given the span of time covered, we must be prepared for the possibility that some words will become less frequent over time while others become more frequent. Issues such as these are the focus of the next chapter.



# Looking at Words

## 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter we will begin the exploration of the EEBO corpus in the light of what was introduced about prostitution in Britain in the two previous chapters. However, before we can look meaningfully at a topic in a corpus, we need to answer a deceptively simple question – what will we look for? This issue can be problematic even in a modern corpus where one’s intuitions as a native speaker of a language, for example, can help to guide an initial search. Given that there are no native speakers of Early Modern English left, the question of what to look for becomes an area in which the corpus linguist and historian can gainfully interact. To begin with, we will consider how to look for words referring to prostitution and, from there, see the extent to which these can be used as a gateway to explore, more broadly, women and sex in the seventeenth century.<sup>1</sup>

## 4.2 Looking up: What to search for?

There are a number of approaches one might take to looking up words and patterns in a corpus. The most obvious is to allow your intuitions to be a guide, as noted. This often proves to be a rapid and fruitful route into a modern corpus – if we were to look at prostitution in a corpus of present-day English we could, in all likelihood, draw up a list of words to look for quite quickly based on our experiences of hearing about prostitution on the radio or reading about it in newspapers. However, we do not so clearly have such intuitions, gained on the basis of casual experience, to draw upon when exploring the seventeenth century. We could use our intuitions about the English language now to look at the topic of prostitution four hundred years ago, but this is likely to be an unreliable guide at best, as will be shown in this chapter.



What other resources may we draw upon? One possible source of terms to explore would be dictionaries in general and slang dictionaries in particular. Prostitution was an activity which, as shown in the previous chapters, took place on the margins of society so it is fair to assume that a number of slang terms might be associated with the practice in the past, as they are today. So dictionaries may well record these terms. Dictionaries such as the *Oxford English Dictionary* and the *Chambers Dictionary of Slang* do indeed include words relating to prostitution in the seventeenth century. However, consulting them brings us back to the same problem we had to start with. How do we know which words to look up in the dictionary? If we know a particular word *X* is important, why would we bother looking in the dictionary to begin with? We could just go directly to the corpus. It would be unwise to bypass the dictionary as it can act as a corrective on our intuitions about terms relating to prostitution, based on our experience of present-day English. So we can check, for example, whether the phrase 'sex worker', which is used in present-day English, was used in the seventeenth century. The dictionaries may help in this way, removing the need for some looking up and exploration in the corpus itself. However, they are poorer at allowing us to discover words relating to prostitution that we do not know but which were used in the past. An exception is the *Oxford English Dictionary* which, in its online version, allows us to explore words occurring in definitions within a particular period. This is potentially very helpful as will be shown later in this chapter.<sup>2</sup> However, as will also be shown, the *OED* is not as good a source of slang terms as a slang dictionary is, so some fusion between this resource and the slang dictionary would still be necessary. That takes us back to the question of what to look up.

Unlike the *OED*, the *Chambers Dictionary of Slang* is not available in an electronic edition that we can search rapidly using a computer.<sup>3</sup> While we might scan through the slang dictionary by eye, it would be difficult to conclude that any such search was either reliable or exhaustive. Yet even if we could search the *Chambers Dictionary* as swiftly as the *OED*, there would still be an issue. The dictionaries are typically a poor guide to which words are worth looking for – we would much rather spend our time and effort looking at frequent words than infrequent ones, for example. A dictionary like the *Chambers Dictionary of Slang*, while it is a superb reference resource, does not indicate which words are frequent or rare. Consequently the dictionary would be of little help to a researcher who wished to focus on the common words and expressions used to refer to a prostitute.

One route into the question of what to look for may be to examine specific texts from the period which are known to discuss the topic of prostitution. For

example, John Crouch's newsbook *Mercurius Fumigosus*, published 1654–5, often discusses prostitutes. Perhaps by focusing on a close reading of such texts we could extract a set of words and phrases that we may care to use to begin exploring the topic. There are obvious advantages to this approach, yet there are disadvantages. The seventeenth century is a long span of time and, as Chapter 2 showed, a turbulent one. It may be that the terms used to refer to prostitutes vary over that period; hence, while looking at one set of texts from the early 1650s might provide a good way into the corpus, it may also promote skew – we may end up applying a lens from the early 1650s to the whole corpus. Also, if we wished to use frequency to guide our study, we may introduce a further element of skew – it may be that Crouch's choice of words to refer to prostitutes was idiosyncratic in some sense; for example, perhaps he preferred to use infrequent terms or coined novel turns of phrase of his own to describe prostitutes. Finally, while initially such materials were a good source of data on slang terms, they have been mined by lexicographers, so whatever insights they had to offer to the study of words relating to prostitution have been realized.<sup>4</sup> So, while it is an interesting approach, using texts like this as a guide would, at the very least, require a good number of such texts to be looked at covering a range of authors and the whole span studied before a reliable set of words and phrases to be studied could be determined.

However, another possible source of evidence for what to look up can be drawn both directly and indirectly from the existing body of research on the topic of prostitution in the period.<sup>5</sup> It can be drawn directly by looking at the words historians have said are used in the period. Indirectly, in looking at the studies for the period and original manuscripts the historian begins to develop a sense – intuitions if you like – about what words and phrases were used in the seventeenth century to refer to prostitutes. Interestingly, in gaining that knowledge the historian may also gather a sense of which words and phrases appear common and which are infrequent. In brief, the experience of the language of the seventeenth century that historians interested in the study of prostitution gain from reading many sources in the period provides them with valuable insights into the words used throughout the century to refer to prostitutes. It also gives them a sense of what may or may not be frequent. We decided to explore the extent to which the intuitions a historian develops in reading texts from the period can provide a guide to the linguist in looking at corpora in the period. To do this the historian was asked to list out words and phrases she thought were used in the centuries to refer to prostitutes based upon her reading of the literature about prostitution in the period and her direct experience of

relevant documents of the period. These are shown in Figure 4.1. Note that the list in Figure 4.1 is not going to be exhaustive. We thought this may be a faster way to access the corpus in a balanced way than would be possible using the other methods we had considered. Yet we need not set aside the lexicographic resources – we can use the historian’s intuition to look at the dictionaries to get a sense of which words that the historian believes may be new to the dictionaries. Hence in Figure 4.1, words or phrases occurring in the *OED* with the required meaning are marked with an \*, words or phrases occurring in the *Chambers Dictionary of Slang* with the required meaning are marked with a †. Words or terms the historian thought were rare when describing prostitutes are italicized.

Figure 4.1 provides reassurance that the historian’s intuitions produce good terms to explore the corpus with. It also provides a number of words and phrases that are not attested in the dictionaries explored as meaning prostitute in the period, which are therefore worth investigating. We will return later to the words and phrases meaning prostitute which are not in this list but which are attested in the dictionaries. For now, we will proceed with an investigation of the terms in Figure 4.1.

What general observations can be made of the list in terms of the ease with which the items in it can be explored? Some words can be explored easily – they are words which seem to have a meaning very closely associated with prostitutes (e.g. *trull*). Others pose more of an issue because they vary between being a noun and a verb and it is only the nominal form that is of interest – *prostitute* is the prime example of this. Some words, on the other hand, look as though they will present a problem. Even without looking in a corpus, one suspects that words like *commodities* and *miss* are likely to prove highly problematic. The word *commodities* is more often than not likely to refer to something other than a prostitute. The word *miss* is both commonly a title and a verb – its use to refer

*ape-gentlewoman*, Bartholomew Baby, Bridewell Baggage, Bridewell Bird, commodities†, courtesan\*, Covent Garden ladies†, crack, *daughters of sodom*, *doves of Venus*, girls of pleasure†, harlot\*†, *hydra*, jade, jilt\*†, kind woman, lewd / wicked / abominable / debauched / disorderly person\* or woman, miss\*†, monster\*, nightwalker\*†, *nocturnal privateers*, *nymph*\*†, *pirates of the night*\*, prostitute\*, punk\*†, quean\*†, she-friend\*, strumpet\*, *the sisterhood*, traffic\*†, trull\*†, wanton ladies, whore\*†, Winchester goose\*†, woman of iniquity, woman of the town\*†

**Figure 4.1** Possible terms to describe prostitutes in the seventeenth century.

to prostitutes, as with *commodities*, would, we assumed, be both rare and would have to be carefully pulled apart from the uses of the words not referring to prostitutes. Another problem arises around the word *woman*. This word seems to be capable of being modified in a very large number of ways to allow it to be used to refer to a *prostitute*. Given that the ways in which the word is modified in this manner are unlikely to be listed exhaustively in Figure 4.1, we need to think through ways to look at patterns around what is likely to be a frequent word to see how it is usually modified to refer to prostitutes. Finally, where the search term denotes a singular we also need to look for the plural form and vice versa.

### 4.3 Lexicons of Early Modern English

One possible source of lexicographic evidence that may help has not been mentioned so far – native speaker intuitions recorded in seventeenth-century dictionaries. A dictionary of the period is, presumably, a rich repository of both observation and intuition. Exploring such dictionaries has been somewhat difficult to date, but the recent development of the Lexicons of Early Modern English (LEME, Lancashire 2015) system has changed this. Users of the system are now able to search a wide variety of dictionaries limiting the date searched, looking at original as well as modern spellings and searching headwords as well as definitions. The collection is also divided into types of dictionary, which is useful for our purpose. Many of the dictionaries included in LEME are not of direct interest to us – they are bilingual dictionaries, for example. While bilingual dictionaries are in themselves interesting, we are interested in exploring definitions of word meanings in English, not assessing how accurate or otherwise proposed words equivalences are between two languages. However, LEME does contain two categories of dictionary that may be relevant to us – English lexical dictionaries and dictionaries of hard words. The English lexical dictionaries are English dictionaries listing words and a definition for those words. The hard word dictionaries are even more promising – these were dictionaries which focused on new words which had entered the language or other words, for example, slang words, which users of the dictionary may be unfamiliar with. Our enthusiasm for these sources should be tempered by reality, of course. The dictionaries of the period predate important work by lexicographers in the eighteenth century, notably Samuel Johnson, who sought both to gather data much more systematically for their work and to present it in a reasonably standardized format. Further innovations in dictionary production

worked towards a point in the late twentieth century when corpus data was used to greatly enhance the quality and coverage of dictionaries (see Hanks 2009 for an excellent review of the development of corpus-based lexicography in the late twentieth century). So while we may expect to see intuitions in the seventeenth-century dictionaries, the credibility of those intuitions is clearly open to doubt. Nonetheless, these dictionaries stand as valuable records of what some speakers of English in the seventeenth century believed various words to mean. We will return to explore LEME further later in the chapter. For now, we will set it aside as a source of evidence for reasons that the later study will show.

#### 4.4 The historian's intuitions

In short, searching for words in a large dataset is not quite as simple as it may at first seem. However, before turning to the question of how we may ease such a search, let us explore the extent to which the intuitions of the historian were accurate or not with reference to corpus rather than dictionary evidence. Let us begin by looking at the words and phrases that were thought to be infrequent when used to refer to prostitutes. These are outlined in Table 4.1. We will then look at frequent words which we may presume were used infrequently to refer to prostitutes, such as *monster*. We set aside for now the discussion of frequent words more likely to refer to prostitutes, such as *prostitute* and *whore* but will return to them in Section 4.6.

From this point onwards we will not discuss capitalization or variations in spellings for a word unless this is germane to this discussion, though in all cases we took capitalization and spelling variants into account when undertaking our searches.<sup>6</sup>

Table 4.1 demonstrates two things clearly. First, that the singular and plural forms of these terms behave the same – there is no expression which refers to prostitutes more in one form or the other. Secondly, and most importantly, it shows that the historian's intuition that the words and phrases involved were used infrequently to refer to prostitutes was accurate. In some cases, this was easy to determine – when the expression, for example, was rare so checking its appearances for references to prostitution was straightforward as was the case with *doves of venus*. In other cases there were many examples to check, as in the case of *hydra*. Note that where no examples are found this does not indicate that the word or expression could not be used to refer to prostitutes. The EEBO

**Table 4.1** Rare words and expressions used to refer to prostitution

| Word/Phrase          | Frequency referring to prostitute | Total occurrences in the corpus | Number of texts in the which the word appears |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|
| Ape-gentlewoman      | 0                                 | 0                               | 0   |
| Bartholomew babies   | 0                                 | 8                               | 8   |
| Bartholomew baby     | 0                                 | 8                               | 7   |
| Bridewell baggage    | 1                                 | 1                               | 1   |
| Bridewell bird       | 0                                 | 1                               | 1   |
| Bridewell birds      | 0                                 | 2                               | 2   |
| Daughter of Sodom    | 0                                 | 0                               | 0   |
| Daughters of Sodom   | 0                                 | 0                               | 0   |
| Dove of Venus        | 0                                 | 2                               | 2   |
| Doves of Venus       | 1 <sup>7</sup>                    | 7                               | 6   |
| Hydra                | 0                                 | 1,448                           | 981   |
| Hydras               | 0                                 | 73                              | 66  |
| Nocturnal privateer  | 0                                 | 0                               | 0   |
| Nocturnal privateers | 1                                 | 1                               | 1   |
| Nymph                | 1 <sup>8</sup>                    | 4,713                           | 1,110   |
| Nymphs               | 1 <sup>9</sup>                    | 4,465                           | 1,253   |
| Pirate of the night  | 0                                 | 0                               | 0   |
| Pirates of the night | 1                                 | 1                               | 1   |
| Sisterhood           | 17 <sup>10</sup>                  | 120                             | 86  |
| Winchester goose     | 5                                 | 16                              | 13  |
| Winchester geese     | 0                                 | 1                               | 1   |

corpus does not contain all texts from the period, so it is possible that the phrase or word is used in that way in a text not in the corpus. However, as discussed in Chapter 1, EEBO contains a sufficient body of material from a wide enough range of sources in the corpus for us to be able to say, with some confidence, that the historian's hunch that these words or expressions were used only rarely to refer to prostitutes was accurate. However, the study also shows how painstaking an investigation of this sort may be. To find a few rare examples, some of which are capable of being interpreted in different ways, of expressions referring to prostitutes we needed to search through many thousands of concordance lines. If we had analysed *monster* in the same way, we would have had to check 12,338 examples of the word in the EEBO corpus or at the very least a random sub-sample of those words. This would have been a major undertaking. Are there ways in which this process may be speeded up? Yes, in principle.

The first decision that speeds the process up is a procedural one – we decided we were interested in the major ways in which prostitutes may be referred to. An example such as *doves of venus* is so rare that, even though it is an interesting turn of phrase which is not attested as referring to prostitutes in either the *OED* or the *Chambers Dictionary of Slang*, it does not tell us much about society in the seventeenth century and its attitudes to prostitution. At best, it gives us an example, in this case, of one expression used by one author. This is not the type of general observation we wish to make. So we will set aside the rare examples at this point, interesting though they are lexicographically, noting simply that, as some type of informal proof of the intuitions of the historian, they give weight to the idea that the knowledge gained by close reading of manuscripts and texts on the historian's behalf gives them valuable insights into the language of the period that can be of use to the corpus linguist. Yet we are still left with one problem – the word *monster*. This has been set aside so far, but it could be the case, in principle, that a fair number of the examples of *monster* refer to prostitutes and hence should be of interest to us. How can we deal with a case like this? The answer is collocation.

When looking at a word such as *monster* where we expect that it may have multiple meanings, we should expect each of those meanings to have reasonably distinct collocates, as meaning is at least selected, some would say formed, through collocation. So, for example, when referring to a fictional monster, we might expect that the word would have collocates like *horned* or *hideous*. When referring to a prostitute, we would expect the word to have some collocates that would allow an interpretation of the word as prostitute to be apparent – perhaps a collocation with a place-name where prostitutes were known to work, or a reference to money, punishment or lust. Given that collocation is linked to frequency of co-occurrence, if the use of the word *monster* to refer to a prostitute was infrequent, we would not expect any of the words which indicate prostitution to collocate with the word – there would simply not be enough examples to introduce collocates. The lack of collocates indicating a meaning of prostitute thus becomes diagnostic of the word being, at best, infrequently used to refer to prostitutes. So what are the collocates for *monster* in the seventeenth century in the EEBO corpus?<sup>11</sup> Figure 4.2 gives the top fifty collocates for the word by way of illustration.

These collocates clearly relate to monsters rather than prostitutes. Using collocation as a guide we can build up a definition of *monster* in the seventeenth century. Monsters have names (e.g. *Endriagus*), have unusual physical properties (e.g. *three-headed*), are deformed (e.g. *misshapen*), are awful to behold

Endriagus, many-headed, three-headed, Minotaur, misshapen, Sphinx, Hydra, Ste., Monstrum, Headless, hideous, Chimera, headed, Andromeda, ugly, Heliogabalus, deformed, prodigy, Cerberus, Caligula, prodigious, Nero, strangle, fiend, quell, frightful, inhumane, devoured, ingratitude, hatched, horrid, tamed, effigies, devouring, Goliath, horned, Giant, devours, Perseus, infernal, Leviathan, savage, grim, horrible, Labyrinth, Ghastly, monsters, huge, beastly, African

**Figure 4.2** The top 50 collocates of *monster* in the EEBO corpus in descending order.

(e.g. *hideous*), they mete out or are subjected to death (e.g. *strangle*) and they have unpleasant temperaments (e.g. *savage*, *grim*). Humans – or Roman emperors at least – can be described as monsters (e.g. *Heliogabalus*, *Caligula*, *Nero*) and humans can be the intended victim of (e.g. *Andromeda*) or killer of (e.g. *Perseus*) monsters. While not an exhaustive analysis of this list, the analysis above clearly indicates the properties of monsters and the features that we might expect humans described as monsters to be associated with by metaphorical extension. Prostitution does not figure in any discernible way in this list.<sup>12</sup> Scanning the remaining collocates shows some to be of possible interest – for example, *female* and *lust*. However, on examining the eighteen examples of *monster* and *female* collocating, none were found to relate to prostitution. In the corpus the collocate *lust* is in fact typically a personification of the emotion of lust in the form of a monster, usually relating to men rather than women – it has nothing to do with prostitutes at all. The collocate that does suggest a link to women and sex, however, is interestingly, *woman*. As noted earlier, *woman* was thought to be able to combine with a number of words to indicate a prostitute or, at the very least, a woman engaging in sex that was not approved of, what we shall call transgressive sex. In the corpus there are sixty-nine examples of *woman* and *monster* collocating. While most of these refer either to a woman giving birth to some type of monstrous child or to a woman being monster-like for some non-sexual reason, the transformation into being a monster is linked to transgressive sex in some cases. Below are two examples of *woman* and *monster* collocating which show the use of the word *monster* to describe women engaging in such sexual acts:

That woman monster Dodecamechana In Venus act devise twelve sundry  
measures With lusty lads at full to take their pleasures<sup>13</sup>

So winds this wicked monster, woman's shame, About me to my sorrow and  
her blame What shall I fly? She me too fast doth hold, Shall I cry out? For shame  
be it not told A manlike heart did for a woman cry, Oh who can but bewail my



misery! Should I but now to dalliance consent, Me follows honour, pleasure,  
worlds content, But if that I this offered grace reject, Bondage, disgrace, a prison  
I expect, But fearing more divine revenging hand, Then rack, disgrace<sup>14</sup>

In the first example, a woman is specifically identified as being a monster because of sexual acts she engages in. In the second, it is a property of a woman that is the monster; in this case her desire to have sex with a man who is uncertain whether to pursue the 'dalliance' yet is clear of the probable outcome of it.

The evidence from this experiment points to collocation being a useful guide to determining whether a possible use of a word is frequent or infrequent. We can see clearly from the collocates what the usual semantics of the word *monster* are. Yet the collocates also provide a guide to the rarer, but not highly infrequent, meanings or uses of the word, in this case yielding some examples close to the suggested use of the word by the historian. Nonetheless, on the basis of this evidence, we can safely set aside *monster* as a word which is frequently used in the EEBO corpus to refer to a prostitute.

Using collocation as a guide we can go on to explore the other words which, because they are frequent but not likely to be used to refer to prostitution frequently, may prove to be problematic if explored solely through a close reading of concordances: *commodities*, *crack*, *miss* and *traffic*. Yet before we do so, we should note another way in which the corpus may help us – *miss* and *crack* can appear with different parts of speech. The EEBO corpus has been subjected to automated part of speech analysis, with each word assigned a code to say whether, in each case where it is used, it is a noun, verb, adjective, etc. So for *crack* and *miss* we can narrow our search to look at their use as nouns, which is the category in which they may be used to refer to prostitutes. Table 4.2 gives the top twenty collocates for *commodities*,<sup>15</sup> *crack*,<sup>16</sup> *miss* and *traffic* by way of illustration.

For each of the words, their collocates were examined and, where a possible link to transgressive sex or prostitution was perceived, the collocate in question was subject to concordancing to see whether, when read in context, the example in question did indeed relate to sex or prostitution. On the basis of this investigation we are able to dismiss *crack* and *commodities* quickly – the collocates all indicate a meaning other than prostitute. The words *miss* and *traffic* are, on the other hand, much more interesting.

The collocates of *traffic* reveal that in public discourse in the seventeenth century the word is closely tied to a meaning of a trade in goods for profit, as the collocates in Table 4.2 show. However, one collocate, *infamous*, points to another

**Table 4.2** Top twenty collocates for *crack*, *commodities*, *miss* and *traffic*

| Word                                   | Top 20 collocates   |
|--|---|
| <i>crack</i> (as noun) <sup>17</sup>   | <i>flaw, thunder, flash, Cleft, crack, novelties, Lightning, burst, terrible, loud, Ice, terror, Noise, Vessel, sudden, perish, neck, credit, ruin, piece</i>   |
| <i>commodities</i> <sup>18</sup>       | <i>over-ballancing, consumable, exportable, overballancing, easements, Exciseable, merchantable, Exported, staple, Vendible, barter, Draperies, Emoluments, bartered, exporting, vending, Permutation, Importation, bartering, export</i>           |
| <i>miss</i> (as noun) <sup>19</sup>    | <i>Hoyden, sacrif, loll, Biel., Tol, Pru, Biel, lect., Lucy, EPILOGUE, sang, Pretty, Nurse, celebrate, mend, hit, amend, Mrs, Rom, aim</i>  |
| <i>traffic</i> (as noun) <sup>20</sup> | <i>Commutative, Commerce, merchandising, bartering, Negros, Merchandice, merchandise, Staples, intercourse,<sup>21</sup>negotiate, tipple, Navigation, permutation, sea-faring, Free-borne, Negotiation, Trade, Merchants, negotiating, trading</i> |

use of the term. An *infamous traffic* is any type of immoral transaction – four of the examples of *infamous traffic* clearly relate to prostitution, as the example below shows:

Man kept as many Mistresses as he pleased, and maintained them openly in his own House, even in the quality of lawful Wives. They bought Women, or took them away by force, either for their Service, or to make Money of them. Their Masters taxed them at a certain Sum by the day, and for fault of payment, inflicted on them all sorts of punishment: Insomuch, that those unhappy creatures not being able sometimes to work out the daily rate imposed on them, were forced upon the infamous traffic of their Bodies, and become public prostitutes, to content the Avarice of their Masters.<sup>22</sup>

This is a tale which is, sadly, familiar to modern readers. Yet the example shows clearly that one meaning of *traffic*, when collocating with *infamous*, is prostitution. The example also shows quite nicely how using collocation as a means of approaching word meanings, especially relatively rare meanings, in data of the scale of EEBO can be fruitful.

Turning to *miss*, while again doubtless pointing to a meaning which is infrequent for the word relative to the more typical uses of it implied in Table 4.2, the word *miss* does carry with it the collocate *town*, with which it collocates twenty times in the corpus. On inspecting this collocate a strong pattern is apparent within which the collocate occurs – *miss of the town* accounts for eight of the examples.<sup>23</sup> This pattern clearly does relate to women who are prepared

to either expend money on having sex<sup>24</sup> with a male or who receive money for sexual favours as the examples below show:

Let not the Country wench that is coy, insinuate into your favour For when she knows what it is to enjoy she quickly will change her behaviour: Turn an insatiate Miss of the Town, to purchase Gallants she'll endeavour.<sup>25</sup>

Though she plies up and down Like a Miss of the Town, To oblige every Cully will give her a Crown.<sup>26</sup>

Further evidence that *town* and *miss* collocating select a meaning such as those described can be found in the following example from the corpus:

#### THE CHARACTER OF A Town-Miss.

A Miss is a new Name, which the Civility of this Age bestows on one, that our unmannerly Ancestors called, Whore and Strumpet. A certain Help meet for a Gentleman, instead of a Wife; Serving either for prevention of the Sin of Marrying, or else as a little Side Pillow, to render the Yoke of Matrimony more easy. She is an excellent Convenience for those that have more money than Wit, to spend their Estates.<sup>27</sup>

This is an interesting proof of the value of using collocation to sift out the rare uses of a frequent word used to infrequently refer to something else. In this case it is the unusual collocate, *town* which brought to our attention the pattern *miss of the town* and its variants. While this phrase is infrequent in our corpus, it does allow us to have some confidence in this discovery procedure while also yielding some interesting examples of how women who bought and were paid for sex were perceived. Yet this example does more than that. Importantly, it also shows how valuable access to the context in which a word or phrase was used can be. In the examples above we find a candidate word for a client of a prostitute – *cully*. The ‘Character of a Town-Miss’ example is also interesting as it yields corpus internal evidence of near synonymy – the author tells us that *miss* is a near synonym of the words *whore* and *strumpet*. The following definition of the town miss is also, therefore, an interesting definition, by extension, of what the author believes *whore* and *strumpet* to mean. Through an investigation of the corpus via collocation, we come to examples in the data that we may presume actually give us access to native speaker intuitions of speakers of Early Modern English who are not lexicographers (in this case an anonymous writer from 1675) reflecting upon and reporting their views of word meaning in their time. This example, as will be shown as we explore the corpus further, is far from rare.

Before leaving the discussion of *miss*, however, we should consider its plural form. This is relevant, more so than the word *miss*. The collocates of *misses* as a noun are few but telling. In descending order of strength, the collocates are: *keeping, keep, end, your, their, his* and *but*. *Keeping/keep* refers directly to the keeping of mistresses.<sup>28</sup> All of the examples relate to men who are engaged in extramarital affairs. In this there is an implied monetary transaction as the *misses* are 'kept' as is clearly implied by the following examples:

I have known when Complaints have been brought by Wives, against their Husbands for Keeping Misses, when they were scarce able to find Competent bread for their own Families.<sup>29</sup>

most of the Limberhams of this end of the Town keep their Misses a great deal finer than their Wives<sup>30</sup>

*Misses* clearly relates to mistresses and in the texts there is an ambivalence towards them. They are sometimes cast as being sinful – 'all Men that keep Misses know beforehand, that by so doing they act a great sin.'<sup>31</sup> But at other times, they are simply identified as being part of a man's rite of passage, as in the following example:

For I have been taught by my Father and other venerable Persons that nicity and spruceness belong to Women; but that toil and labour better become Manhood: and that all Heroic and generous Spirits, ought to value Fame above Wealth, and take a greater pride in their Arms than in their Household Furniture . Therefore let them always follow their Pleasures and Delights; let them keep their Misses, let them Drink and Revel.<sup>32</sup>

At least one author sees the keeping of mistresses as a sign that society is great and prosperous:

O what a brave World and pleasant Age do we live in, when new sets of Misses, are now grown modish marks of Greatness, as numbers of Wives and Concubines were signs of Magnificence in Solomon's days.<sup>33</sup>

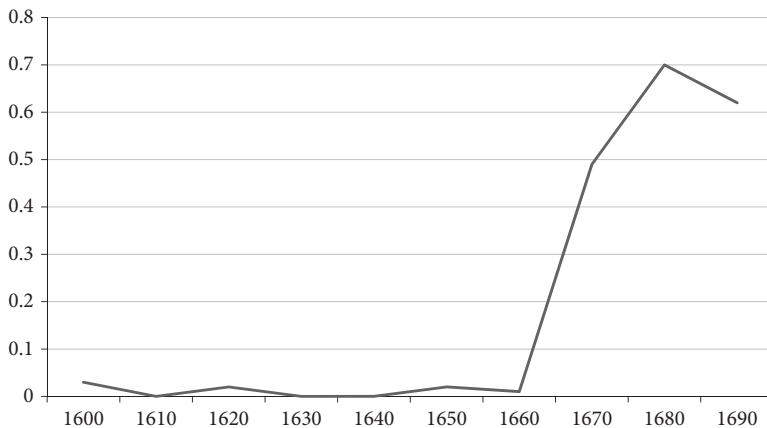
While it may be arguable that mistresses are prostitutes as such, they are clearly similar at the very least – they are what one writer describes as 'Misses, who make a Trade of Lasciviousness and Filthiness.'<sup>34</sup> They require money to be maintained and if the money goes or the ardour of the male wanes they may easily be set aside, a state of affairs summed up well by one writer of the time:

Misses in Towns are like Freebooters at Sea, no Purchase, no Pay. ... Indeed our fine young Gallants are wise in this particular. ... And this their wisdom consists

only in choosing of two evils the least; for they will keep Misses which is ill, but they will not be bound to keep them longer than during pleasure, which is less ill than a longer time; that is, they will be tied to Misses by no other Law, than that dearly beloved one of sweet variety, Misses being to be used but like slight summer Garments, which are only useful in the youthful Spring or hot Summer Season of Men's Lives, and may without much Ceremony, or great difficulty be put on, or cast off.<sup>35</sup>

Of the other collocates, *your*, *their* and *his* most often refer to the males who own one of the Misses. It is interesting that this is a case where capitalization matters. As may be apparent from the examples given so far, the form *Misses* is a better guide to mentions of mistresses than *misses*. Looking for *Misses* as a noun it is possible to plot the frequency of mentions of this form of the word mistresses through the century. Figure 4.3 gives the resulting graph of the 249 examples found in 159 texts.

This is the first time in this book that we have been able, with due caution, to look at mentions of a type of prostitute and find a clear link to the historic narrative. The correlation between the growth in the use of this phrase, and presumably the social practice associated with it, aligns well with what we know about the reign of Charles II as discussed in Chapter 2 – looking for the moment only at evidence from the word *Misses*, there are grounds to claim that there was a more frequent discussion of the keeping of mistresses in public discourse from the Restoration onwards. Yet we should be cautious – especially as one of the quotes from the corpus so far has given reason to be cautious: ‘A Miss is a



**Figure 4.3** Mentions of *Misses* as a noun in the EEBO corpus, expressed as a normalized frequency per million words in each decade of the seventeenth century.

new Name, which the Civility of this Age bestows on one, that our unmannerly Ancestors called, Whore and Strumpet.' Might it be the case that what we are seeing here is a new word entering usage to refer to something that was previously named something else? Given that the words *whore* and *strumpet* are on the list of words we have yet to investigate, we can return to that issue shortly.

A phrase similar in meaning to *misses* is *she friend*. There are seventy-one examples of *she friend* in fifty-four texts in EEBO. Of these, twenty-four relate to friends who happen to be female. This meaning is strongly selected where the person who has the friend is also female. Where the person who has the *she friend* is male, a meaning similar to that for *misses* is selected. Much is implied rather than stated expressly, but when a text recommends a remedy for a young man in love to be 'a Bottle Of Wine or two, and a she Friend',<sup>36</sup> we assume that it is not a cosy chat over a drink in female company that is being advised. When someone else writes that they are prepared 'to fight for a She-friend, as ever the best man in the mirror of Knighthood was for an honest woman',<sup>37</sup> the implication grows stronger that these women are not ones who one engages with entirely innocently, and they stand apart from 'honest' women. This is sometimes spelt out quite clearly, if wittily, 'Friends for the most part are Home-lovers, that is, the He-friend makes love to the Wife, or the She-friend is Courted by the Husband.'<sup>38</sup> There are implications also that congress with she friends may be transactional – 'Come and see thy Friend some time, thee may be assured of good Wine, and a Soldiers Bottle. ... And procure a kind She-friend to boot.'<sup>39</sup> Given that collocates of *procure* in the EEBO corpus include *purchase*, *money* and *profit* it seems not unwarranted to assume that a financial transaction is implied in this example.

Of the remaining words and phrases, four groups of terms, both from the dictionaries and the historian's list, suggest a possible complexity in the way in which prostitutes are referred to which may be approached fruitfully via collocation. These are i) expressions involving *ladies* (*Covent Garden ladies*, *wanton ladies*); ii) expressions involving *girls* (*girls of pleasure*, potentially also *women of pleasure* and *ladies of pleasure*); iii) the complex of expressions involving *woman* (e.g. *lewd woman*, *woman of the town*) and iv) the complex of expressions involving *person* (e.g. *lewd person*). In each case one could simply look at the words/expressions themselves and take a count of their appearance. However, given that it is possible that other expressions involving these words could have been used, we decided to look at the collocates of the singular and plural forms of *lady*, *girl*, *woman* and *person* in order to see whether there was any evidence for other terms involving these words not present in Figure 4.1. To

**Table 4.3** Expressions involving *woman* and *person* relating to women engaged in extramarital or paid sex

| Word/phrase                     | Frequency (singular) | How many texts it appears in | Frequency (plural) | How many texts it appears in |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------|
| Abominable woman                | 3                    | 3                            | 1                  | 1                            |
| Debauched woman                 | 12                   | 9                            | 34                 | 21                           |
| Disorderly person <sup>40</sup> | 0                    | 0                            | 1                  | 1                            |
| Disorderly woman                | 0                    | 0                            | 1                  | 1                            |
| Girl of pleasure                | 0                    | 0                            | 3                  | 3                            |
| Lady of pleasure                | 19                   | 16                           | 21                 | 21                           |
| Woman of pleasure               | 1                    | 1                            | 6                  | 5                            |
| Kind woman <sup>41</sup>        | 6                    | 6                            | 3                  | 3                            |
| Lewd woman                      | 196                  | 164                          | 359                | 291                          |
| Lewd person                     | 75                   | 67                           | 482                | 355                          |
| Wanton lady                     | 20                   | 19                           | 11                 | 11                           |
| Woman of the town               | 19                   | 18                           | 27                 | 24                           |

begin with, however, the frequencies of each of the words/phrases covered by i–iv were looked up in the corpus. Frequencies for the word or phrase referring to a prostitute or woman engaging in transgressive sex are given in Table 4.3. In the table, terms which have no examples in either the singular or plural are omitted.

A feature of the table is that there is a preference for gender specificity for women – nearly all of the examples involving *person* did not yield examples of people engaged in transgressive or paid sex. Interestingly, however, some of the examples involving *person* do have relevant cases, but not for women; rather they are for men who engage in reprehensible behaviour, especially drinking, but also transgressive sex, as in the following example:

That which one receives for being a Pander to a debauched person.<sup>42</sup>

Most notable is the expression *lewd person* and its variants – this is frequent and relevant. We will return to examine this phrase when we look at the expressions frequent enough to sustain further analysis.

In general, in the examples in Table 4.3 we once again find a rather broad meaning to some of the terms. For example, *debauched women* could be women who appeared to sell sex ('Nevertheless as there have been at all times debauched Women, who have prostituted themselves indifferently to all sorts of Men'),<sup>43</sup> have engaged in extramarital affairs ('when he came to be a Man, he debauched

Women from their Husbands')<sup>44</sup> or are simply sexually active and seeking male partners for sex outside marriage ('a Vile Drunken Debauched Stallion, whose virile parts being of an Extraordinary Size, a Company of Debauched Women did continually haunt him').<sup>45</sup>

Before leaving the discussion of this table, the example of *woman of the town* merits note. It is a pattern that is similar to *miss of the town*.<sup>46</sup> It may be also that these expressions can appear in the form *town woman* as one text which, while sketching out a vignette about the path to prostitution for one woman, expressly makes an equivalence between the two:

She was Boarded astern by the young Esquire her Master's Son; when complaining to him that her Belly wambled, he put her off with a piece of Money: upon which, she took Sanctuary under the Protection of an old Bawdy Midwife, who having delivered her, and dropped the Child as a Parish-Charge, advised her to turn Town-Woman, or a Woman of the Town; and taught her how to practise, going Snips with her for Counsel.<sup>47</sup>

Could it be that *X of the town* or *town X*, where *X* is a term used to refer to a woman, might be a pattern to use to find further examples of relevant expressions referring to those engaged in paid and extramarital sex? Collocation should show whether there are words that fit *X* that co-occur frequently with these. In the case of *of the town* we need to explore collocates to the left of this pattern and with *town* alone we need to explore collocates to the right of the word. In each case the words to the immediate left (usually referred to as L1) and right (usually referred to as R1), respectively, are likely to be where any new candidate phrases will be found. Focusing on these patterns, no new instantiations of either pattern referring to women is found except *ladies*. However, in this case the phrase *ladies of the town* refers to women that were 'of Honour and Quality'.<sup>48</sup> The search did yield one interesting L1 collocate, however – *gallants* is a collocate of *of the town*. While this is not referring to women, if we look at the collocates of the word *gallants* in EEBO, it is clear that *gallants* are linked closely to sex, either as providers of paid sex, buyers of sex or as temporary extramarital partners for sex – collocates of *gallants* include *amorous*, *debauched*, *love*, *lovers*, *lusty* and *mistresses*. The word *gallants* also collocates with *spend*. In *spend* we get a sense of how money, sex and gallants interact, as shown in the following examples where, first, gallants presumably use money to get sex:

Our Gallants think it better spend their lands and livings in a whores lap, then their lives in a martial field for the honour of their Country.<sup>49</sup>



And, secondly, where they are the beneficiaries of a woman spending money on them for sex:

How many Women run away from their Husbands, with their Plate and Money  
... to spend it upon their Gallants?<sup>50</sup>

While it is not a point we will pursue now, it is interesting to note that *town* yielded one other interesting collocate – *lewd*. There is enough of an association between certain towns and immoral behaviour for this to be apparent in the collocates of *town*. This point will be explored when we discuss the geographical distribution of the terms referring to prostitution in Chapter 6.

After the discussion of Figure 4.1 we set aside words present in the figure which we believed were frequently, though not necessarily exclusively, used to refer to prostitutes in the century. We can now return to those words and consider them. They are COURTESAN, HARLOT, JADE, JILT, NIGHTWALKER, PROSTITUTE, PUNK, QUEAN, STRUMPET, TRULL and WHORE. Let us begin by exploring what dictionary writers in the seventeenth century thought of these words by returning to LEME.

#### 4.5 Lexicons of Early Modern English revisited

To explore the value of the dictionaries in LEME, two searches were undertaken in the English lexical and hard word dictionaries. First, COURTESAN, HARLOT, JADE, JILT, NIGHTWALKER, PROSTITUTE, PUNK, QUEAN, STRUMPET, TRULL and WHORE were searched for as headwords in the dictionaries. Where there were entries for the word this was noted. Any near synonyms used in the definitions of the word were also noted for each dictionary. Finally, the words were looked for in the definitions in the dictionary – the goal here was to discover whether any relevant terms were attested in the dictionary that were not apparent from the studies of modern dictionaries or the EEBO corpus.

So what do the dictionaries say? One English lexical dictionary proves to be of some assistance. *An Alphabetical Dictionary, Wherein all English Words According to their Various Significations, Are either referred to their Places in the Philosophical Tables, Or explained by such Words as are in those Tables* produced by William Lloyd, published in John Wilkins' *An Essay Towards a Real Character and a Philosophical Language* (1668), contains relevant entries. Lloyd's work should be approached with some caution, however. Wilkins' goal was not to publish a dictionary as such – only the last part of this book contains the dictionary.

The primary goal of Wilkins' book was to produce a lingua franca to replace Latin based on a deficit model of language – Wilkins believed that language was disorderly and needed to be replaced with a system of communication devoid of ambiguity and redundancy.<sup>51</sup> Lloyd's dictionary, of approximately 11,500 words, was an important part of this goal. The dictionary has entries for *courtesan*, *harlot*, *prostitute*, *punk*, *quean*, *strumpet*, *trull* and *whore*, yet Lloyd's definitions are brief and repetitive. Though *common whore* is the brief description of *courtesan*, the other words share unhelpfully broad and coy definitions such as *unchasteness female* (*punk*, *quean*) and *fornication female* (*harlot*, *strumpet*, *trull*, *whore*). From Lloyd's perspective the repetitiveness was helpful – he wanted to produce a dictionary to help Wilkins pursue his quixotic desire to 'eliminate all ambiguity and redundancy in human thought'.<sup>52</sup> This might be said to give us a useful view of what Lloyd thought might be synonyms – indeed it may be viewed as a precursor of the thesaurus rather than a dictionary. Yet the goal set by Wilkins was flawed and hence Lloyd's dictionary is too. Wilkins viewed language as deficient and wanted to replace it with a model in which what he perceived to be deficiencies, such as ambiguity and redundancy (e.g. in the form of synonymy) were addressed. Yet language is not deficient – it is dynamic and wonderfully varied. Hence, Lloyd's attempt to treat near synonyms as true synonyms and assert a single unambiguous meaning that covers all of them should always be viewed as suspect, certainly given the subtle differences between words such as HARLOT and WHORE as will be discussed in Chapter 5 of this book. Lloyd, in attempting to reduce and constrain language, gives us a description of it which is at odds, to some degree, with the linguistic reality he faced. This reduces the usefulness of his dictionary for our purposes and undermined the long-term project of Wilkins. In conclusion, Lloyd's dictionary is a source of evidence for the use of these words in the century, and of their association with sexual intercourse. But Lloyd's definitions are purposefully unrevealing as his focus on asserting synonymy between words masks differences in their meaning. Also, none of the entries in Lloyd's list identify any new terms for us to study.

The hard word dictionaries are much more helpful. All of the words we are interested in are attested in seventeenth-century hard word dictionaries. Exploring the definitions in these dictionaries is often as revealing as looking for headwords. For example, while the dictionaries do not include *strumpet* as a headword, the word is used in definitions of other words as a near synonym of that word – for instance, in Elisha Coles' *English Dictionary* of 1676, a *courtesan* is defined as 'a Court Lady, also a Strumpet'.<sup>53</sup> So definitions, in addition to headwords, may help to attest the use of word with specific meanings in the

century. They may also give a wider range of uses of a word, as we see if we explore *prostitute* in a little more detail. The entries for *prostitute* are relatively numerous – there are five definitions of *prostitute* as a headword in works from the century. All focus upon the verb form in their definition of the word. Interestingly, the link between sex and money is evident, as in this example from Henry Cockeram's 1623 *English Dictionary* 'Prostitute: To set open for sale, to offer ones bodie to every man for money'. However, in the 1699 *A New Dictionary Of The Terms Ancient and Modern Of The Canting Crew* by one 'B.E.' the word does not appear as a headword, but is used as a near synonym in definitions, in which it appears as a noun: 'Woman of the Town: a Lewd, common Prostitute'. So while silent on the use of the word with different parts of speech, the dictionaries do show that the word, while it may be defined in terms of usage as a verb, clearly was also acceptable as a noun.

Unlike *strumpet*, the word *jade* is a headword in the dictionaries, but not with the meaning of prostitute. The *New Dictionary* of B.E. does contain an entry for the word and uses *jade* in definitions, but the emphasis is on a generally undesirable woman: 'Jade: a Terme of Reproch give to Women, as Idle Jade, silly Jade, &c. As dull Jade, tired Jade, to a heavy or over-ridden Horse.' Given that the definitions of *jade* provided earlier in the century relate to the tired old horse meaning of the word (e.g. Elisha Coles' dictionary gives this meaning) the word seems to have extended its meaning metaphorically from horse to female.<sup>54</sup>

A deeper exploration of *jade* would be interesting, but sadly, even with a billion words, there are insufficient examples to explore the word fully. However, the examples that are in the corpus do reveal cases which go beyond B.E.'s definition, where *jade* is likely being used as a near synonym of whore 'Now must I go to be called Whore or Jade,<sup>55</sup> and others in which the jade is linked to sexuality 'For the Zealous Jade, Ben a True Cuckold made.'<sup>56</sup> Yet the word *jade* clearly links to age and the potential for it to be a near synonym of a word like *whore* is often obscured by ambiguity, as in the following example: 'But she was cross and as peevish a Whore, As any old Jade can be at threescore.'<sup>57</sup> Here *jade* may be a word emphasizing an old woman, or, if a near synonym of whore, an old prostitute. Other examples, however, suggest that jades are criminals and are linked to whoredom 'Or whoring Duchess (as poor Jade) is carted?.'<sup>58</sup> In this example, the writer asks if a whoring duchess would be 'carted' as a *jade* is. Given that carting was a punishment for whores<sup>59</sup> as discussed in Chapter 2, and a parallel is being drawn between one type of whorish behaviour and another, *jade* here quite unambiguously means *whore*. Yet if we look at the word in the 1690s, one of the decades in which there are sufficient examples to provide some

meaningful collocates, *jade* is most strongly associated simply with age – *old* is the strongest collocate of the word and there are no near synonyms in the list of collocates of the word. The collocate refers both to women and to horses. The examples are too few to cast further light on the meaning of the word, though there is certainly evidence that the word may be used of prostitutes, but is not used exclusively to refer to either prostitutes or women. As such, we may suspect that the definition of *jade* given in the dictionaries of the time is incomplete because, on occasion, the word clearly can be used to denote a prostitute. This meaning is contextually bound and seems to be active where the word does not clearly relate to age. However, given the few examples, this point must remain speculative.

Of the words that are attested as headwords in the hard word dictionaries many are, as noted, defined with reference to near synonyms. In Table 4.4, each word investigated is presented with the different near synonyms used to describe them in the hard word dictionaries. The synonyms are listed in chronological order with a year in brackets showing the year of the publication of the entry for the word from which the near synonym is drawn.

It is interesting to note that an entry for *whore* does not appear in the hard word dictionaries, but nearly every other word explored is defined, at some point, as a near synonym of *whore*. This perhaps suggests the centrality of the word *whore* to the definition of this type of behaviour, with the near synonyms being defined with relation to *whore*. *WHORE* is defined once in the seventeenth century in LEME, in what appears to be a hard word dictionary, *A Christian Dictionary* by Thomas Wilson (1612). However, this dictionary gives the meaning of words as used in the Bible; hence, it is more of a specialist than a hard word dictionary as such. Nonetheless, it is significant that, as well as having an entry relating to the Whore of Babylon, the dictionary also defines *whore* as ‘An unchast woman, taking money for the use of her body’ a definition interesting in that it confirms the link between the word and prostitution and also because it does not rely on near synonyms to define the word. The fact that *whore* does not appear more generally as a headword in the seventeenth-century dictionaries may suggest that it was a word in common use that was widely understood, a supposition supported by the frequency of the word in the EEBO data. We argue that this suggests that *whore* is a strong candidate for the prototypically salient word used to refer to the concept of prostitution in this century as other near synonyms are frequently defined in relation to it. The semantics of *whore* represents the archetypal reference to the concept of prostitute in this case, with the near synonyms of *whore* linking to it to varying degrees over time – this will be a

**Table 4.4** Near synonyms used in hard word dictionary entries

| Word              | Near synonyms (and year of use)  |
|-------------------|--|
| <i>courtesan</i>  | harlot (1616), strumpet (1656), whore (1656), fine miss (1699), quality whore (1699) |
| <i>harlot</i>     | courtesan (1623), whore (1676)   |
| <i>jilt</i>       | whore (1699)   |
| <i>prostitute</i> | harlot (1656)  |
| <i>punk</i>       | whore (1699)   |
| <i>quean</i>      | whore (1699), slut (1699)  |
| <i>trull</i>      | harlot (1676), whore (1699)  |

major focus of investigation in Chapter 5<sup>60</sup> where the analyses of *WHORE* and its associated words certainly sustain this interpretation. This interpretation also pushes along the discussion of near synonymy – it may be that the words that we are perceiving as near synonyms of *whore* are better described as hyponyms of *whore*.<sup>61</sup> – If this is the case, it makes a little more sense of examples like ‘strumpet, whore, I will not call her daughter’.<sup>62</sup> If *strumpet* is a hyponym of *whore*, then it would be a little like saying ‘bird or crow’ or ‘animal or bird’. One meaning contains the other. Obviously the example of *whore* is not as clear as bird as a superordinate meaning to crow, but *whore* does seem to be the most frequent word used to label prostitutes, has the widest range of semantic fields associated with it and makes sense of examples where apparent near synonyms are coordinated together, making the argument that the near synonyms are hyponyms at least plausible. This point should be borne in mind when looking at the analysis in Chapter 5.

A second point of interest in Table 4.4 will have been noticed by the sharp-eyed reader. The word *slut* is used as a synonym of *quean*. B.E. in the *New Dictionary* defines *quean* as ‘a whore or slut’. Before considering what he meant by *slut*, it is apparent that the definitions of words we know to be related to prostitution may, through the definitions of those words, lead us to words which we are not aware of and which were not listed in Figure 4.1. The dictionary of B.E. is a rich source of such new words. By looking at the definitions of words we have studied, we find the following words which may also refer to prostitutes: *cat*, *doxies*, *drab*, *puzzel*, *slut* and *strum*. What does the corpus have to tell us about these words?

*CAT* is difficult to approach because it is a very frequent word – it occurs 10,064 times in 3,285 texts in the corpus. However, as shown already in this chapter we can analyse the word using collocation. No collocates of the word suggest any meaning other than that relating to felines, with collocates like *dogs*,

*rats* and *mouse* linking strongly to the word. Hence, in public discourse at least, there seems to be no evidence that CAT was a frequent way in which prostitutes were labelled. Of course, the dictionary of B.E. was published in the 1690s, so perhaps, if we limited our search to that decade, we may see this meaning of CAT become evident. However, there is no evidence of this – the collocates in this decade are very familiar, with the top five being: *rats*, *mice*, *civets*, *mouse* and *monkey*. Nowhere in the collocates of the word is there evidence of it being used, in public discourse, to discuss prostitution.

DOXIE, mentioned in Chapter 2 as being categorized by Thomas Harman as a type of female vagabond, is used in the corpus but in numbers too low (there are eighty-three examples of *doxies* in the corpus) to allow us to carry out a full analysis of the word across the century, though we note that DOXIE does not occur in the singular. PUZZEL does occur, but does not seem to be linked to prostitution in any of the thirty-seven examples in the corpus. STRUM likewise is not used to refer to prostitutes in the forty-five examples in the corpus.

On the other hand, some words occur frequently enough to be analysed in a little more detail. DRAB, for example, occurs 593 times as a noun in 357 texts, while SLUT occurs 618 times in 403 different texts. Nonetheless, this gives very few examples per decade and the collocates for each word are few. For SLUT, *a* collocates with it consistently. More interestingly, two initiating collocates attach to the word: starting in the 1660 the pronoun *you* collocates with the word followed by *she* in the 1670s. Both of these pronouns are strongly linked to the use of SLUT as an insult. For example, in the 1670s, sixteen out of twenty-five examples of *you* collocating with *slut* are positioned to the left of the word and form an insult such as ‘Get you hence you stinking slut’ and ‘you spiteful pissabed slut’.<sup>63</sup> To that extent the word has an affinity with words such as WHORE which, as will be shown in Chapter 5, also started to be closely associated with insulting later in the century. However, in the absence of any collocates other than the indefinite article and pronouns, we must look carefully at the concordances of the word in the corpus to discover whether the meaning of the word is linked to prostitution. An exploration of the word reveals that the word certainly describes an undesirable female who engages in, or is suspected of, transgressive sex as in ‘You saucy slut you are to blame, In letting him lie in your bed’.<sup>64</sup> Yet the word also clearly means unkempt, as in ‘he that with a Slut doth meet hath the worst luck of all, She stinks as she doth walk the street, her nasty beast they call: And if you strive to make her neat, then will she scold again; That with her you dare hardly eat, to help this it is in vain’.<sup>65</sup> In brief, the meaning of the word closely aligns with the primary

meanings given in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, 'a woman of dirty, slovenly, or untidy habits or appearance' and 'a woman of low or loose character; a bold or impudent girl'. While prostitutes may engage in behaviour that would also make her a slut, to be a slut does not necessarily entail being a prostitute. Given that *slut* was given by B.E. as a near synonym of *quean*, we might conclude that either B.E.'s intuitions about the meaning of QUEAN were misplaced, or that *quean* could refer either to a prostitute and/or to a slut. However, the textual evidence in the corpus and the lexicographic evidence from sources such as the *Oxford English Dictionary* both point towards QUEAN being closely associated with prostitution.

A study of DRAB is also hampered by limited evidence. It has two collocates of interest – *dice* (1630s and 1660s) and *drink* (1630s, 1650s, 1660s and 1670s). These collocates alone might suggest that the word is linked to prostitution, as these are social practices closely linked to prostitution, as outlined in Chapter 2. Also, examples of the word being used as a near synonym of the words relating to prostitution are not difficult to find, such as 'vile drabs & naughty queans', 'take an whore, and use company with a drab, and a harlot' and 'Out-scold the strong-lung'd Drab and Trull'.<sup>66</sup> As a noun DRAB has a clear link to paid entertainment as in 'Nilus that Niggard, spends much in waste, true: for he keeps a Drab, yet seems she chaste'<sup>67</sup> and 'heres drink money, dice money, and drab money'.<sup>68</sup> The collocates *dice* and *drink* principally occur with DRAB as verbs – *dice* collocates with DRAB 22 times, 17 times as a verb; *drink* collocates with drab 67 times, 62 times as a verb. In short, there is plentiful evidence that DRAB is a near synonym of WHORE. Hence, B.E.'s description of drab as 'a Whore, or Slut, a Dirty drab, a very nasty Slut' seems right to the extent that a DRAB is very similar to a WHORE. However, on the basis of the textual evidence there is less of a case for saying that a drab is a slut.

In conclusion, the dictionaries of the time provide some useful confirmation, from the point of view of native speaker intuition of some things found in the corpus data. The headwords are useful, but it is the descriptions of the headwords, in the hard word dictionaries in particular, that provide most insight. However, dictionaries have come a long way since these early works – and in some of the analyses it is possible to see why change was needed. An over-reliance on near synonyms, while helpful for the purposes of our study, must be seen as a limitation in a dictionary. Also, the definitions described are sometimes at odds with corpus evidence, illustrating why, in the late twentieth century, corpora became so central to the process of dictionary creation; such corpora help to control inaccurate or idiosyncratic intuitions in lexicography.

On the basis of this analysis we may safely set aside the study of LEME. Let us return to our exploration, focusing now on what frequency information can show us.

## 4.6 Exploration – frequency in the corpus

Table 4.5 gives the frequency of these words across the century. As they are sufficiently frequent, we have broken down the century into decades, to show any trend over time that there may be.<sup>69</sup> Each number represents the number of mentions of the word by decade, normalized to 1,000,000 words, rounded down to two decimal places. On each row, the highest value on the row is underlined to act as an informal indication of when the peak of usage of the word happens in the century. Where there is a tie for the peak, we used and explored the number to four decimal places to assign a unique peak.

In Table 4.5, the decades with the greatest number of peaks of mention are the 1610s and the 1690s. The 1690s witnessed – as Chapter 3 discussed – a public discourse that led to the establishment of moral reform movements. In that context, the salience of peaks of mention in the 1690s is understandable. The earlier peaks in the 1600s and 1610s do not seem to have a pressing historical explanation and may, rather, be a token of language change – the words fell out of use slowly as the century progressed. We shall explore that hypothesis shortly. It is also worth noting here that *whore*, unlike many other terms, peaks in the 1640s. This might fit in with information given in Chapter 3 about the upsurge in the use of sexual insult in political and religious texts – directed at men, women and institutions – during this decade, supported by Hughes (2012) and Freist (1995). We shall explore the use of *whore* as an insult in the following chapter.

This discussion of trends is impressionistic – to improve our view of possible language change in the century we decided to further explore the proportions of preferred naming strategy in each period (Table 4.6) and to use a candlestick chart in order to get a better visual gist of the trends in the data (Figure 4.4). Some explanation of the construction of this table and figure is necessary. In Table 4.6, in each decade, the raw figures for how often a word is used to refer to a prostitute, is replaced with a percentage. This percentage represents a proportion of the times for the word in that century; it was used when somebody chose a word that could refer to a prostitute. For example, imagine in one decade



Table 4.5 The distribution of the most frequent words relating to paid sex throughout the seventeenth century

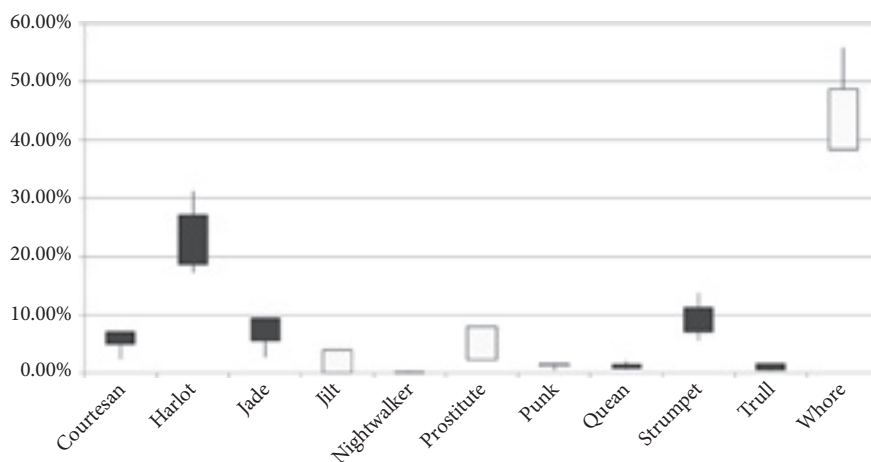
|              | 1600-9 | 1610-19 | 1620-9 | 1630-9 | 1640-9 | 1650-9 | 1660-9 | 1670-9 | 1680-9 | 1690-9 |
|--------------|--------|---------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| courtesan    | 2.25   | 1.50    | 1.20   | 1.29   | 0.58   | 0.65   | 1.17   | 0.95   | 0.70   | 0.77   |
| courtesans   | 1.73   | 1.45    | 1.06   | 1.18   | 0.66   | 0.64   | 0.88   | 1.40   | 0.85   | 1.04   |
| harlot       | 10.49  | 11.87   | 8.29   | 8.19   | 7.84   | 8.28   | 6.91   | 5.31   | 4.61   | 3.93   |
| harlots      | 4.75   | 6.14    | 5.54   | 4.61   | 4.61   | 5.03   | 4.49   | 4.46   | 2.87   | 2.72   |
| jade         | 5.10   | 2.86    | 2.33   | 2.27   | 1.70   | 0.91   | 1.31   | 1.35   | 1.90   | 1.61   |
| jades        | 0.17   | 0.03    | 0.05   | 0.49   | 0.38   | 0.30   | 0.54   | 0.46   | 0.63   | 0.36   |
| jilt         | 0.00   | 0.00    | 0.00   | 0.00   | 0.00   | 0.00   | 0.00   | 0.31   | 0.53   | 1.11   |
| jilts        | 0.00   | 0.00    | 0.00   | 0.00   | 0.00   | 0.00   | 0.01   | 0.06   | 0.13   | 0.28   |
| nightwalker  | 0.05   | 0.03    | 0.11   | 0.09   | 0.02   | 0.02   | 0.08   | 0.01   | 0.01   | 0.01   |
| nightwalkers | 0.09   | 0.03    | 0.07   | 0.09   | 0.07   | 0.09   | 0.06   | 0.02   | 0.04   | 0.01   |
| prostitute   | 1.27   | 1.65    | 1.49   | 1.89   | 1.83   | 1.55   | 1.83   | 1.68   | 2.30   | 2.33   |
| prostitutes  | 0.02   | 0.11    | 0.09   | 0.35   | 0.37   | 0.21   | 0.21   | 0.35   | 0.29   | 0.51   |
| punk         | 0.54   | 0.87    | 0.43   | 0.46   | 0.22   | 0.17   | 0.28   | 0.41   | 0.56   | 0.44   |
| punks        | 0.14   | 0.08    | 0.02   | 0.11   | 0.13   | 0.08   | 0.05   | 0.09   | 0.18   | 0.15   |
| quean        | 0.14   | 0.03    | 0.04   | 0.14   | 0.26   | 0.29   | 0.81   | 0.85   | 0.42   | 0.30   |
| queans       | 0.68   | 0.78    | 0.57   | 0.63   | 0.32   | 0.02   | 0.00   | 0.00   | 0.00   | 0.00   |
| strumpet     | 4.68   | 4.75    | 3.91   | 5.53   | 2.89   | 2.49   | 2.04   | 1.73   | 2.01   | 1.70   |
| strumpets    | 1.62   | 2.34    | 1.08   | 1.97   | 0.82   | 0.81   | 0.66   | 0.63   | 0.82   | 0.82   |
| trull        | 0.72   | 0.45    | 0.39   | 0.58   | 0.43   | 0.31   | 0.17   | 0.26   | 0.38   | 0.15   |
| trulls       | 0.21   | 0.21    | 0.07   | 0.25   | 0.21   | 0.06   | 0.05   | 0.08   | 0.12   | 0.05   |
| whore        | 17.13  | 19.59   | 19.44  | 17.78  | 24.39  | 17.07  | 19.35  | 16.73  | 17.96  | 12.86  |
| whores       | 4.47   | 4.63    | 5.36   | 6.44   | 5.03   | 3.78   | 4.36   | 4.91   | 5.84   | 4.50   |
| Peaks        | 4      | 5       | 1      | 3      | 1      | 1      | 0      | 1      | 1      | 5      |

**Table 4.6** Proportions showing the preferred naming strategy in each period of words used to describe prostitutes in each decade of the seventeenth century

|             | 1600-9 | 1610-19 | 1620-9 | 1630-9 | 1640-9 | 1650-9 | 1660-9 | 1670-9 | 1680-9 | 1690-9 | Mean  | SD  | End-Beg |
|-------------|--------|---------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|-----|---------|
|             | (%)    | (%)     | (%)    | (%)    | (%)    | (%)    | (%)    | (%)    | (%)    | (%)    | (%)   | (%) | (%)     |
| COURTESAN   | 7.08   | 4.97    | 4.38   | 4.55   | 2.36   | 3.02   | 4.54   | 5.58   | 3.59   | 5.07   | 4.51  | 1.3 | - 2.01  |
| HARLOT      | 27.09  | 30.31   | 26.83  | 23.56  | 23.59  | 31.12  | 25.19  | 23.25  | 17.35  | 18.65  | 24.69 | 4.5 | - 8.44  |
| JADE        | 9.37   | 4.87    | 4.63   | 5.07   | 3.94   | 2.82   | 4.08   | 4.29   | 5.86   | 5.53   | 5.05  | 1.7 | - 3.85  |
| JILT        | 0.00   | 0.00    | 0.00   | 0.00   | 0.00   | 0.00   | 0.02   | 0.89   | 1.53   | 3.91   | 0.63  | 1.3 | 3.91    |
| NIGHTWALKER | 0.25   | 0.11    | 0.35   | 0.35   | 0.17   | 0.28   | 0.32   | 0.06   | 0.11   | 0.04   | 0.20  | 0.1 | - 0.20  |
| PROSTITUTE  | 2.30   | 2.96    | 3.06   | 4.11   | 4.16   | 4.13   | 4.50   | 4.81   | 6.01   | 7.97   | 4.40  | 1.6 | 5.68    |
| PUNK        | 1.21   | 1.60    | 0.87   | 1.04   | 0.65   | 0.58   | 0.73   | 1.21   | 1.70   | 1.64   | 1.12  | 0.4 | 0.43    |
| QUEAN       | 1.46   | 1.36    | 1.18   | 1.42   | 1.10   | 0.73   | 1.80   | 2.03   | 0.98   | 0.83   | 1.29  | 0.4 | - 0.63  |
| STRUMPET    | 11.20  | 11.93   | 9.67   | 13.79  | 7.04   | 7.72   | 5.96   | 5.60   | 6.54   | 7.08   | 8.65  | 2.8 | - 4.13  |
| TRULL       | 1.64   | 1.11    | 0.90   | 1.54   | 1.21   | 0.86   | 0.49   | 0.81   | 1.16   | 0.57   | 1.03  | 0.4 | - 1.08  |
| WHORE       | 38.39  | 40.77   | 48.12  | 44.57  | 55.76  | 48.74  | 52.38  | 51.48  | 55.17  | 48.71  | 48.41 | 5.8 | 10.32   |

there were three words that could be used to refer to a prostitute. In total, they are used 150 times. Word A is used 30 times, word B 90 times and word C 30 times. That means, assuming these words were the ones that could be used to refer to prostitutes, they represent 20 per cent, 60 per cent and 20 per cent of uses of such words respectively. In the table given, there is a simplifying underlying assumption that these words were the only ones available when referring to the group. This is not quite true – as we have seen there are a number of other words and phrases that could also be used. However, by comparison those words and phrases are used very infrequently in contrast to the words represented in Table 4.5, so we need not worry unduly that the pattern revealed in Table 4.6 is in any way substantially misleading, though we should acknowledge once again that the infrequent terms have been deliberately set aside. Note also that the frequencies for singulars and plurals have been combined in this table, so *harlot* covers both *harlot* and *harlots*, for example. The table also usefully gives the mean relative frequency of the word in the century. The reliability of that mean is shown by the standard deviation (SD) – the lower that value, the closer the values on the row in question are to the mean, the larger the value the more scattered, or dispersed, those values are away from the mean. Finally, in the table there is also an indication of how much the first and the last values for the century differ, giving a rough indication of the usage trend that the word has been subjected to in the century.

The data in Table 4.6 then allows us to produce candlestick plots. Candlestick plots are useful visualizations of data such as this.<sup>70</sup> Invented in nineteenth-century Japan to monitor commodity prices, the plots give a very immediate visual impression of variation over time. For readers unfamiliar with such plots, the following suffices to explain how to read them. Shaded boxes represent things that are lower in value at the end of the period, compared to the beginning. Transparent boxes are the reverse. For shaded boxes, the top of a box represents the value at the start of the period, the bottom of the box the value at the end. For transparent boxes, the bottom of a box represents the value at the start of the period, the top of the box the value at the end. Where a box has a line, called a ‘wick’, emerging from its top, this is to indicate the highest value in the period. Where it has a wick emerging from the bottom of the box, this is to indicate the lowest value in the period. Note that if all values fall between the start and end value, neither shaded nor solid boxes will have lines emerging from them.



**Figure 4.4** Candlestick plots of the words used to refer to prostitutes in the seventeenth century.

What does Table 4.6 and the candlestick plot show us? First, it reconfirms that *WHORE* does indeed peak in the 1640s. When we look at the number of times that the word *WHORE* is used as a proportion of all mentions of the words we are interested in, we see that the word *WHORE* peaks in terms of being selected in the 1640s. However, it also shows us that we should be cautious of the apparent peak for *HARLOT* that Table 4.5 shows. *HARLOT* peaks in terms of being selected in the 1650s. Setting aside any possible explanation of this difference for now, this observation alone shows the importance of looking at data in different ways.

What does the candlestick chart show? In terms of shading, it shows that the following words become dispreferred, relative to behaviours at the beginning of the century, when the century ends: *COURTESAN*, *HARLOT*, *JADE*, *NIGHTWALKER*, *QUEAN*, *STRUMPET* and *TRULL*. The following words become preferred, relative to behaviours at the beginning of the century, when the century ends: *JILT*, *PROSTITUTE*, *PUNK* and *WHORE*. Note that there is an indication that the rise of these words is smoother than the decline of the others – the words with shaded boxes have wicks, indicating fluctuating usage, while the words in the transparent boxes have hardly any wicks (with the exception of *whore*), indicative of a steady increase. The SD values are another indication of the volatility of this shift. Two words, *WHORE* and *HARLOT* have strikingly high SD values. This is interesting as again it suggests a link between these two words which we have noted already, with *WHORE* peaking in the 1640s and *HARLOT* peaking in the 1650s, thus giving us further cause to explore the relationship between

the words more carefully – this will be a key focus of Chapter 6, accordingly. In terms of the wicks, it is of note that in the 1650s, when HARLOT peaks, it seems to be at the cost of words such as JADE, NIGHTWALKER and QUEAN to the extent that these words have downward wicks on their boxes associated with the 1650s, linked to the upward wick for HARLOT generated by the same decade.

We can return for a brief final discussion at this point of *misses*. We noted that this seemed to come into usage in the 1660s, but we paused in making conclusions, concerned that perhaps it was replacing *whore* and *strumpet* which appeared to be near synonyms for the word. There is no strong evidence in Table 4.5 to show that *whore* and *strumpet* began to decline as *misses* came into use. Rather the table seems to show that words that could be used to refer to prostitutes did indeed come into and fall out of use in the century. As Table 4.5 shows, *jilt* and *jilts* come into use also, intriguingly around the same time as we previously saw *misses* come into use. Around the same time, the plural of *quean* seems to fall out of use. It is very tempting indeed to link these events together, but in the absence of compelling evidence we must resist the temptation to do so, satisfying ourselves with the observation that the Restoration seems to have been a period in the century when lexical innovation with regard to the naming of prostitutes peaked – it seems likely that the liberal atmosphere of the reign of the Merry Monarch, as discussed in Chapter 2, allowed for the production of such terms. Perhaps, we might even claim, this period led to the coining of terms to refer to prostitutes, which did not have the obvious negative connotations of some other terms. Yet to prove that we need to move to investigating how collocation may provide a key to looking at changing representations of prostitutes in the century. That will be a key goal of Chapters 5 and 6.

Let us take a closer look at the relationships between words that seem apparent. Without further analysis, Table 4.6, while helpful, leaves us in a position of being able to perceive trends by eye only. While the candlestick plots are helpful for looking at the behaviours of certain words, we have already speculated that some of those words may be linked. This is certainly evidenced by collocation as we will see in Chapters 5 and 6 – *whore* is a collocate of *harlot* and vice versa. But in what way are the words linked? Do some go down in use as others go up, for example? Or does the rise of one link to the rise of another? A good way to explore that is by the use of correlation statistics. These look at a range of variables – in this case words – to see if they appear in some way linked, in this case by frequency of selection. The procedure is simple enough – each possible pairing of words is explored and a statistic, called a Pearson Correlation, is applied to the data. The tests shown in Table 4.7 show us two

Table 4.7 Correlating words that can be used to refer to prostitution

|             | courtesan           | harlot | jade    | jilt   | nightwalker | prostitute | punk   | quean | strumpet | trull | whore   |
|-------------|---------------------|--------|---------|--------|-------------|------------|--------|-------|----------|-------|---------|
| courtesan   | Pearson Correlation | .057   | .738*   | .113   | -.093       | -.205      | .425   | .519  | .316     | .194  | -.699*  |
|             | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .875   | .015    | .757   | .798        | .570       | .221   | .124  | .373     | .591  | .024    |
|             | N                   | 10     | 10      | 10     | 10          | 10         | 10     | 10    | 10       | 10    | 10      |
| harlot      | Pearson Correlation | .057   | -.184   | -.713* | .456        | -.780**    | -.488  | .077  | .396     | .108  | -.533   |
|             | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .875   | .610    | .021   | .185        | .008       | .153   | .833  | .258     | .766  | .113    |
|             | N                   | 10     | 10      | 10     | 10          | 10         | 10     | 10    | 10       | 10    | 10      |
| jade        | Pearson Correlation | .738*  | -.184   | .123   | -.070       | -.186      | .479   | .108  | .370     | .579  | -.566   |
|             | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .015   | .610    | .735   | .848        | .607       | .162   | .766  | .292     | .080  | .088    |
|             | N                   | 10     | 10      | 10     | 10          | 10         | 10     | 10    | 10       | 10    | 10      |
| jilt        | Pearson Correlation | .113   | -.713*  | .123   | -.665*      | .903**     | .622   | -.341 | -.379    | -.419 | .219    |
|             | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .757   | .021    | .735   | .036        | .000       | .055   | .335  | .281     | .229  | .544    |
|             | N                   | 10     | 10      | 10     | 10          | 10         | 10     | 10    | 10       | 10    | 10      |
| nightwalker | Pearson Correlation | -.093  | .456    | -.070  | -.665*      | -.563      | -.686* | .057  | .417     | .218  | -.198   |
|             | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .798   | .185    | .848   | .036        | .090       | .028   | .877  | .230     | .545  | .583    |
|             | N                   | 10     | 10      | 10     | 10          | 10         | 10     | 10    | 10       | 10    | 10      |
| prostitute  | Pearson Correlation | -.205  | -.780** | -.186  | .903**      | 1          | .409   | -.320 | -.550    | -.530 | .535    |
|             | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .570   | .008    | .607   | .000        | .090       | .241   | .367  | .099     | .115  | .111    |
|             | N                   | 10     | 10      | 10     | 10          | 10         | 10     | 10    | 10       | 10    | 10      |
| punk        | Pearson Correlation | .425   | -.488   | .479   | .622        | .409       | 1      | -.060 | .106     | .083  | -.230   |
|             | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .221   | .153    | .162   | .055        | .241       | .028   | .869  | .771     | .819  | .522    |
|             | N                   | 10     | 10      | 10     | 10          | 10         | 10     | 10    | 10       | 10    | 10      |
| quean       | Pearson Correlation | .519   | .077    | .108   | -.341       | -.320      | -.060  | 1     | -.020    | -.011 | -.104   |
|             | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .124   | .833    | .766   | .335        | .367       | .869   | .957  | .975     | .775  | .775    |
|             | N                   | 10     | 10      | 10     | 10          | 10         | 10     | 10    | 10       | 10    | 10      |
| strumpet    | Pearson Correlation | .316   | .396    | .370   | -.379       | -.550      | .106   | -.020 | 1        | .703* | -.804** |
|             | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .373   | .258    | .292   | .281        | .099       | .771   | .957  | .023     | .005  | .005    |
|             | N                   | 10     | 10      | 10     | 10          | 10         | 10     | 10    | 10       | 10    | 10      |
| trull       | Pearson Correlation | .194   | .108    | .579   | -.419       | -.530      | .083   | -.011 | .703*    | 1     | -.483   |
|             | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .591   | .766    | .080   | .229        | .115       | .819   | .975  | .023     | .158  | .158    |
|             | N                   | 10     | 10      | 10     | 10          | 10         | 10     | 10    | 10       | 10    | 10      |
| whore       | Pearson Correlation | -.699* | -.533   | -.566  | .219        | .535       | -.230  | -.104 | -.804**  | -.483 | 1       |
|             | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .024   | .113    | .088   | .544        | .111       | .522   | .775  | .005     | .158  | .158    |
|             | N                   | 10     | 10      | 10     | 10          | 10         | 10     | 10    | 10       | 10    | 10      |

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). \*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

things. First, they indicate where a correlation is significant. We have simplified this in the table by presenting both the significance score for each pair of words, but also by marking each relationship that is significant either with \* (95 per cent threshold for significance) or \*\* (99 per cent threshold for significance). So \*\* denotes a higher significance threshold than \*, while no asterisk indicates that a correlation is not significant. Each relationship also has a correlation score. The closer that figure is to 1, the stronger the positive correlation. In our analysis we will, accordingly, only look at significant scores and will do so in reverse order of correlation. In order to see what the correlation thus revealed is, we will need to refer back to Table 4.6 or the candlestick plot – our statistics reveal which cases to explore, but they do not describe the type of correlation observed. So the final step in these cases is to explore the table used for the correlation statistics to explain the correlation – for example, does one go up as the other goes down?

The three strongest correlations, in terms of significance, in descending order of correlation, are the following: JILT/PROSTITUTE, STRUMPET/WHORE, HARLOT/PROSTITUTE. The first is clearly understood by looking at Table 4.5 – from its introduction JILT rises as PROSTITUTE rises. Both become more preferred. Conversely, the data also reveal that as WHORE increases, STRUMPET decreases. Finally, as PROSTITUTE rises, HARLOT falls. So a picture of the interaction between these words begins to emerge. We have words which can be used to refer to prostitutes becoming preferred (JILT, PROSTITUTE, WHORE) at the expense of other such words – the rise of WHORE and PROSTITUTE in particular is at the expense of STRUMPET and HARLOT respectively.

What of the more weakly significant results? These are, in descending order of correlation, with the nature of the correlation provided in parentheses: COURTESAN/JADE (both in general decline, both decline markedly mid-century but recover slightly), HARLOT/JILT (as HARLOT declines, JILT increases), STRUMPET/TRULL (decline together), COURTESAN/WHORE (as COURTESAN declines, WHORE increases), NIGHTWALKER/PUNK (as NIGHTWALKER decreases, PUNK increases, though the absolute frequency of use for either word is low), JILT/NIGHTWALKER (as JILT increases, NIGHTWALKER decreases). In both sets of results, JILT has had a major effect. In this set of data we see some of the probable consequences of the increased use of JILT, the decreased use of one frequent word (HARLOT) and the decrease of one relatively low frequency word, NIGHTWALKER. Along with NIGHTWALKER, a number of lower frequency words are in decline in the century, that is, COURTESAN, STRUMPET and TRULL.

## 4.7 Conclusion

In short, in these analyses we have some evidence of the change in habits across the century when it came to selecting words that may refer to prostitution. But may there be something more subtle than fashion which is dictating choice? May it be that, while they appear synonymous, there are differences in the meaning of these words which make this lexical shift indicative of a wider range of cultural shifts in society, as was discussed previously in relation to lexical innovation around prostitution in the 1660s? To explore that, we can move to looking at representation and how collocation can allow us to look at this. We will achieve this by looking at the words relating to prostitution which gave rise to strongly significant results in the correlation analysis – HARLOT, JILT, PROSTITUTE, STRUMPET and WHORE. Fortunately, with these words there is sufficient data for us to be able to undertake a collocation analysis across the century with the decade as the level of resolution.





# Strumpets and Whores

## 5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we are going to look at public discourse throughout the seventeenth century principally through the lens of two words which, on the basis of the investigations so far, we might reasonably conclude are associated with paid and transgressive sex in the period – STRUMPET and WHORE. In this chapter, we will consider the semantics of STRUMPET and the core semantics of WHORE as formed by consistent collocates across the century. In the following chapter, we conclude our analysis of WHORE and explore three other related words in the period HARLOT, PROSTITUTE and JILT.

To begin with, however, we will look for any of these words changing abruptly in frequency between decades, seeking to explain any examples of this that we find. Following that, in this chapter and the next we will go further and try to take, for want of a better phrase, the ‘pulse’ of the seventeenth century. In public discourse, what were the issues relating to these five words that mattered, how did they vary through the century and how might this help to explain any findings we may have about prostitution in the century? This exploration will be undertaken in the light of the discussion of prostitution in Chapters 2 and 3. Most of our analysis, as will become apparent, will centre around the word WHORE as this is the most frequent and most complex of these words. As the analysis of WHORE progresses in this chapter and the next, we will explore its relationship to its near synonyms. In doing so, we will also explore the use of WHORE as an insult.

An analysis of this sort is a very substantial task, requiring an analysis of a billion words of data. Reading through the entirety of the data and analysing it in detail is out of the question. It is for that reason that we will once again in this chapter use corpus techniques to paint a broad picture and then relate that back to the details of the corpus in the period, by concordancing and interpretation

in the light of historical evidence. Let us begin with what we might call the easier task – looking at changes of frequency of the words through the period.

This is something we explored to an extent in Chapter 4. We mapped out the frequency of words across the decades and, by the use of techniques such as candlestick graphs, developed a narrative surrounding individual words in the corpus. The analysis in this chapter will differ in that instead of taking what we might call a simple, descriptive approach to the data, we will begin by using inferential statistics to see if any of the differences we see in word frequency between decades are worthy of note.<sup>1</sup> We will follow that by using collocation to explore the meaning of the words we are focusing upon.

Let us begin by exploring word frequency between decades. In order to explore this we will use the keyword procedure, a common technique in corpus linguistics introduced in Chapter 1 of this book. Our approach to using keywords is to look at each decade in the EEBO corpus, comparing the decades pairwise. For each pair of decades we can then look at the words we have previously studied in Chapter 4 to see whether, in fact, any changes of frequency are so marked that they begin to characterize what public discourse around these words at the time was about, at least in part. If a keyword is positive in a period, it is a strong evidence that discussion of that topic was markedly increasing. If the keyword is negative then, contrariwise, it is evidence that the topic was discussed less than previously – whether because of aversion to the topic or lack of topicality, for example. Note that we use the word evidence here, not proof. An example of why one needs to be cautious was shown in Chapter 4 – some words decline because the word is going out of use, but the concept may still be in use, it is just realized by different words. So while topicality and ‘aboutness’ are usually the frame within which keywords are analysed, we must always be sensitive to other plausible explanations for what we are seeing.

With that introduction concluded, how did we set about looking at keywords in the century? As noted, we divided the corpus into decade-long chunks and compared them pairwise with one another using the Log Ratio statistic. The results of these keyword comparisons were then gathered and individual decades were searched for focusing initially on each of the words looked at in Chapter 4, Table 4.6,<sup>2</sup> that is, COURTESAN, HARLOT, JADE, JILT, NIGHTWALKER, PROSTITUTE, PUNK, QUEAN, STRUMPET, TRULL and WHORE. The main finding arising from this may seem quite negative – few of the words become keywords in the seventeenth century. Only two words, STRUMPET and WHORE, vary in their frequency sufficiently to register as keywords. We will investigate the behaviour

of these words shortly before shifting to consider collocation which will allow us to explore variation in a different way.

First, however, let us return to the negative finding and consider it more carefully. The most important thing about keywords that must always be remembered is that keywords are words which show a change in frequency – they are not words of high frequency necessarily. Just because a word is not key, it does not always mean that the word is infrequent. Indeed, in this case we know we are looking at words which are frequent. So words which remain relatively stable and frequent across a time period, when approached by keywords in the way we are using them, will not appear to be key at all, because their frequency is not varying sufficiently. Importantly, however, just because the frequency of a word is relatively stable, it does not mean that the use of that word is static – the word may maintain a relatively stable frequency through time but its uses in discourse and meaning may vary. So we should not conclude that no variation in word frequency is the same as no variation at all, as the collocation-based analysis of words later in this and the next chapter will show very clearly.

## 5.2 Strumpet and whore – keywords

We can now look at STRUMPET and WHORE. The easier of the two cases is STRUMPET. This is key at one point in the century, when the word declines markedly in usage in the 1640s relative to the 1630s.<sup>3</sup> Why does this happen? Does it represent a change in the use of the word or does it simply mean that the word STRUMPET was used less, but its meaning remained the same? Collocation helps to answer this question. Below are the collocates for STRUMPET in the 1630s and 1640s.<sup>4</sup> Collocates which appear in the 1630s but not the 1640s are emboldened. There are no collocates that appear in the 1640s but not the 1630s. Following each collocate is an indication of the frequency of that collocate (per ten million words) in that decade.

Collocates of STRUMPET in the 1630s: *a* (30.55), *an* (3.94), *common* (4.41), *her* (6.93), *his* (11.81), *she* (5.51), *thou* (3.78), *whore* (2.36), *wife* (3.15)

Collocates of STRUMPET in the 1640s: *a* (16.23), *common* (2.51), *her* (4.23), *she* (1.94), *whore* (1.6)

The first thing we should note is the general decline in any mention of STRUMPET is marked – there are 74.96 mentions per ten million of the word in the 1630s versus 37.15 mentions per ten million words in the 1640s. This suggests that the topicality of the word, relative to others, seems to have declined

between the two decades. In the context of the 1640s, a decade in which a Civil War rages, this relative decline in topicality is perhaps understandable – one assumes that the politics and military affairs of the period were more topical than discussions of strumpets. As the mentions of the word decrease, the word loses some significant collocates, notably *his* and *wife*. These collocates are associated strongly with discussions of men's wives, either in terms of how they are called strumpets for some transgression, or how they are contrasted, as models of virtue, with strumpets. This seems to be a discourse that becomes less salient in the written language. Alone, it may account for this decrease between the decades. One assumes it is topicality rather than any prevailing social trend that explains this decrease – it is hard to believe that there is a great difference between the 1630s and 1640s in terms either of infidelity or of the idea that wives should be sexually faithful. Certainly, none of the background provided in Chapters 2 and 3 would support the hypothesis that this change links to a significant social change.<sup>5</sup>

In the list, however, there is one further collocate worth noting which may more correctly be called a colligate as it seems to index a grammatical rather than meaning-based relationship. Nevertheless, it may have an interesting tale to tell about change – *thou*.<sup>6</sup> The pronoun *thou* seems to be very strongly associated with certain genres. Looking across the century, it collocates with STRUMPET in three decades – the 1630s, 1670s and 1680s. On close inspection, *thou* seems to be limited by genre, at least with reference to its collocation with WHORE. In the three decades in which *thou* is a collocate of WHORE, it occurs overwhelmingly in religious writings (eighteen examples) and literary works (thirty-four examples) and especially in plays (twenty-nine examples). Only three examples of WHORE collocating with *thou* are in other genres. It is possible that it is the disappearance of one of these genres that accounts for the departure of the word *thou* from the collocate list for WHORE in the 1640s and 1650s. If one were to hazard a guess, it would be that the suppression of playhouses during the years of the Interregnum (1642–60) most likely accounts for the disappearance of *thou* as a collocate. We have seen in Sections 2.3 and 2.7.3 how the period of Cromwell's leadership proved challenging for both actors and playwrights. Some playwrights continued to write shorter pieces or plays that were intended for a private audience but there was an overall marked decline in the output of plays in the 1640s and 1650s. Unfortunately, a manual inspection of the data was necessary to determine these results – at the time of writing EEBO cannot be reliably searched for genre automatically; otherwise, it would have been possible to check to what extent the genres in question vary across the decades.

The question of whether the suppression in religious writing or literary works, principally plays, must thus rest upon the evidence presented in Chapter 2, not the corpus. However, Chapter 2 does provide relevant evidence – in Section 2.7.3 we outlined how plays were banned in 1642 and the playhouses closed in 1647. Given that this state of affairs persisted until the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660, the hypothesis that this change is caused by the decline of plays in this period seems both persuasive and plausible.

The keyword pattern for *WHORE* is much more varied. It is a negative keyword in the 1640s, 1650s and 1690s, but a positive keyword in the 1680s. Looking at what seems to be a relatively complex pattern of change, by comparison to *STRUMPET*, is more of a challenge. This challenge is amplified by the fact that *WHORE* not only varies in terms of keyness, it also appears to be linked to a major biblical figure, the Whore of Babylon, who is being used for allegorical effect in the writing of the time. Hence, before beginning to look at why the word shifts in keyness across the century, one needs to better understand how the word works across the century – what is its meaning and how, if at all, does its meaning or role in discourse shift. In this chapter, we will focus principally on establishing the stable elements of meaning attached to the wordform *WHORE* in the century. With this established we will return to look at how the word *WHORE* changes meaning in the century in the next chapter.

Yet if we are to look at meaning change at all we must answer a methodological question – how do you study meaning shift across a century?

### 5.3 Exploring long-term change

Our approach is as follows. Given that the keyness calculation is linked to decades in our analysis, we will use those decades as, admittedly arbitrary, units to organize the century. Taking a decade-long view of a word has the merit of yielding sufficient examples in each decade to allow an analysis of the word *WHORE*. As has been the practice in this book so far, we will use collocation to explore the word in each decade, organizing words into semantic fields. In doing so we use a span of  $\pm 5$  words and require the collocate to occur with the word *WHORE* at least ten times in the decade. Collocates are discarded from this analysis where i) the collocates are all drawn from one author; ii) the collocates are drawn from a number of authors, but one author predominates to the extent that if those examples are removed, the number of collocates remaining falls below the threshold used in the study; iii) the collocate is associated clearly

with two meanings and neither meaning, when disaggregated, achieves the threshold used in this study. The first condition which results in collocates being dropped is important – we wish to explore collocates which appear to have reasonable currency in the language in that decade. We are not interested in the idiosyncratic use of language by individual authors, no matter how important that author may be. One possible downside to such a decision is that we may miss the birth, so to speak, of an important collocate. One may imagine that an influential author, using a collocate frequently, may establish a collocate in the language as people follow their lead and adopt that collocate. So, for example, in the 1640s the word *fleshly* collocates with *WHORE*. It only does so, however, in one book written by Joseph Salmon, *Anti-Christ in Man*, published in 1647.<sup>7</sup> It is the first time in the century that the word collocates with *WHORE* – yet there are only five other examples of *fleshly* and *WHORE* collocating in the remainder of the century. All of those come from the following decade in which the book *Mysterium Magnum* by Jakob Beohme, published in 1656, uses the collocate five times. Such a collocate then is of limited interest to our study – only one author (Salmon) uses it above the threshold we have set, while one other (Beohme) uses it below that threshold. If this was an attempt to innovate linguistically, it failed. An exploration of the collocates thus discarded in this study show that none of them led to innovation – they all had the limited impact of Salmon's *fleshly* + *WHORE*. Hence, we can safely set these collocates aside in this study of public discourse in general written English.

Another decision that requires some discussion before the analysis proper begins is the treatment of the Whore of Babylon. In Chapter 3, we have already noted the work of Freist (1995) who has explained how new life was breathed into the insult Whore of Babylon during the Civil War years – it was used by opponents of the Catholic Church to decry Charles I's apparent affinity with Catholicism (his wife, Henrietta Maria was a Catholic) and also by nonconformists to criticize the High Anglican Church. This may account for the peak in the semantic fields of *WHORE* in the Religion category in the 1640s and 1650s shown in Table 5.2.<sup>8</sup> In our analysis the collocates associated with the *WHORE* are placed into one category, Religion, as they are clearly linked to one, admittedly complex, feature in the discourse. So, for example, collocates as diverse as *cup*, *dragon*, *drink*, *skirts*, *two-horned* and *waters* all fall into the Religion category as they are all part of the discourse surrounding the *WHORE*. There is no sense, in our view, of separating these words out into different semantic fields – as collocates of *WHORE* they all index the Whore of Babylon in the texts we are looking at. Hence the fact that *cup* is a drinking vessel here is irrelevant. The

key is that this is an object closely associated with the Whore. Also, the words are allegorical. The cup of the whore is not a physical object, imagined or real, except, perhaps, for people of faith. It is used in the discourse in an allegorical sense and all of the words in the Religion category work, in concert, to achieve allegorical goals, typically promoting anti-Catholicism, as the following example shows: ‘The church of Rome should be the whore of Babylon ... out of whose cup the nations of the earth have drunken so many abominations, and that the Pope should be the lover and spouse of this adulterous and unchaste congregation.’<sup>9</sup> The story of the Whore in this example is allegorical – her acts and degradation act as a parallel for the writer to those of the Catholic Church. The elements of the Whore’s story are imbued with meaning in that context, helpfully spelt out in part in this example. Her sexual congress with many is likened to the Pope’s relationship with many Catholics, a far from flattering parallel. Her cup is the vessel within which all of the perceived wrongs of the Catholic Church are stored and dispensed. Hence, the Religion semantic field is deliberately broad, as it relates almost exclusively to the Whore and the complexity of the allegory around the Whore warrants a broad field with many collocates within it. A literal interpretation of the words in this field would be entirely pointless as it would miss the true, allegorical meaning, being encoded by the collocates. Note, however, that we are not suggesting that religious concerns do not impact on other semantic fields. They almost certainly do, and as will be shown in Section 6.2, the indirect influence of the Bible on what was written at the time can at times be seen.<sup>10</sup> However, as the Whore of Babylon is an allegorical character, deriving entirely from biblical sources, we set her aside in this analysis.

We also need to be clearer about semantic fields. They have been mentioned in the book a couple of times so far, but no detailed definition of them has been given. With semantic fields, we are placing words in the broad fields of meaning that they relate to – so, for example, we might place *cup*, *glass* and *mug* in the semantic field Drinking Vessels as the words all share this meaning. It is a process of hierarchically organizing meaning, bringing words together with similar meaning. When placing collocates in semantic fields, we explore the context in which that collocate occurs by looking at concordances of the collocate occurring with the word we are interested in. So, for example, if *stews* collocates with *whore*, we may wonder whether it relates to food or brothels. To determine this we explore through concordancing the contexts where *stews* and *whore* co-occur to discover the sense in which the word *stews* is being used with *whore*. On the basis of this exploration we can then determine the meaning that this collocation seems to select. The majority meaning selected in that context is



then used as the basis for assigning the word to a semantic field. Note, however, that if there is not one clear dominant meaning in that context, but two or more, this may lead to the collocate being assigned to more than one semantic field.

But where do the fields in our study come from? Our approach to deriving these was corpus driven – we looked at the collocates of the words we were interested in and, from those, we developed a set of semantic fields that seemed to account for the meanings these collocates express in combination with the words studied, in the corpus. However, before we made this decision – which was not taken lightly as such a process is labour-intensive – we explored the possibility of automating this process using an existing, predetermined, set of semantic fields. We explored whether we could reliably automate the classification of words into semantic fields by using a program such as USAS (Garside and Rayson: 1997) which claims to automate, or at least assist, this process. This could, in principle, be of help and there seems to be some evidence to show that the system works with some success on Early Modern English.<sup>11</sup> We were fortunate in that, when the corpus we are using in this book was constructed, it was run through the USAS system, hence each word had a semantic ‘tag’ – a code telling us which semantic field the word had been assigned to by the system – attached to it already. We began by looking through the data to assess how accurate the tagging of the data was. It was at this point that we encountered two problems which meant that the use of the USAS system, while tempting, was clearly inappropriate. The first problem relates to the worldview encoded in the USAS system. USAS provides a set of semantic fields which were crafted in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. This produces a terrible bias that it is difficult for the system to escape from – it imposes a worldview on the data from nearly four centuries later. For example, there is a semantic field of Electricity in USAS – yet this field, should it exist at all for the seventeenth century, is clearly far less important to it. Similarly, the semantic field relating to TV, Radio and Cinema is clearly irrelevant for the century. Contrariwise, there is only one semantic field for Religion in the USAS system, but religion is pervasive in the seventeenth-century worldview and deserves a much more detailed treatment than simply one label.<sup>12</sup>

The second problem is related. The worldview issue could be ignored to some extent if no words were assigned to the problematic categories. Yet the worldview bias in the set of fields used is also reflected in the words which those labels are applied to. The system seems to frequently make assumptions about the meaning of words which are inappropriate for the seventeenth century. For example, the word ‘articles’ in present-day English is usually given a semantic

label by USAS that identifies the word as being linked to newspaper articles. In the seventeenth century, this use of the word seems non-existent, with the word typically being used to refer to the core principles of systems – for example, articles of faith. Another example is the semantic field Cigarettes and Drugs – while the word SMOKE in the seventeenth century could be used to refer to smoking tobacco, the majority of the examples we looked at referred to things that emit smoke rather than the process of smoking tobacco. Other words assigned to this semantic field in the seventeenth century, such as PUFF, have no clear link to smoking tobacco or other substances in the language of the time. Similarly, *addicted* is assigned to this category, but the word seems to have nothing to do with substance dependence four hundred years ago. In brief, while an automated semantic analysis of our data would have proved of help, the system we had access to was clearly not suitable for use on seventeenth-century data. We are sure that, in time, a system will be developed which is sensitive both to the worldview and word meaning of the time. But for now we decided to rely on wholly manual semantic analyses.

#### 5.4 In depth – WHORE

To study the word WHORE, we calculated the collocates of the word in each decade of the seventeenth century. As discussed, for each collocate we then looked at the concordances of the collocate and determined the principal meaning encoded by that collocate. This led to the collocate being placed into a semantic field. The semantic fields themselves can be further organized into one of three categories – semantic fields relating to grammatical relations that we may more properly call colligates (e.g. prepositions, wh-interrogatives), collocates in principle relating to the practice of prostitution (e.g. words for controllers of prostitutes) and those in the Religion category (words to do with the Whore of Babylon). We will focus only on the second category, setting aside collocates which were in the Religion category as the allegorical attack on the Catholic Church, while interesting, is not a central concern of this book. Similarly, we will only look at what might more readily be described as colligates, that is, words expressing a principally grammatical rather than meaning relationship, where it is revealing to do so. This brings us to the start of the analysis. To begin with, we looked at the semantic fields associated with WHORE in each decade. The question we wanted to explore was to what extent the meaning of the word was stable over time – if new semantic fields are being associated with or decoupled from the word

then this is taken as strong evidence that the meaning of the word is changing. Table 5.1 gives an overview of the word in the century. In each case the semantic fields associated with the word are listed with a number in parentheses following indicating how many collocates fall within the field in that decade.

Table 5.1 shows what we may call the overall 'shape' of the meaning of *WHORE* across the seventeenth century. In the table a core semantics for the word which

**Table 5.1** The semantic fields of *WHORE* by decade

| <b>Decade</b> | <b>Semantic fields attached to <i>WHORE</i></b>   |
|---------------|---|
| 1600s         | Criminality (1), Gender Identity (1), Insult (2), Location (1), Near Synonym (2), Purchase (3), Family Relation (1), Religion (23), Undesirable Characteristic (3)  |
| 1610s         | Acting (3), Controllers (2), Criminality (2), Gender Identity (2), Honesty (1), Insult (1), Near Synonym (1), Purchase (1), Family Relation (1), Religion (20), Undesirable Characteristic (1)  |
| 1620s         | Acting (4), Controllers (1), Criminality (3), Gender Identity (1), Honesty (1), Insult (2), Purchase (2), Family Relation (4), Religion (23), Undesirable Characteristic (2)  |
| 1630s         | Age (1), Acting (1), Controllers (3), Criminality (4), Gender Identity (2), Honesty (1), Insult (2), Near Synonym (3), Purchase (2), Family Relation (2), Religion (7), Title (1), Undesirable Characteristic (3)   |
| 1640s         | Acting (2), Controllers (4), Criminality (4), Gender Identity (1), Honesty (1), Insult (1), Near Synonym (3), Purchase (3), Family Relation (2), Religion (41), Undesirable Characteristic (3)  |
| 1650s         | Acting (3), Controllers (1), Criminality (3), Disease (1), Gender Identity (1), Honesty (1), Illegitimacy (1), Insult (3), Intercourse (1), Location (1), Matrimony (2), Near Synonym (3), Purchase (2), Family Relation (2), Religion (55), Undesirable Characteristic (5)   |
| 1660s         | Age (1), Acting (2), Controllers (2), Criminality (4), Disease (2), Falsehood (1), Gender Identity (1), Honesty (1), Insult (3), Matrimony (1), Metaphor (1), Near Synonym (2), Pity (1), Purchase (2), Family Relation (2), Religion (38), Simile (1), Undesirable Characteristic (2)  |
| 1670s         | Age (1), Acting (1), Controllers (2), Criminality (2), Disease (1), Gender Identity (2), Honesty (1), Illegitimacy (1), Insult (2), Near Synonym (2), Pity (1), Purchase (1), Family Relation (3), Religion (31), Title (3), Undesirable Characteristic (2)   |
| 1680s         | Age (2), Allow (1), Acting (4), Controllers (2), Criminality (4), Exclamation (1), Falsehood (1), Gender Identity (2), Honesty (1), Illegitimacy (1), Insult (4), Know (1), Location (1), Near Synonym (1), Pity (1), Profession (1), Purchase (3), Family Relation (2), Religion (30), Title (2), Undesirable Characteristic (1) |
| 1690s         | Age (1), Acting (6), Controllers (6), Criminality (6), Gender Identity (2), Honesty (1), Insult (8), Punishment (2), Purchase (4), Family Relation (2), Religion (27), Simile (1), Title (1)  |

endures across the century is observable. Throughout the century the Religion category is associated with the word. Yet a second use of the word is also present throughout the century – the social process that we call prostitution seems to be clearly attached to the word WHORE – crucially, whores are purchased, for example. Table 5.2 recasts the data in the first table in terms of consistency of collocation, as discussed in Chapter 1, showing the consistent, initiating,

**Table 5.2** The semantic fields of WHORE by decade over the century

|                               | 0  | 10 | 20 | 30 | 40 | 50 | 60 | 70 | 80 | 90 |    | Nature of collocates         |
|-------------------------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|------------------------------|
| Criminality                   | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  | 4  | 2  | 4  | 2  | 4  | 6  | 10 | Consistent                   |
| Gender Identity               | 1  | 2  | 1  | 2  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 2  | 2  | 2  | 10 | Consistent                   |
| Insult                        | 2  | 1  | 2  | 2  | 1  | 3  | 3  | 5  | 4  | 8  | 10 | Consistent                   |
| Purchase                      | 3  | 1  | 2  | 2  | 3  | 2  | 2  | 1  | 3  | 4  | 10 | Consistent                   |
| Family Relation               | 1  | 1  | 4  | 2  | 2  | 2  | 2  | 5  | 2  | 2  | 10 | Consistent                   |
| Religion                      | 23 | 20 | 23 | 7  | 41 | 55 | 38 | 31 | 30 | 27 | 10 | Consistent                   |
| Acting                        | 0  | 3  | 4  | 1  | 2  | 3  | 2  | 1  | 4  | 6  | 9  | Consistent                   |
| Controllers                   | 0  | 2  | 1  | 3  | 4  | 1  | 2  | 2  | 2  | 6  | 9  | Consistent                   |
| Honesty                       | 0  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 9  | Consistent                   |
| Undesirable<br>Characteristic | 3  | 1  | 2  | 3  | 3  | 5  | 2  | 2  | 1  | 0  | 9  | Consistent                   |
| Near Synonym                  | 2  | 1  | 0  | 3  | 3  | 3  | 2  | 2  | 1  | 0  | 8  | Consistent                   |
| Age                           | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 1  | 2  | 1  | 5  | Transient/Initiation         |
| Title                         | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 3  | 2  | 1  | 4  | Transient/Initiation         |
| Disease                       | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 2  | 1  | 0  | 0  | 3  | Initiation and<br>Transience |
| Illegitimacy                  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 1  | 1  | 0  | 3  | Transient                    |
| Location                      | 1  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 3  | Transient                    |
| Pity                          | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 0  | 3  | Initiation and<br>Transient  |
| Simile                        | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 1  | 1  | 3  | Transient/Initiation         |
| Falsehood                     | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 2  | Transient                    |
| Matrimony                     | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 2  | 1  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 2  | Transient                    |
| Adultery                      | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | Transient                    |
| Allow                         | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 1  | Transient                    |
| Client                        | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | Transient                    |
| Exclamation                   | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 1  | Transient                    |
| Know                          | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 1  | Transient                    |
| Intercourse                   | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | Transient                    |
| Metaphor                      | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | Transient                    |
| Profession                    | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 1  | Transient                    |
| Punishment                    | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 2  | 1  | Transient                    |

terminating and transitory collocates in the century. In this case, however, rather than looking at the persistence of individual collocates, we are looking at the persistence of collocates within a field across time.

This table is ordered by type of collocation because this is the structure that the discussion of the word will now follow. In this chapter we will explore the core semantics of *WHORE* which seems invariant across the century as evidenced by its consistent collocates. The discussion of the initiating and transient collocates of the word will take place in the next chapter.

In the consistent semantic fields, we argue there is, setting religion aside, a consistent representation of real, rather than allegorical, whores. The construction of these whores is that they are associated with Criminality, Gender Identity, Purchase, a process whereby people Act as whores and those who are Controllers of whores. They are also associated with a series of Undesirable Characteristics. Where there is an association with a positive attribute, Honesty, this is negated in context. We also see that there are Near Synonyms of *WHORE* that are often mentioned in close proximity to *WHORE* itself.<sup>13</sup> In addition, whores are often mentioned with reference to a Family Relation such as *sisters*. Given the representation of whores as discussed so far, it is unsurprising to discover that to call somebody a whore is an Insult that is used across the century. Let us flesh out this construction of the whore in seventeenth-century texts in these semantic fields.

#### 5.4.1 The price of a whore

First of all, let us consider the Price field as evidence that what we have is a meaning of *WHORE* that is consistently associated with some type of transaction for sex. The most consistent collocate in the Purchase field is *HIRE*, which occurs as a collocate in all decades bar the 1610s and 1630s. *PRICE* is also a consistent collocate in this field which initiates in the 1630s, appearing in each decade thereafter. Both of these collocates indicate quite clearly that what a whore is offering she is offering for pay – there is a price to be paid for the services given. A third collocate, which is transient, is *KEEP*. This occurs from the beginning of the century until the 1640s, is in abeyance from the 1650s to 1670s, and returns in the 1680s and 1690s. This roughly corresponds with what historians tell us about changes in public morality as a result of Puritan influence during the period of Cromwell's leadership. It is interesting that the collocate *KEEP* does not reappear earlier in the century, in the 1660s or 1670s, when an atmosphere of sexual liberation at court was thought to have spread to wider society (see Chapter 2).

Conversely, the circumstance of men keeping whores does not appear to have fully re-entered public discourse until a few decades into the Restoration of the monarchy. We would argue that the keeping of a whore is as transactional as hiring a whore – the price paid is the whore’s keep, as was shown in Chapter 2, Section 2.5. If the price is not paid, the whore is not kept. Some may ‘keep their whores, under a yearly rent’<sup>14</sup> while others ‘keep a Whore, paying only Ten Shillings and Six Pence’<sup>15</sup> though men are warned that the whore is unlikely to be faithful, and that if you keep a whore you ‘Must chain her, or she’ll trade with forty more.’<sup>16</sup> The last point, once again, accords well with what historians have described, that kept women may have had many keepers (see Chapter 2, Section 2.5). There is no doubt then, that throughout the century, the word WHORE refers to women who provide a certain form of entertainment in return for money or, perhaps, a payment in kind.

#### 5.4.2 Whores and criminality

The association of whores with illegality in the century is marked in the Criminality field. While consistent, a close inspection of collocates reveals, however, a change across the century, as will be shown.

In the Criminality field there are criminals (KNAVE, THIEF, ROGUE) and criminal processes (STEAL). However, the focus is much more on criminals. KNAVE is a collocate in the 1600s, and then from 1620 through to the 1660s after which it terminates as a collocate of WHORE. Interestingly, as KNAVE terminates, ROGUE initiates in 1660 and remains a collocate through to the end of the century. THIEF is the most consistent collocate, starting in the 1610s and continuing as a collocate throughout the century. Let us first consider knaves and rogues. Given the pattern of distribution of each, it would be easy to conclude that *rogue* displaces *knave* but that changes little – we simply have a new word indexing the same meaning. That is not the case – a look at the top twenty collocates of KNAVE and ROGUE reveals that this shift indicates a real change in the type of criminality associated with WHORE. In the top twenty collocates for KNAVE, no less than eight of the collocates relate KNAVE to criminality. In each case knaves are associated with trickery or deceit through words such as, *bribing*, *cheating*, *cogging* and *cozened*. Yet ROGUE does not link to criminal acts. Rather it links strongly to criminals, with six of the top twenty collocates linking to words such as *cut-purse*, *footpad*, *Tory* and *villains*. There is a further notable change – the words most frequently associated with ROGUE in the top twenty collocates of the word are words associated with begging. Seven of those collocates fall in this category,

including *beggars*, *runnagate*, *vagabond* and *vagrant*. From being associated through *KNAVE* with those who undertake criminal deceit, *WHORE* shifts in the latter half of the seventeenth century to be associated with poverty and thieves through *ROGUE*. This is a sustained shift, as noted. So the association with thievery created by the consistent collocate *THIEF* is amplified from the middle of the century by a shift of collocate from *KNAVE* to *ROGUE*. In that process, a link between poverty and thievery is also introduced. The transient collocate *STEAL* from the 1640s is entirely in harmony with this strong link to thievery.

### 5.4.3 Whores and gender

The category of Gender Identity needs little discussion: *woman* is a collocate of *WHORE* in every decade of the seventeenth century – there is no other gender identity marker, for example, *man*, *girl* or *boy*. This very clearly defines the gender identity associated with *WHORE*. This is reinforced if we look at the colligates of *WHORE* and explore the pronouns colligating with the word. There are two consistent colligates – *her* (which occurs with *WHORE* in every decade but one) and *she* which is a colligate of *WHORE* throughout the century. This gender identity is formed in large part because of the numerous references to the Whore of Babylon, but it extends to non-biblical settings also. *WHORE* is generally the referent of the pronoun, as in the following example: ‘The whore speaks first, her argument doth tend To prove her calling lawful; and the end Will make it good: it is honest downright dealing To use my tail, to keep my hands from stealing.’<sup>17</sup> One last point can be made regarding the word *she*. This often appears in the expression *she + BE + a + whore*. The pattern occurs 75 times in the seventeenth century and never seems to be anything other than an insult or accusation, as in the following examples ‘my wife cuckolds me, she is a whore, a whore, a whore’; ‘she is a Whore and her child a bastard’ and ‘Go tell thy mistress Whore, she is a Whore.’<sup>18</sup> This pattern seems suggestive of an insult, a topic we shall return to shortly.

### 5.4.4 Playing the whore

The semantic field of Acting is linked to one consistent collocate – *PLAY*. If a woman plays the whore,<sup>19</sup> she either acts in the fashion of a whore or is claimed to act in that fashion. The only other collocate in this category which occurs more than in a highly transient way, *MAKE*, is present in the 1610s–1620s and the 1640s–1650s. It is interesting to contrast the two words. The consistent collocate

seems to give some agency to the woman becoming or acting as a whore – it is her decision to play, yet that decision may be driven by external factors or some goal, as in the following examples: ‘for gain to play the whore’, ‘some forced are, By being poor and very bare, To play the Whore’ and ‘And what do many fair Ladies do, but play the Whores with themselves, and commit Uncleaness.’<sup>20</sup> In these examples it is also possible to see themes coming together – i) engaging in sex for gain; ii) poverty, crime and prostitution; iii) the strong association of being a whore with being a woman, as we may expect from the patterns of collocation discussed thus far. It may also be possible to link this pattern with the belief prevalent at the time that women were sexually incontinent, as discussed in Chapter 2 – they sought transgressive sex and took agency to engage in it.

The collocate *MAKE* on the other hand may initially suggest women are being coerced or tricked into transgressive sex, as did happen (see Chapter 2, Section 2.6). A close examination of the results reveals that many such examples can be found, as in ‘To make a whore of my daughter, is no hurt to me’ and ‘That Thief has sold her then into some Bawdihouse. Was this your project for her education, To steal my child to make a whore of her?’<sup>21</sup> However, it must be noted that *MAKE* is also used in a large number of examples in which the Whore of Babylon is made naked. While these are not numerous enough to force the categorization of *MAKE* into the Religion category, they are frequent enough to greatly increase the collocation of *MAKE* with *WHORE*. Nonetheless, it is interesting to see that there are examples in the data where a female is coerced into prostitution, though by comparison to *PLAY*, this use of *MAKE* with *WHORE* is marginal. In short, there is more of a discussion of women playing the whore rather than being made whores in the century.

#### **5.4.5 Facilitators of prostitution**

One category of actors associated with prostitution that we have only touched upon lightly in the corpus analysis in this book so far are those who control or facilitate prostitution as evidenced in the Controllers semantic field. The analysis of *WHORE* forces us to consider this group, as they collocate consistently, perhaps unsurprisingly, with the word. The only consistent collocate in the field is *BAWD*. The transient collocates are *PANDER*, *WHOREMONGER* and *PIMP*. Of note is that *PIMP* becomes a collocate in the 1690s – while lack of data prevents us from exploring the hypothesis, it is tempting to conclude that what we see in 1690 is the initiation of *PIMP* as a consistent collocate. While we cannot explore that hypothesis, we can note that *PIMP* increases in usage through the century, as the



following figures of instances of PIMP per decade, normalized per ten million words, show: 1.7 (00s), 6.1 (10s), 1.4 (20s), 6.9 (30s), 16.3 (40s), 7.3 (50s), 15.8 (60s), 14.8 (70s), 22.3 (80s), 24.8 (90s). Setting this speculation aside, what does the consistent collocation with BAWD tell us? In order to answer this question we need to understand the word. To gain a better sense of it we analysed the top twenty-five collocates of BAWD (excluding spelling variations). This reveals that bawds were thought to be the near equivalent of panders and pimps, near synonyms with which they collocate. They also have a role to play in facilitating sex, as evidenced by the collocates *broker*, *brokers* and *procurers*. The sex they are facilitating is with *wenches* and these wenches are realized through the collocate WHORE and a series of near synonyms of the word: *courtesans*, *harlot*, *harlots*, *prostitute*, *punk*, *strumpet* and *strumpets*. It is implied that they live off the proceeds of the transactions that they set up as they are *parasites*. They are closely linked with criminals in the form of the word *ruffians* and undesirables such as *fornicators* and *usurers* – they are accused of *harbouring* criminals and young ladies who have had babies out of wedlock, and are *receivers* of such people into places out of the reach of the law. It probably follows that they are also collocated with places of detention (*bridewell*) and forms of punishment (*carted*). Finally, there is a suggestion that bawds are female in that it is suggested, through the collocate *midwife*, that bawds are female. On the basis of this exploration of BAWD, it is hard not to conclude that, in public discourse, a bawd served a purpose not dissimilar from a modern madame or pimp, facilitating the relationship between a client and a sex worker and profiting from that relationship. As is still the case with such people, their role takes them into a socially marginalized space in which they may be associated with criminality of various forms.

This analysis is striking in how it parallels what historians have said about bawds, as reviewed in Chapter 2, Section 2.7.1. All of the features of bawd found through collocation align well with the discussion of bawds in that section. Interestingly, the near synonymy of BAWD with PIMP is also best understood in the context set by that section – bawds and pimps fulfilled similar social functions, hence the basis for their near synonymy is rooted in the social reality of the lived experience of bawds and pimps, a reality well reflected in public discourse of the time.

#### 5.4.6 Whores and the undesirable

This association with social marginalization continues when we look at the Undesirable Characteristics semantic field. Many of the collocates in this field

appear as collocates fleetingly. Some recur briefly (*arrant, impudent, painted, swear*) while others are entirely transient, collocating for one decade only before disappearing (*base, crafty, filthy, lust, notorious, shameless*). It is interesting to note that the decade which has most transient collocates evidenced within it is the 1650s, which shows WHORE collocating with *arrant, filthy, impudent* and *swear*, that is, four out of the ten transient collocates. Before leaving the discussion of transient collocates in this category, however, it seems wise to pause over *swear* and to highlight another set of collocates, those which appear in the last two decades of the century associated with WHORE. The collocate *swear* occurs in the 1640s and 1650s, then vanishes only to return in the 1680s and 1690s. In the 1680s and 1690s it joins other collocates which are key only in those decades – *drink* and *lewd* as well as one collocate, *drunk*, which is not evidenced elsewhere in the century. In short, while we do not have data to project into the eighteenth century, there is some evidence that the word WHORE is becoming associated at the end of the century with a different set of undesirable features than earlier in the century. Transient collocates such as *arrant, base, crafty, filthy, painted* and *shameless* all occur pre-1680. After 1680 the new collocates are *drink, drunk, lewd, lust, notorious* and *swear*. A strong link to sex, drink and bad language seems evident in the last two decades of the century, while it is absent in the first eight. It is doubtful that this reflects a change in the social practices associated with whores – it seems absurd to suggest that prior to 1680 whores had nothing to do with sex, drink and bad language. What seems more likely as an explanation is that what is viewed as problematic shifted in public discourse at this point leading to features that had always been associated with whoredom, but not salient in discourse, to be forced into prominence. On the basis of the historical background provided in Chapter 3, the most likely explanation for this is the rise of moral reform movements in response to the perceived libertinage of the Restoration, in particular the Society for the Reformation of Manners. The work of Shoemaker (1999) in particular, as discussed in Chapter 3, Section 3.4, explains why and how such a pattern should be observable in the data. Note also that this concatenation of issues is also supported by the study of the language of the Society for the Reformation of Manners in McEnergy (2005). While causation is always difficult to prove, we would argue that there is a strong case, based on previous studies, to suggest that what we are seeing here is a shift in public discourse brought about by, or at least in harmony with, moral campaigning groups such as the Society for the Reformation of Manners. The linking of bad language, sex and alcohol was precisely the type of associations they, and other moral reformers, were campaigning to bring about. While McEnergy (2005)

shows the process at work in the writings of the reformers, this study shows, we would argue, its powerful effect on public discourse and the representation of whores in public discourse.

The one consistent collocate in this category is the word *common*. This raises the question of what is being foregrounded – are whores ‘usual’ or of low social standing? An exploration of the collocate *common* with WHORE reveals a striking result – it is powerfully linked to the L1 position. The fixed expression *common* WHORE accounting for 71 per cent of the collocates of *common* with WHORE, with the fixed expression occurring 296 times in 231 texts throughout the century. This leads us to refine the question to ask, what does the fixed expression *common* WHORE denote? Again collocation is helpful here – we can explore collocates of fixed expressions as easily as we can those of individual words.<sup>22</sup> The collocates of *common* WHORE reveal it to be one linked, predictably perhaps, with those on the social margins in much the same way that WHORE is – *common* WHORE collocates with criminals (*pick-pockets*), beggars (*wanderers*), those controlling or facilitating the sex trade (*bawds*) and others engaged in the same activities (*harlot*, *prostitute*). The talk is not of the whore as ‘usual’, but, rather, seems to be about how they are typically of low social standing. The following quote, in which whores are likened to a toilet (*Jakes*), shows the low social standing of whores in public discourse:

A Prostitute or Common Whore, is a Creature in the form and shape of our mother Eve, but of far more impudence, for as Eve desired to hide her nakedness, this covets to discover it, making a Trade of lust, and a pastime of incontinence. A painted Iesabell peeping out at her polluted window, with a nod or beckon to allure the simple; and shamelessly saluting those she neer saw; and may be compared to a Jakes, which every rogue uses for necessity, and then abhors it.<sup>23</sup>

The only ordinariness here about the *common* WHORE is that she is routinely associated with the marginalized and despised by the mainstream.

It is interesting, and perhaps telling, to note that this analysis of *common* once again parallels well with the analysis of the word in the writing of the Society for the Reformation of Manners by McEnery (2005: 160–4), though in this case the collocate predates the writings of the society, so there can be no suggestion that the society brought this collocation into being. The analysis also links in well with the discussion of the origin of whores in Chapter 2, Section 2.5, in which a powerful link between low social standing, economic deprivation and prostitution was established. The discussion of common whores in Section 2.1 does not sit as easily with this analysis – though the ambiguity regarding the

payment or otherwise to a common whore certainly permits that this analysis is not inconsistent, potentially, with that outlined in Section 2.1. This analysis of *common* WHORE also links to the discussion of the Apprentice Riots in Chapter 3, Section 3.3. The impoverishment that those riots brought to whores, though satirized at the time, must have made the position of the socially and economically marginalized worse.

#### 5.4.7 Whores and honesty

The Honesty semantic field is generated by a word which frequently collocates with WHORE throughout the century – *honest*. While this appears positive, in the text it is subject to a variety of plays on words – an honest whore is ‘a poor whore’, as if to suggest the essence of being a successful whore is dishonesty; an honest whore is prone to change as she may be ‘persuaded by strong Arguments to turn Courtesan again’; only disfigurement might stop a whore, for of honest whores there ‘live none but honest whores with a pox’; in short, it was thought ‘to be impossible, an honest whore.’<sup>24</sup> The words *honest* and *whore*, when collocating, are brought together for effect – the honest whore is a contradiction in terms for many writers and as such is used as a literary device.

#### 5.4.8 Whores and the family

What of the consistent relationship in the data between family relatives and whores in the Family Relation category? There is one consistent collocate in this category and it brings with it, potentially, a metaphor. The consistent collocate is *wife*. When collocating with WHORE, the predominant sense that is attached to WHORE is not literal – it is most often that a wife who has been unfaithful is being accused of being a whore. The use of the word as an insult was noted in Chapter 2 where we were told that a woman’s sexual reputation was crucial to her standing in society. The collocate not only draws a parallel with the actions of a prostitute, the intention also verges upon insult, meaning that this collocate could, arguably, be cross posted into that category too, as the following examples show: ‘his Wife had plaid the Whore with another Man before his Marriage to her’,<sup>25</sup> ‘My wife is a whore, I’ll kiss her no more’ and ‘My Lord, you are a Rogue, your Wife’s a Whore, and your Children are all Bastards.’<sup>26</sup> Consequently, the presence of this category is indicative more of issues of fidelity in the home rather than prostitution as such, that is, another variety of transgressive sex.

#### 5.4.9 Insults: When is a whore not a whore? When it is a metaphor

The potentially insulting use of *wife* with WHORE brings us to the last consistent semantic field of WHORE, Insult.<sup>27</sup> It is a matter of some planning and fortune that this comes last for, as a category, it needs some careful justification. That the word WHORE could be used as an insult, as has been shown already, is not in doubt. What is more contentious is the question of which words should be placed within the category. As noted already, *she* is closely linked to the formation of insults involving WHORE (and other words for that matter). It is entirely plausible that other pronouns, in particular *you*, are also used. However, our lexical approach to this analysis allows us to note this while also accepting that a pronoun such as *you* is not inherently insulting. It is simply a pronoun that may be used to insult yet is also more commonly used for a host of other purposes. This is in contrast to a word that is the sole consistent member of this category – CALL.

CALL, in the sense of ‘to label’, appears to have a negative discourse prosody, indicating insulting usage, hence when linked to WHORE it may better be defined as ‘to label with the purpose of insulting’. Relying on the examples around WHORE may allow us to make that claim – but such uses of CALL are highly likely to be linked to insulting. A wider question to consider is whether CALL generally had a negative discourse prosody in the seventeenth century. It need not necessarily be the case that all uses of CALL are insulting – one might call somebody a saint, for example. However, to establish whether it is the pattern CALL+WHORE that has a negative discourse prosody or whether CALL carries this burden of meaning typically anyway is clearly linguistically important.

To explore this we began by looking at the word CALL in the seventeenth century. The word occurs 268,664 times in the corpus, so examining all examples of the word is quite impractical. Hence we explored a random sample of four hundred uses of the word looking not for where somebody is attributed a proper name through *call* (e.g. ‘His mother said that she would call him John’), but for examples with an attribute or with a noun that links them to an activity – this is the sense of call we are exploring (e.g. ‘I will call you dishonest’ or ‘I will call you a whore’).

What did we find? In the sample, there were sixteen uses of *call* with the definition we were interested in. All were linked to negative concepts, with people being called such things as *absurd*, *fool*, *jealous*, *liar*, *monstrous*, *traitor*, *unclean* and *ungrateful*. So, while it is almost certainly the case that in a larger sample we may have seen some positive examples, it appears that there is good

evidence that to call somebody something is an inherently insulting act because of the discourse prosody of *call* – it seems it will typically introduce something that is insulting to be called.

We decided to explore this a little more deeply by looking at the pattern *call+him* and *call+her* in the data. This allowed us to narrow our search a little and get out examples which more clearly met the sense of *call* we were exploring. The results provided further evidence in support of the hypothesis we had developed. We looked at two hundred examples of each pattern and found that *call+her* yielded twenty-six relevant examples, while *call+him* yielded forty-five examples. In each case, while we did find some examples of positive labelling, the labels being applied were overwhelmingly negative – *call+her* introduced twenty-three negative labels (e.g. *Babylon, dog, harlot, rogue, whore, wine bibber*) while *call+him* introduced thirty-seven negative labels (e.g. *devil, liar, monster, son of a whore, worm*). So it seems that this sense of CALL is imbued with a negative discourse prosody through collocation in the century as it is used to insult. It is a consistent collocater of WHORE throughout the seventeenth century as it is used to insult women by calling them *whore*, relying on two wordforms in particular, *call* and *called*, to achieve this goal. Further evidence of the insulting nature of being called a whore comes from another collocater in the Insult field, *like*. This is a collocater which, like many others, attaches to WHORE in the 1660s, being a collocater through the 1670s and 1680s, hence matching our criteria for being an initiating collocater. It could be that the word is being used to express approval – ‘I like whores’. It is not. It is used quite consistently to introduce a simile, a likening of somebody to a whore with the intent of insulting. It is a pattern repeated with STRUMPET (with which *like* collocates in the 1600s, 1610s, 1620s, 1650s, 1660s and 1670s) and HARLOT (with which *like* collocates in the 1600s, 1610s, 1630s, 1640s, 1650s, 1680s and 1690s). So all of these near synonyms can be used with *like* in a simile to insult.

Demonstrating the use of *like* as a simile reveals two things in the data – first that a simile can be used to insult. One might just imagine examples saying somebody suffered stoically like a whore, for example, which might, conceivably, be viewed as a compliment. Yet the data does not bear this out. The purpose of using *like* with WHORE or one of its near synonyms to form a simile was to insult, as is clear in the following examples: ‘Like an harlot drunk in a common Inn, or a frantic whore in an open market, she prostrates her self to every passenger’; ‘old errors are like old whores, that is, the more to be abhorred’ and ‘Why is thy beautiful Maiden-body, polluted like a strumpets, and prostituted?’<sup>28</sup> Yet notice the second function of the simile – while saying something is like something,

there is a tacit assumption that the things are not, in fact, the same. Hence, an unfaithful wife who is said to act like a whore, strumpet or harlot is not any of those things. She is identified as having some properties in common with them, in this case what is perceived as sexual incontinence.

Some modern examples can help illuminate the argument. Consider the following utterances from the British National Corpus: ‘That old woman looks like a witch,’ ‘Your life is an illness, you old witch’ and ‘You used to have a story book when I was a kid, there was a witch called Jenny Green Thing’.<sup>29</sup> In the first example, a simile is used to liken a person to a witch. In the second, it is asserted that the person is a witch, but this is merely an insult, the person is metaphorically being associated with the properties of a witch. In the final example, there is a reference to a literary witch. In neither of the first two examples is it actually believed that the person being likened to or referred to as a witch is, in fact, a witch. Rather, the association with a witch is drawing attention to some features that the person shares in common with a witch – this is an unflattering process, hence it is an insult. We see the same process in the seventeenth century around HARLOT, STRUMPET and WHORE. Women who are not, for example, those who have sex for money are likened to such people or asserted to be such a person by way of an insult. Yet we should not conclude, especially in the case where the extension is metaphorical, that the writer actually intended to claim that the target of their ire was a person who was an actual whore, that is, somebody who matched fully the core definition of WHORE outlined in this chapter – a woman who took money in exchange for sex. Consider this example: ‘Come you are a whore, and have abused my honest bed; I’ll have you before the Justices to be punished for thy offence.’<sup>30</sup> In this example, taken from a play, a man has been accidentally cuckolded by his wife who thought him dead. The wife has not been engaged in transgressive sex in return for pay, she has simply taken another lover, assuming her husband dead after he has been absent for seven years. His use of *whore* is insulting, but he is not suggesting she has been having sex with many men for money. He is, however, insulting her by calling her *whore*, drawing on the transgressive nature of the sex that whores engage in to draw a metaphorical link to his own wife’s behaviour. The Insult category for WHORE and its near synonyms generally works in this way.

Another category issue is worthy of mention – the example above, *son of a whore*, shows evidence of a multiword unit being used as an insult. This phrase (and *sons of whores*) emerges in the 1660s, at which point the word *son* collocates with *whore* in this phrase. It is then a consistent collocate until the end of the century and hence is a strong candidate for being labelled as an initiating

collocate in the Insult category, which is where we have placed it in this analysis. One interesting feature of *son of a whore* is that, while *whore* seems to be an exclusively female insult when used in a structure such as *you whore*, *son of a whore* extends the negative associations of WHORE to a male target, bringing a wealth of meaning with it including, presumably, illegitimacy. Unwanted pregnancies outside marriage, as noted in Section 3.2, were closely associated with prostitution.

Finally, as the century progresses, beginning in the 1660s, the Insult category attracts another initiating collocate – DAMN. The use of this word to amplify an insult needs no extensive justification. One hypothesis we should dismiss, however, is that DAMN initiates as an insult in general at this point in the history of the language, that is, it initiates as an insult at this point, linking itself first to WHORE. If we look at the distribution of the word *damned* through the century, we see no evidence that the word sprang into being in the 1660s – in the corpus its frequency varies between 41.35 and 26.57 words per million across the century. Yet the word need not be an insult – we need to explore whether the word's association with insult started in the 1660s, previous to which it was used in a religious sense only. A quick test of this was carried out whereby we looked at *damned* in the first decade of the 1600s. This yielded 2,368 examples. If the hypothesis is right, we should have seen no examples of *damned* as part of an insult in this data. While it is true that the majority of examples in the data show *damned* being used in a religious sense, there are clear examples of *damned* being used to amplify an insult in cases such as the following one from 1607: 'Into a house among a bawdy crew, Of damned whores; I there's your whole delight: Let purse and time go which way twill for you, Bus me sweet rog till moneys all gone quite.'<sup>31</sup> There is no overt religious framing of this use of the word, and it seems it is being used here in an insulting rather than religious fashion. This is a good example because, as well as showing the use of *damned* in an insult, it also attests that whores could be the target of the word many years before it became a collocate of the word. What happens in the 1660s is that it becomes a frequent part of insults aimed at whores.

The discussion of insults begs a question – how often is a word like WHORE used to refer to a woman, imagined or otherwise, engaged in transactional sex as opposed to being used in some non-literal way, for example, to besmirch a woman or to refer to a woman engaged in transgressive but non-transactional sex? We have already seen, in Chapter 2, Section 2.1, that historians such as Gowing (1993: 3) have argued that the term *whore* did not necessarily carry implication of payment in early modern England. It would clearly be very



difficult to analyse every use of the word in the seventeenth century to ascertain the truth of this, though the collocation analysis alone would cast doubt on the claim. So to approach this question we proceeded by taking a random 5 per cent sample of uses of the word *WHORE* from each decade. We looked at each example and categorized it either as i) relating to a biblical allegory (typically the Whore of Babylon); ii) either a woman, imaginary or otherwise, engaged in transactional sex or the process of purchasing or seeking such sex; iii) the use of the word in some non-literal sense, typically as an insult or as a reference to a woman engaged in transgressive sex that is not transactional; iv) as being ambiguous – it is on occasion difficult, in context, to disambiguate ii and iii; v) other meaning, where the word does not fit categories i-iv, that is, examples where *whore* is a person's surname. What did these samples show? Table 5.3 gives the numbers of examples falling in each of the five categories – the percentage of all examples in that decade that this represents is shown in parentheses after each number for ease of comparison across the columns. In each decade, the most frequent category is emboldened.

While admittedly based on a sample, the figures here seem revealing. If we focus upon the top ranked category in each decade, we see that the use of the word *WHORE* as a religious allegory is dominant in most of the century, as the collocation analysis suggested. It is interesting to note that there seems to be shifts in the selection of the meanings through the century – the non-literal and literal uses rise, while ambiguous references also rise. The rise of the non-literal can, in part, be explained once again by collocation – insults fall within this category and, as the use of the word to insult rises, so too do the number of instances of the word falling in this category. The surge of ambiguity

**Table 5.3** Different uses of *WHORE* sampled across the century

| Decade | Religion        | Literal         | Non-literal     | Ambiguous       | Other  |
|--------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------|
| 1600s  | <b>26 (42%)</b> | 18 (29%)        | 12 (19%)        | 6 (10%)         | 0 (0%) |
| 1610s  | <b>29 (39%)</b> | 14 (19%)        | 13 (17%)        | 15 (20%)        | 4 (5%) |
| 1620s  | <b>34 (49%)</b> | 17 (24%)        | 8 (11%)         | 10 (14%)        | 1 (1%) |
| 1630s  | 14 (18%)        | <b>33 (42%)</b> | 12 (15%)        | 19 (24%)        | 1 (1%) |
| 1640s  | 14 (18%)        | <b>29 (37%)</b> | 16 (21%)        | 18 (23%)        | 1 (1%) |
| 1650s  | <b>90 (51%)</b> | 12 (7%)         | 22 (12%)        | 50 (28%)        | 3 (2%) |
| 1660s  | <b>68 (51%)</b> | 14 (11%)        | 28 (21%)        | 19 (14%)        | 4 (3%) |
| 1670s  | <b>46 (36%)</b> | 12 (9%)         | 22 (17%)        | <b>46 (36%)</b> | 2 (2%) |
| 1680s  | 51 (30%)        | 26 (15%)        | 33 (19%)        | <b>57 (34%)</b> | 3 (2%) |
| 1690s  | 26 (23%)        | 29 (26%)        | <b>31 (28%)</b> | 21 (19%)        | 5 (4%) |

is also of interest – though the explanation for this is more difficult to posit. Textually, there is no clear evidence in each of these cases to ascribe the use of the word to the literal or non-literal categories, though this is always where the ambiguity lies. In each case it could well be that a broader social context at the time may have disambiguated these uses. Or it could be that the ambiguity was productive – people were actively choosing not to disambiguate for effect, suggesting transgressive sex may have a transactional element thereby, for example. This would certainly have led to a more potent insult. Speculation aside, what the table shows us is that the analysis of the word here is quite in line with the analysis of insults presented in this section – there is a literal meaning for the word from which ambiguous and non-literal meanings proceed and gain their effect, especially in the context of insulting. Historians who dispute the word *whore* having any financial implication are probably correct with respect to the data they examined, but wrong when it comes to the language in the century in general. Gowing (1993), for instance, has primarily made use of data taken from the consistory court, London's main church court. These cases were dealing with sexual insults – hence we might expect to find exactly what Gowing found, the use of the word *whore* as an insult, not as a literal reference to prostitution. Yet outside of this genre this is not the case.

This example shows the advantage of looking at large language corpora, composed of a range of genres, when assessing word meaning. It also illustrates why, in Section 1.4, we said that we wanted to avoid an over-reliance on language in a legal context and to explore language in general. Polysemous words can have strong preferences for appearing with specific meanings in certain genres or in certain modes of communication (e.g. speech or writing). If we only look at that one genre, or mode of communication, then we run the risk of only viewing a subset of the word's range of usages. With reference to insult, consider the word *pig* in present-day English. If one looks at the spoken section of the British National Corpus, the word *pig* appears most frequently as an insult (as suggested by the collocate *ignorant*). If you look at the same word in the written section of the corpus, then the word often refers to the animal (as suggested by strong collocates such as *warty*, *bellied*, *sty* and *suckling*). In this case, the mode of production is key to separating out two contexts in which two distinct, but related meanings, are preferred. The same appears to be true of *whore* in the seventeenth century – in certain contexts it has a strong preference to appear as an insult. As noted in Section 5.2, in our data we found a genre that seems to develop a strong preference for using *WHORE* as an insult: plays. If we had only studied plays, it may be that we would have come to a similar conclusion to Gowing. However,

as Table 5.3 shows, when a wider range of texts are considered, a wider range of meanings of *WHORE* emerges, including what we term the literal meaning of the word, a person paid for sex.

This study certainly establishes that we should expect literal and non-literal meanings of *WHORE* to be well attested throughout the century in the corpus. So it is not the case when we look at the data in the corpus that what we are seeing is the word *WHORE* used simply to denote non-transactional transgressive sex. We have good cause to believe, on the basis of this analysis of samples of data, that we are seeing collocates relating to what we might call transactional sex as well as collocates which refer to non-transactional transgressive sex as well as non-literal uses of the term used with the intent of insulting.

In the following chapter, we will consider the initiating and transient collocates of *WHORE*. We will then return to a semantic field which is consistent with *whore* but which has not been discussed in this chapter – Near Synonyms.

## Whores, Harlots, Jilts and Prostitutes

In this chapter, we will conclude the analysis of *WHORE* by exploring the initiating and transient collocates of the word. This will be followed by an exploration of the near synonyms of *WHORE*. One of those, *STRUMPET*, has been explored already in Chapter 5. This chapter will thus focus upon those that we have not considered so far – *HARLOT*, *JILT* and *PROSTITUTE*.

To recap, below is an extract of Table 5.2 showing the initiating and transient collocates of *WHORE* arranged into semantic fields.

### 6.1 Initiating collocates of *WHORE*

The appearance of *son a whore* as an initiating collocate in the 1660s is particularly interesting as it foreshadows a discussion of the initiating semantic fields of *WHORE*. But it also leads us to consider a question about the data itself. To what extent may the appearance and disappearance of collocates be linked to the volume of data available at any given point of time in the corpus? We have not explored this so far as the issue is not necessarily pressing when looking at consistent collocates, but it is clearly important when looking at initiating and transient collocates. If one uses measures based on word frequency, then the volume of data available may have an important role to play – more data provides more opportunities for a word to occur and, in the case of collocation, co-occur. How might we begin to explore whether the initiation of collocation, for example, might be linked to an increased availability of data rather than a change in word meaning per se? We must consider the possibility that we are not seeing new meanings attach to *WHORE*. What we may be seeing is meanings that are already attached to the word coming into view as more data emerges.

To begin to explore this, let us assume for a moment that the volume of printed texts increases steadily across the century. As more text is produced, so the

chance of a collocation attached to a word being observed increases. In a corpus analysis, collocation, no matter how it is measured, is, ultimately, a function of frequency of co-occurrence. With more data, the chance of us observing a co-occurrence increases. Hence, in this admittedly idealized scenario, assuming no other factors intervene, if we see more data over time, the chance of us seeing more collocates for a given word over time should increase also. Conversely, if the available data shrinks consistently over time, some collocates may appear to terminate simply through lack of data. How prone may our observations be to this issue of data availability? In this analysis, our focus will be on initiation, as this seems to be a more salient effect for *WHORE* than termination. Also, as we will see, the main feature of the corpus is a general escalation of the availability of data as the century proceeds, which places the focus more squarely on initiation. Table 6.2 gives the number of words and collocates of *WHORE* per decade in the EEBO corpus.

Impressionistically, we can see that there is an increase in the size of the corpus across the century, though that is not uniform. In particular, the 1650s stand out as including a lot of data, while the period 1600s–1640s and 1660s–1690s both look somewhat more stable. However, we can also see that an increase in data does not necessarily mean an increase in collocates. For example, the 1630s has more data available than the 1620s, yet the 1620s has more collocates of *WHORE* than the 1620s.

To move beyond this impressionistic view of the relationship between corpus size and the number of collocates of a word, we can test if there is a correlation between the amount of data available and the number of collocates of *WHORE* found over time using the Pearson (product-moment) correlation statistic. This allows us to see whether there is a statistically significant relationship between the increase in the corpus data available over time and the growth of observed collocates. The initial finding, using the data in Table 6.2, is positive – there is a relationship. Using the Pearson (product-moment) correlation statistic gives a high rank correlation value of 0.923, with a narrow 95 per cent confidence interval range of 0.701 to 0.982. However, this is one of the moments when we must pause and consider the number of sampling points we have, as discussed in Chapter 1, Section 1.1. Is the pattern we observe with ten sampling points the same as that we could observe with one hundred sampling points? To explore the pattern further we generated collocates for *WHORE* by year from the corpus and tested the correlation with these one hundred sampling points. The result of this is another positive correlation, though weaker, with a rank correlation value of 0.662 and a 95 per cent confidence interval of 0.535 to 0.759. In short, there

seems to be a strong but not perfect correlation between the size of the corpus and the number of collocates observed.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, it may be prudent to consider the impact that it may have on initiation as shown in Table 6.1. Can one argue that any of the initiating collocates there are truly initiating? A simple experiment can provide some clear evidence that, especially with respect to the 1660s, initiation does occur. Imagine that we add a further criterion to initiation, namely, that to count as the first instance of an initiating collocate, a collocate must first appear in a decade in which there is less data than the previous decade. This would eliminate the possibility of the first appearance of the collocate being attributable to an increased volume of data alone. If all of the initiating collocates are simply attributable to the correlation between the number of collocates and the volume of data available, there should be no initiating collocates in the data. Yet even with this harsh criterion some initiating collocates survive: the semantic fields of Age, Disease and Pity would still initiate in the data, because the decade in which much initiation occurs, the 1660s, is a decade with far less data in it than the previous decade, as Table 6.2 shows. The availability of more data cannot be an explanation for what we see in the 1660s. What we are seeing is evidence of new meaning attaching itself to *WHORE* in the data. Hence, while caution in approaching initiating collocates in a context where data is not evenly

**Table 6.1** The initiating and transient semantic fields of *WHORE*

|              |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |                           |
|--------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---------------------------|
| Age          | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 5 | Transient/Initiation      |
| Title        | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 4 | Transient/Initiation      |
| Disease      | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 | Initiation and Transience |
| Illegitimacy | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 3 | Transient                 |
| Location     | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 | Transient                 |
| Pity         | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 3 | Initiation and Transient  |
| Simile       | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3 | Transient/Initiation      |
| Falsehood    | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | Transient                 |
| Matrimony    | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | Transient                 |
| Adultery     | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | Transient                 |
| Allow        | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | Transient                 |
| Client       | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | Transient                 |
| Exclamation  | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | Transient                 |
| Know         | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | Transient                 |
| Intercourse  | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | Transient                 |
| Metaphor     | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | Transient                 |
| Profession   | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | Transient                 |
| Punishment   | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | Transient                 |

**Table 6.2** The data available in the EEBO corpus per decade, with the number of collocates per decade for WHORE shown

| Decade | Collocates | Words       |
|--------|------------|-------------|
| 1600   | 42         | 57,272,438  |
| 1610   | 42         | 61,922,837  |
| 1620   | 50         | 55,748,866  |
| 1630   | 40         | 63,496,401  |
| 1640   | 66         | 87,480,996  |
| 1650   | 104        | 168,912,439 |
| 1660   | 79         | 111,998,646 |
| 1670   | 73         | 118,167,747 |
| 1680   | 88         | 142,071,417 |
| 1690   | 60         | 128,494,904 |

spread over time is wise, the patterns of initiation arising from the data seem credible.

So, the 1660s are something of a watershed for the word. There is clearly a major shift, or at least expansion as evidenced in writing, in the semantics of WHORE that occurs around 1660. While the consistent semantic fields continue through to the end of the century, at least one of them, Insult, experiences an expansion from the 1660s, as noted. In addition, a number of semantic fields attach to WHORE, most of which initiate on or after the 1660s – Age, Pity and Title. The exception is Disease, which initiates in the 1650s, thus we will set it aside.<sup>2</sup> While Age and Title initiate and persist to the end of the century, Pity initiates and subsequently terminates – Pity is a semantic field from the 1660s through the 1680s. This powerful extension of the meaning surrounding the word is very notable and certainly indicates that from the 1660s there is a real shift in how whores are written about in British society. The explanation of these changes – why some fields initiate and sustain while others initiate and terminate, for example – requires a consideration of the historical context painted in Chapters 2 and 3.

These transitions strike us as particularly interesting linguistically. First, the appearance of Pity in association with discussion of whores. Until the 1660s the word WHORE is unremittingly attached with negativity. However, in the period 1660s–1680s a more humane approach to discussing whores was adopted by many to the extent that this semantic field initiated. Examples such as ‘The fright you put me and my poor Whore in At your Masters house, you Rogue?’, however,

must carefully be separated from those in which whores are being described as impoverished, such as 'It is better, Son, to have a rich whore than a poor whore.'<sup>3</sup> This, at times, is difficult as the term is quite ambiguous on occasion. To some extent, the appearance of Pity collocates supports the established belief by historians, already discussed in Chapter 3, Section 3.7, that an element of compassion was introduced into narratives describing prostituted women in the latter half of the seventeenth century. However, our analysis shows that the semantic field of Pity terminates in the 1680s and this is something which requires further interpretation. It is possible that the tentative shoots of sympathy that emerged in popular attitudes in the 1660s were beaten down, three decades later, by a more forceful and fearful discourse concerning people who engaged in transgressive behaviour. This moral anxiety eventually manifested itself in the establishment of the Society for the Reformation of Manners, discussed in Chapter 3, Section 3.4, at the end of the century. The appearance also of the punishment collocate, *carted*, with WHORE in the 1690s adds further weight to this argument.

Only two collocates, *young* and *old*, form the Age semantic field. They highlight a number of competing discourses that have already been identified in Chapters 2 and 3. Concordances include the insult *old whore* provoking a defamation case and many references to old whores being physically repulsive and worthless: 'Poor Whores, when old, rott and die, You need not ask the reason why.' The Age semantic field reveals that youthful prostitutes and their older colleagues were frequently juxtaposed, particularly in an assumption that young whores will become bawds – 'Q. Why do young whores turn old bawds? A. It is with them as it is with other trades, after they have served out their times, they set up for themselves' – and that older women tutor, or corrupt, youngsters: 'Old whores, which keep a school of incontinency, instruct young maids in all unclean acts of carnal wantonness.'<sup>4</sup> We have seen how satires in which a naïve young girl is sexually educated by an older woman were particularly popular in the second half of the seventeenth century in titles such as *The Miss Display'd, with all Her Wheedling Arts and Circumventions* and *The Ape-Gentlewoman, or the Character of an Exchange-wench*, both printed in 1675, and *The Whores Rhetorick* of 1683. The popular belief in the prevalence of this relationship between young and old whores, combined with the emergence of the narrative of a young girl corrupted, probably accounts for the initiation and persistence of this field throughout the latter half of the century. A weaker discourse identified by the Age semantic field involves whores picking up young men which, again, has been highlighted in a previous section (Chapter 3, Section 3.3).



The titles used to address people are the third source of comment. In this field only one word, *sir*, is a consistent collocate in all three decades covered by this semantic field. Yet when we explore this collocate it becomes apparent that the word, collocating with *WHORE*, is linked strongly to a single genre: plays, or more specifically comedies. This suggests a change in what was acceptable to put on the stage – the word seems to collocate with *WHORE* because of a steady stream of plays in which there is a character with the title of *sir* who is engaged in a discussion involving the word *WHORE* often enough for the words to collocate. In the 1670s, of the 27 times *sir* collocates with *WHORE*, only two are not drawn from plays. In the 1680s, of the 33 times that *sir* and *WHORE* collocate, only five are not drawn from plays. Finally, in the 1690s, only eight of the twenty-four examples of *sir* collocating with *WHORE* do not come from plays. It would seem that the Restoration stage is the chief cause of titles becoming prominent in the semantic fields of *WHORE* in the latter part of the century. Why this should be the case requires the historical explanation provided in Chapter 3, where we noted how the production of bawdy plays burgeoned during the Restoration period. Many of these productions were crowd-pleasing comedies, which often depicted members of the aristocracy as sexually transgressive hypocrites – this most likely goes some way to explaining why *sir* often appeared alongside *WHORE*.

### 6.1.1 Transient collocates of *whore*

The purely transient collocates show a similar pattern of distribution to the initiating collocates. If we look at 1660 onwards, we find ten fields within which there are transient collocates. However, if we look from 1650 onwards, all thirteen transient fields are, at some point, attested between 1650 and the end of the century, yet only one transient field is attested in the period 1600–49. This adds to the overall impression of stability in the meaning of *WHORE* to the middle of the century, after which the meaning started, in writing, to undergo changes which begin in the 1650s and seem to accelerate in the 1660s.

With our analysis of *WHORE* complete, we can turn in the following two sections to consider the other near synonyms of *WHORE*. Let us begin with a short exploration of near synonyms that *WHORE* collocates with. For *WHORE*, *STRUMPET* is a collocate which initiates in 1630 and terminates in the 1650s. The word *CONCUBINE* is entirely transient, being key in the 1660s alone. Of more interest is the word *HARLOT* which is a consistent collocate of *WHORE*, collocating with it in every decade bar the 1620s and 1690s. Using this as our

point of departure, let us return to the question of near synonymy and ask the question, 'What makes a HARLOT different from a WHORE?'

## 6.2 Harlots

HARLOT is different in a way that makes it similar to WHORE – it links both to the Whore of Babylon ('the Mother of Harlots') and to other biblical allegories, such as Solomon and Delilah; this makes the word heavily laden with allegorical Religion collocates. In looking for difference we will set these religious collocates to one side as such collocates are not the focus of our study.

To begin with, let us explore the collocates of HARLOT in the 1680s. They are remarkably similar to those of WHORE. There is the focus upon undertaking the acts associated with a HARLOT, with a similar structure used as with WHORE – for example, the collocates *play*, *playing* and *played*. The gender identity of the HARLOT is the same, *woman*. The undesirable characteristics of the HARLOT are familiar too – they are *painted* and they are *common*. As with WHORE, *common* + HARLOT is a fixed expression, with 74 per cent of the examples of *common* collocating with HARLOT appearing in the L1 position (in total *common* co-occurs with HARLOT 211 times in 176 different texts in the corpus). Two minor differences are, however, apparent. First, the collocate *company* is used with HARLOT, in the sense of men keeping company with harlots as a euphemism for them using their services. Secondly, the word *houses* co-occurs with HARLOT in the fixed expression *harlots houses*. The absence of any collocates which suggest a link to those who facilitate or control prostitution may lead us to speculate that harlots are distinct from whores in that whores are associated with bawdy houses while harlots are not. This could link in with some of the evidence presented in Section 2.7, which showed that not all women being paid for sex worked from a bawdy house. Some worked from their own homes, or from hired lodgings. However, an alternative hypothesis is that the phrase *harlots houses* is indeed an equivalent of brothel or whore house.<sup>5</sup> An exploration of the corpus for evidence to explore these hypotheses reveals no evidence to suggest that harlots were always freelancers working from their own home. If we look at the word *brothel*, we do find clear examples which suggest that harlots plied their trade from them, for example, one text talks of how some men loose 'all their felicity in a Tavern or Brothel house, where Harlots: and Sycophants rifle their Estates'. So, while we cannot say that harlots never worked out of their own homes, and there are examples in the corpus where *harlots house* does resolve itself as a

singular genitive rather than as a plural, with a harlot plying her trade from her own home, we do know that they were sometimes said to work from brothels. The question returns to the fore when we go back and repeat this exercise in the 1610s to ensure that what we are seeing is not simply an artefact of looking at the 1680s. The word *houses* is once again a strong collocate of HARLOT, though in this case they are also linked to bawds and publicans through collocation. This seems to suggest that the phrase *harlots houses* is not indicative of a significant difference between harlots and whore – it is simply the case that HARLOT is a very close synonym of WHORE and *harlots house* was a synonym of brothel. While some harlots' houses were private dwellings, others were bawdy houses. We will return to the exploration of this phrase again shortly to consider the source of the phrase *harlots house*.

What other differences may there be between HARLOT and WHORE? Comparing the non-Religion semantic fields associated with collocates of HARLOT and WHORE makes the near synonymy a little clearer. Table 6.3 shows, for each such field attached to HARLOT, the number of collocates in that field for each word – for HARLOT first with WHORE following in parentheses. The table itself can be usefully compared to Table 6.2. This shows that there are far fewer non-Religion semantic fields attached to HARLOT (16) by comparison

**Table 6.3** The semantic fields of HARLOT by decade across the century

|                               | 00s  | 10s  | 20s  | 30s  | 40s  | 50s  | 60s  | 70s  | 80s  | 90s  |
|-------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Acting                        | 2(0) | 2(3) | 2(4) | 2(1) | 2(2) | 2(3) | 3(2) | 2(1) | 3(4) | 2(6) |
| Age                           | 0(0) | 0(0) | 0(0) | 0(1) | 0(0) | 1(0) | 0(1) | 0(1) | 0(2) | 0(1) |
| Body                          | 1(0) | 0(0) | 0(0) | 0(0) | 0(0) | 0(0) | 0(0) | 0(0) | 0(0) | 0(0) |
| Controller                    | 0(0) | 1(2) | 0(1) | 0(3) | 0(4) | 0(1) | 0(2) | 0(2) | 0(2) | 0(6) |
| Criminality                   | 0(1) | 0(2) | 0(3) | 0(4) | 0(4) | 1(2) | 0(6) | 0(2) | 0(4) | 0(6) |
| Gender Identity               | 0(1) | 0(2) | 0(1) | 1(2) | 0(1) | 1(1) | 1(1) | 1(2) | 1(1) | 1(2) |
| Intercourse                   | 0(0) | 0(0) | 0(0) | 1(0) | 1(0) | 2(1) | 1(0) | 1(0) | 2(0) | 2(0) |
| Location                      | 0(1) | 2(0) | 0(0) | 1(0) | 1(0) | 2(1) | 2(0) | 1(0) | 1(1) | 1(0) |
| Love                          | 0(0) | 0(0) | 0(0) | 1(0) | 0(0) | 0(0) | 0(0) | 0(0) | 0(0) | 0(0) |
| Money                         | 0(0) | 0(0) | 0(0) | 0(0) | 0(0) | 0(0) | 1(0) | 2(0) | 0(0) | 0(0) |
| Near Synonym                  | 0(2) | 1(1) | 0(0) | 1(3) | 2(3) | 2(3) | 0(2) | 1(2) | 1(1) | 0(0) |
| Purchase                      | 1(3) | 0(1) | 0(2) | 0(2) | 0(3) | 1(2) | 0(2) | 1(1) | 0(3) | 0(4) |
| Quantity                      | 0(0) | 0(0) | 0(0) | 1(0) | 1(0) | 0(0) | 0(0) | 0(0) | 0(0) | 0(0) |
| Family Relation               | 1(1) | 2(1) | 1(4) | 1(2) | 1(2) | 0(2) | 1(2) | 0(3) | 0(2) | 0(2) |
| Simile                        | 1(0) | 1(0) | 0(0) | 1(0) | 1(0) | 1(0) | 0(1) | 0(0) | 1(1) | 1(1) |
| Undesirable<br>Characteristic | 1(3) | 2(1) | 1(2) | 2(3) | 1(3) | 6(5) | 1(2) | 0(2) | 3(1) | 1(0) |

to WHORE (29). This may suggest that, as evidenced in the written data, the semantics of the allegorical use of HARLOT, as evidenced in the corpus, are not as complex as that of WHORE. This impression grows, beyond the Religion category, when we look at Table 6.3 and compare it back to Table 6.2. Two of the fields which consistently collocate with HARLOT (Acting, Undesirable Characteristic) also consistently collocate with WHORE while two, Location and Intercourse, do not. Conversely, while WHORE shares two consistent collocates with HARLOT, as noted, the fields of Controllers, Honesty, Family Relation, Insult, Gender Identity and Criminality are consistent for WHORE but not HARLOT. Of those fields, Controllers, Gender Identity and Criminality are transient for HARLOT. Honesty does not occur with HARLOT at all while Family Relation is a terminating field for HARLOT in the century. There is, of course, another potential explanation for this difference that we should not dismiss: it may simply be a question of evidence. WHORE is more frequent than HARLOT. This alone may explain, at least in part, some of these observations. Note, however, it would be a poor explanation of the Location and Intercourse fields, which are not shared with the more frequent WHORE.

Whatever the source of the mismatch between the two words, the overlap in meaning between the two, if this is how it can be characterized, is limited to the basics of what writers of the time call whoredom or harlotry – people of an undesirable sort engaging in acts closely associated with these states. The specification of the acts engaged in are much more consistently referred to for whoredom – it is the provision of sex for a reward, usually facilitated by a controller of prostitution. While the elements of meaning relating to reward and control/facilitation are present in a transitory fashion for HARLOT, it is not evidenced in collocation in the texts with anything like the consistency that we see for WHORE. Conversely, harlots are much more clearly linked to the places where such events occur and to acts which could be conceived of as carnal. Let us consider the point relating to the carnal first – this is not realized directly by words clearly relating to coitus. It is, however, we argue, realized by euphemism through collocates such as *company* and *lovers*. In each case, a relationship between a harlot and another person is discussed. In each case there is clear disapproval expressed by the author. Considering the core semantics of HARLOT, we conclude that in each case it is the carnal nature of the relationship that is being referred to, as in the following examples: ‘to whoredom and fornication in the company of harlots’ and ‘She that hath played the harlot with many lovers.’<sup>6</sup> The company of harlots is harmful because of the whoredom and fornication it entails. Similarly, to take a harlot as a lover entails becoming intimate with

one who is intimate with many. In both cases the word indirectly references the problem with associating with harlots – transgressive sex.

Let us return now to consider *harlots house*. Why do harlots collocate so clearly with a place, *house*, while whores do not? A plausible reason lies in the Bible – the phrase *harlots house* is used in the corpus when quoting key passages from the Bible.<sup>7</sup> The phrase *harlots houses* is cited from the book of Jeremiah (5.7) where it occurs. These examples can thus plausibly be placed in the Religion semantic field as they are direct quotations from the Bible. However, when interpreting Bible passages the writers also use the phrase *harlots house* when the exact phrase is not used in the Bible itself – these are not examples for the Religion category as they do not represent a lexical choice determined by direct quotation from the Bible, rather they represent a lexical choice by the writer when discussing matters relating to morality. Consider the following example: ‘Enter not into the way of the wicked; Prov. 4.14. pass by the doors of the Harlots house; come not near her threshold; avoid the place of so dangerous temptation.’ Yet, Proverbs 4.14 is not about harlots, it reads: ‘Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men.’ The writer is discussing harlots and invoking a scriptural authority to both condemn them and say how you should deal with them. In doing so, however, they decide to draw upon the phrase *harlots house*, possibly to echo Jeremiah. Another possibility is that if we could look back into the sixteenth century we could see that this was a common way of referring to a brothel, or other place from where a harlot operates. Using EEBO we can do this – and the answer is that it is not particularly common in that century. The phrase occurs 0.13 times per millions words in the sixteenth century, compared to 0.18 times per million in the seventeenth century.

So it seems more plausible to claim that the phrase *harlots house* and *harlots houses* are strongly established by scriptural reference in the written discourse of the seventeenth century. At a time when the Bible was a key text of cultural significance and the direct personal experience of brothels and whore houses of most readers was presumably generally limited, the realization of brothels as harlots houses in the Bible had the potential to give the collocation a currency in the population of English speakers that would have been difficult for other writers, or speakers, to match.<sup>8</sup>

While somewhat speculative, there is further evidence in the HARLOT analysis that key passages in the Bible influence the use of the word HARLOT either by paraphrase or by use of phrases in general English writing of the time. For example, Luke (15.3) says, with reference to the prodigal son, ‘But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed

for him the fatted calf? – the idea of devouring income by associating with harlots finds echoes in writing in the 1660s, for example, generating a Money semantic field in that decade. This is perhaps not surprising given the strong association between whores and theft (Chapter 3, Section 3.5) and the financial needs and demands of such women (Chapter 2, Section 2.5). A similar example comes from Proverbs (29.3) where ‘he that keepeth company with harlots spendeth his substance’ creates a Money collocate in the 1670s. Interestingly, these two examples become blurred in writing, leading to examples such as ‘These did not consume their Substance with harlots, like the Prodigal son.’<sup>9</sup> It is noteworthy that *substance* is transplanted from one biblical story about wasting money on harlots to another, strongly suggesting, we would argue, that the Bible does act as a reservoir of collocates for readers of the time, especially, as noted, where they were reading of things of which they probably had little personal experience and in all likelihood discussed little, if at all.

### 6.3 Prostitutes and jilts

Three final analyses will conclude this exploration of words which relate to the selling of sex in the seventeenth century. The first question we would like to explore relates to the word PROSTITUTE – was it, as Amster (2007: xi) has suggested, principally used as a verb in this century, or is there evidence that the word was used in its nominal form with a meaning similar to that used today? Secondly, what of the word JILT? That was shown to be of interest in Chapter 4. Finally, we will ask whether the corpus can tell us anything about the location of those engaged in the sex trade in the seventeenth century.

Turning to the first question, an investigation of the top twenty collocates of the word PROSTITUTE in the seventeenth century proves revealing. Only one new semantic field emerges from these – Debase, which clearly links to PROSTITUTE as a verb. The other collocates, however, fall within the framework of analysis we have used for WHORE: Near synonyms of WHORE are frequent collocates of PROSTITUTE (e.g. *harlot*, *strumpet*, *whore*), a clear suggestion is made that a Purchase of services is involved through the collocate *mercenary*, while numerous clients are implied through the collocate *comers* (only two examples of *comers* collocating with PROSTITUTE are not immediately premodified by *all*). As with WHORE, prostitutes have undesirable characteristics associated with them such as *impudent* and *lewd*.<sup>10</sup> In short, while the top twenty collocates do indeed show that PROSTITUTE could have a meaning associated with it which did not relate to

engaging in sex for pay, there is strong collocational evidence that PROSTITUTE can be seen as a near synonym of WHORE also. The word certainly does occur as a noun with a meaning similar to WHORE as we would expect given the similarity of the pattern of collocation to whore – just as WHORE can be a noun and a verb in the century, so can PROSTITUTE.

The word JILT is the most difficult of all to explore. As was apparent in Table 4.5, this is a word which came into existence in the written record in the 1660s. It remained infrequent to the extent that it is only in the 1690s that there are sufficient uses of the word for us to be able to identify collocates of it. Nonetheless, on the basis of a close reading of examples prior to 1690 and an exploration of the earliest collocates that the word acquires in the 1690s, a clear picture of this word emerges. Consider the following example: ‘Bewitching Smiles Of Mercenary Jilts; whose only Trade, Is daily acting Love in Masquerade: True Cannibals, who can with ease devour, A dozen Men while Time shapes out an Hour.’<sup>11</sup> The strong suggestion here is of a near synonym of WHORE. The person described as a *jilt* has many sexual partners, and there is the suggestion, in the word *mercenary*, that their services in this respect are for hire. Other examples confirm this link between jilts, sex and money, as in the following example: ‘The common Jilt in Cash takes more delight, Than in the lustful Carnal Appetite: It is Money not the Man she does adore.’<sup>12</sup> We also see some familiar words around the word JILT, notably *town*, with *town jilt* casting jilts in the same light as misses in the phrase *miss of the town* explored in Chapter 4<sup>13</sup> as in the following example: ‘like a Town Jilt receives every new comer.’<sup>14</sup> Note that the word *comer* in this context has a usage very similar to that discussed for PROSTITUTE above. This family resemblance, so to speak, with the words explored already becomes stronger when collocates start to attach to the word in the 1690s. There are few such collocates initially, but two words, *like* and *she*, act, as they do with WHORE, to introduce insults – *like* is used to introduce JILT as a simile, while *she* can be used to claim somebody is a jilt. Yet *she* also shows something else – the word JILT acts as a verb as well as a noun. There is very little data to base hypotheses on, but in the available data it appears that *jilt* as a verb relates to an unfaithful lover, rather than a prostitute. No data in the corpus explains how or why this split between the noun form and the verb form occurs, that is, why one seems to be quite clearly related to prostitution and the other to transgressive sex of other sorts – for example, promiscuity or unfaithfulness. However, the link between the meaning of the noun and verb – transgressive sex – is apparent and it is a link which, as noted in Chapter 4, at times blurs the lines between the use of many of the words examined as relating to prostitution. Overall, based on the evidence

available, it would seem that the introduction of JILT in the late seventeenth century is an innovation in wordform only. The meaning of the word seems to be that of a close synonym of WHORE, with the word sharing features with that word and other close synonyms of it.

## 6.4 Location

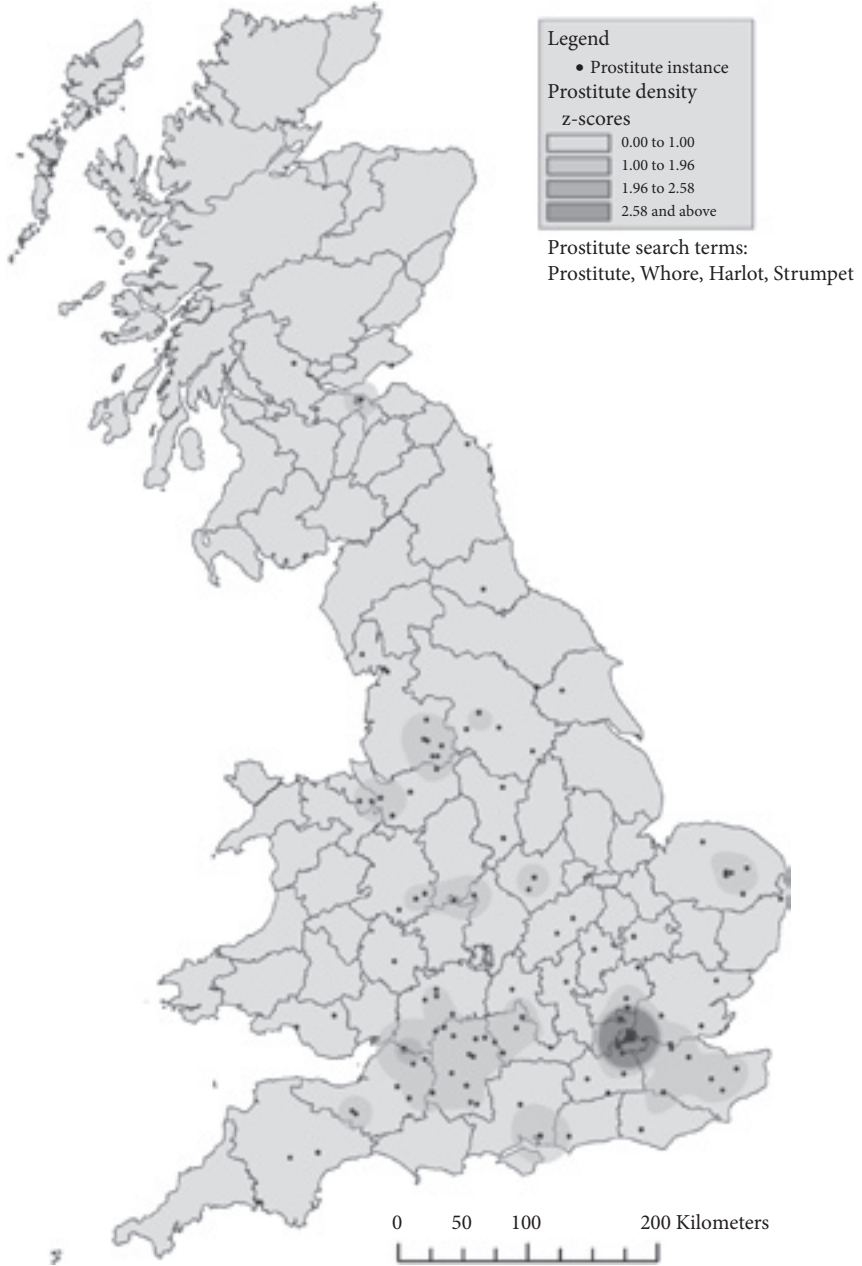
For the final question, we need to look carefully at location. Collocation does not seem to have proved a very fruitful way of approaching the issue of the location. It is possible, of course, that in public discourse people such as whores were not mentioned as being consistently in one geographical location or another. If so, this is a surprising finding for, as should be evident from a reading of Chapter 2 alone, the places frequented by such people were very well known and appear to have been quite focused geographically. Before concluding that in public discourse there was no acknowledgement of this geographical concentration, it seems wise to explore the issue using another approach to corpus data; one which specifically looks within a text to look for places associated with a word – this is based on geo-parsing.

For this we can rely on the work of McEnery et al. (forthcoming). In this paper, the authors used geo-parsing to find places that are being associated with words relating to prostitution in the EEBO corpus.

McEnery et al. (ibid) used an approach that involves using a process called *concordance geo-parsing* (Rupp et al. 2015). This starts by using corpus linguistics software to extract each occurrence of a search-term and its concordance – the text that surrounds it. In this case, they used a wide concordance of fifty words to the left and right of the search-term to give the geo-parser plenty of contextual information to work with. This text was then geo-parsed in the usual way using the Edinburgh Geoparser (Grover et al. 2010). A geo-parser undertakes the necessary identification of place-names in the corpus data and links them to map coordinates. The work of McEnery et al. (ibid) is more complex than we need to explore here, but this description outlines, in brief, what they did for four words most closely associated with prostitution in the seventeenth century, *harlot*, *prostitute*, *strumpet* and *whore*. Figure 6.1 shows the results of this mapping exercise.

The geo-parsing is very helpful here – it brings out from the data a clear geographic distribution of places where whores and the like are associated with. This was not possible using collocation alone. The key finding of this mapping





**Figure 6.1** A mapping of mentions of PROSTITUTE, WHORE, HARLOT and STRUMPET linked to a geographical location in the seventeenth century.

process was that prostitution was something which, in the writing of the century, was much more closely associated with London than any other area of the country. When the concordances used to produce the map were examined, many apparent mentions outside of London turned out not to be directly linked to the sex trade – for example, the numerous examples of the word in the west country are related to anti-Catholicism, with mentions of prostitutes forming parts of slurs against the clergy in the area. But in London a very focused set of mentions of prostitution occur in the corpus. McEnery et al. looked at whether this issue was reflective of population distribution, but no matter how the data was explored a consistent result was found – there was a clear link in the corpus between London and a discussion of prostitution. While a brief example, this does serve to show that other techniques, in addition to collocation, may add real value to any investigation of a corpus.

This concludes the analysis of the words in focus for our study. In the next chapter we will reflect upon how we conducted this study, what we have found and outline some future directions for research.



## Looking Back, Looking Forwards

We thought we would end this book by reflecting back on how we carried out our study and the main points arising from it.

Let us begin by considering the choices we made when we decided how to do this study. In addition to selecting the methods that we have used, we decided, quite consciously, for Chapters 2 to 6 to work independently initially. The first drafts of Chapters 2 and 3 were written independently of Chapters 5 and 6. Later, when the drafts of the chapters were complete we compared them and drew the links between them, which we highlighted mainly in Chapters 5 and 6. This point is crucial. The linguist did not look for things the historian told them to. Nor did the historian fish for evidence to explain or problematize what the linguist had found. Rather, we worked independently and found that there was much discovered by the linguist that added weight and credence to what historians have said and found. As well as adding weight to claims in historical research, the equation reverses nicely too – the work of the historian serves well to provide historical explanations of much that we see in our corpus. So the main point to be gleaned from Chapters 2 to 6 is that of a useful bidirectional symbiosis. Corpus linguists can provide evidence and frame an issue. Historians can bring their own evidence, from close reading, for example, or through methods proposed by conceptual historians. In doing so some new methodological synergies may occur – corpus linguistics could be a way of countering the criticism of works such as those by Koselleck<sup>1</sup> which is heavily based on continental philosophy and has consequently been described as ‘impressionistic’.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, work by the cultural researcher Raymond Williams, while it appears to offer an approach to the study of words in the past, relies heavily on impressionistic analyses and an uncritical adoption of dictionary evidence, an unwise decision given the results of the critical exploration of the utility of contemporary and historical dictionaries for exploring the language of the seventeenth century as carried out in this book.<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, keyword analyses may prove to be a type of evidence that

historians could bring, and refine, in the context of a corpus-based approach to words in the past.

It is undoubtedly the case in our view, however, that the historian has a key role to play in working with the linguist to help provide explanations within the framing of the data, by corpus linguistics and other methods. Those explanations contextualize what is observed in the data in the society behind the production of the texts in the corpus.

Approaching things this way had another merit. In advance of the analysis we considered various issues which could, at that stage, have led us into what would have probably been a lengthy and sterile debate. For example, when we initially discussed the idea for this book, the historian had some reservations. Three examples will suffice to show the nature of the reservations. First, there was the question of what any quantification would actually show – it was clear that the corpus could quantify, but what was the purpose of that? Secondly, while one word to refer to prostitutes may be the word of choice to refer to them at the beginning of the century and another at the end, how was that of interest? If the words meant the same the change has little significance. Finally, if we accept quantification is important, surely it is the frequency of wordforms that is most important – why bother with collocation and other techniques? By sidestepping this debate and actually working on a problem, we were able to much more productively debate these issues after we had done our draft analyses. Rather than speculate on the basis of what we thought the data may or may not show, our debate became focused on what we had actually done. Hence, we could revisit the questions and test them against our findings – we saw that quantification did help as the analyses in Chapters 5 and 6 have shown. For example, quantification is the key to finding consistent, initiating, terminating and transient collocates. Without being able to quantify collocation, it would be very difficult to make these observations systematically.

We also demonstrated that words like *harlot* and *whore* are near synonyms, not pure synonyms – when one becomes less frequent and the other becomes more frequent this can index a change in attitude accordingly. Also, through collocation in particular we have shown, as we do to some extent in Chapter 1 anyway, why a wordform-based analysis is inadequate. Words have multiple meanings in use and that meaning changes over time. Collocation can help us address those issues, the frequency of a wordform like *prostitute* on its own cannot. Consequently, rather than worrying about what would happen when we did our analysis, we did our analyses, integrated them and then were able to identify and dismiss non-issues, which may have looked substantial in advance,

swiftly. Yet we also found that some of the non-issues pointed to areas of very real agreement between historical research and linguistic research. For example, the issue of meaning change over time is shared ground between historians and linguists. Historians may talk of conceptual history while linguists may prefer to talk of semantic change, but both are basically working with the same issue, though perhaps with different emphases and purposes in mind.

If these findings were the only ones to be reported one might say that, perhaps, by working separately we were being a little precious. The linguist might have worked more swiftly by working under the direction of the historian. If the sole role for the corpus linguist is to provide supporting confirmatory evidence and an overall framing, then they can sensibly be subordinated to the historian. However, this is not the case. Two broad types of evidence support this conclusion.

First, there are events which have been given salience in historical accounts of prostitution in the seventeenth century that are not at all salient in the public discourse of the time. It may well be that these were indeed salient events, but they were not written about very much if at all. A good example of this is the Apprentice Riots, as discussed in Chapter 3, Section 3.3. They do not figure in any way in the analyses presented in Chapters 5 and 6. No findings in those chapters seem to need the Apprentice Riots as a background explanation. This stands in contrast to other findings in those chapters that did draw on the evidence from Chapters 2 and 3. Whether or not the Apprentice Riots were salient in forming public views on prostitution the linguist cannot say – but the linguist can say that there seems scant to no evidence of these riots having entered public discourse in any significant way, either directly or indirectly. It may be the case, of course, that something that occurs in society does not enter public discourse clearly until sometime after the event. A modern example of this might be the ship the *Empire Windrush*. This ship brought one of the first large groups of West Indian migrants to the UK in 1948. How did this impact on public discourse? To explore that we looked at the Times Online – for the first ten years after the arrival of the West Indian migrants, the *Windrush* is mentioned, but largely in its role as a troop carrier for the British Army. In the four decades following that, the ship is mentioned twice. However, as the importance of what occurred when the *Windrush* docked enters the public consciousness and the role of the ship as an icon of a major change in British society is established, in the period 1997–2006 there are forty-one mentions of the ship in the newspaper, with its role in public discourse established. It takes nearly fifty years from the docking of the ship to a point where it becomes a

shorthand for discussing the Afro-Caribbean migration to the UK. While many of the examples given in Chapters 5 and 6 do show that some effects on public discourse can be rapid, we should always be alert to the possibility that there may be a very significant lag between an event and its impact on public discourse being realized. While we think that it is unlikely that the Apprentice Riots did, in fact, have an impact on discourse beyond the range of the dataset we used, we should accept that one of the possible explanations for a failure to observe an event in public discourse is that the impact of the event is delayed. Finally, we should note another possibility. We are looking at public discourse. It may be that, if we were able to look at private discourse in the period we may have found somewhat different patterns. When looking at public discourse in the period we are looking at what those, typically powerful males, with access to printing presses chose to print. Even that is filtered through the censorship regime, both formal and informal, of the period. So while public discourse has the merit of being accessible to us, even centuries later, we should always remember that the totality of discourse in the century is inaccessible to us. What we can see is the extant public discourse that has survived the best part of four centuries. While we may make the simplifying assumption that what remains is typical of discourse as a whole at the time, we must remain sensitive to the possibility that this may not be the case.

The second type of evidence is more categorical and clear-cut. There were occasions in Chapters 5 and 6 where a claim made by an historian was explored and doubt was cast upon it. For example, we explored the observation that *PROSTITUTE* seemed to be a verb only in the century – this was disproven.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, we explored the claim that *WHORE* did not denote a person who had sex for gain. While we found examples where this may have been true, we also observed many cases where it was false, and saw how being paid for favours given seems to form a stable part of the meaning of the word *WHORE*. So there are occasions where observations based on hand and eye studies may be challenged when we engage with a much larger dataset using corpus techniques.

Note that the linguist did not mine for evidence to refute claims – the linguist undertook an independent analysis within which, when the findings were compared to the work undertaken by historians, some claims by historians were problematized. One could, of course, approach the study quite differently, actively seeking to falsify. However, this was not our goal. What we wanted to do was compare two ways of working and show how, quite naturally, they could integrate. In doing so, at times, the claims do not match and then evidence has to be weighed and a finding made. However, we were struck by how often an

investigation of public discourse did mesh well with the established research undertaken by historians on the topic.

Some of the unexpected findings, however, shed light on seventeenth-century thought. Academics and social commentators currently debate whether prostitutes are empowered or exploited women.<sup>5</sup> Yet it appears that this dichotomy was alive in discourse four centuries ago as shown in Chapter 5. The collocates *play*, which suggests a woman with agency, and *make*, which gives the impression of a woman forced against her will, represent those opposites. As shown in Chapter 5, it is the empowered whore which dominated seventeenth-century discourse. Yet other elements of the corpus analysis pose questions which are not easily answered – why, for instance, in terms of collocates of *whore*, did *keep* not re-enter discourse as a collocate until the 1680s, and why did the *pity* collocate terminate in the 1680s just when historians have suggested that popular feelings of compassion directed towards prostitutes were starting to emerge? These results are not easily explained. We know that the phenomenon of keeping mistresses was very popular at court from the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660 but it is possible that *keep* did not re-enter popular discourse because the sexual mores of the general public lagged behind those at court. This result, therefore, possibly illuminates a much wider aspect of early modern history than expected. In terms of the collocate *pity* disappearing in the 1680s, we have posited that the moral reform movement that emerged at the end of the century may have temporarily stifled discourses of sympathy directed towards prostitutes. These ideas require further research by historians.

Yet there are also clear challenges for linguists. The analyses presented in Chapter 4 show, quite clearly, we believe, how revolutionary a resource like EEBO can be for the lexicography of the period. The corpus enriched our view of the words used to refer to prostitution and other forms of transgressive sex in the period. Existing dictionaries lacked much information that the corpus can provide, from evidence for relevant new entries to important frequency information. Similarly, our corpus showed a much more nuanced view of the preference for the use of various words over time and how the meaning associated with wordforms changed over time. All of this was information which is provided only relatively crudely for this period in the best dictionaries available.

We also had the opportunity to reflect on the lexicography of the seventeenth century and concluded that this is largely of use for looking at hierarchies in word meanings and at near synonymy. As native speaker intuition evidence from the period for these things, the dictionaries of the period are helpful for



our purpose. However, to determine word meaning they are significantly worse than modern dictionaries and provide nothing of the depth or nuance of analysis that a large corpus from the period can achieve.

Near synonymy remained an issue in Chapters 5 and 6 and a major burden for the analysis across those periods is to try to prise the meanings of the words which are near synonyms, and collocates, of one another apart. Such an analysis will only ever succeed in this role by degrees precisely because the words are near synonyms – they share meaning. They cannot be wholly prised apart. However, the distinctive features of the words can be identified, as we showed in Chapter 6. This can be very helpful for improving the entries in historical thesauri, for example. One resource we have not mentioned in this book so far, but which is relevant here, is the *Oxford Historical Thesaurus*.<sup>6</sup> This very helpfully identifies the type of ambiguity and range in meaning that we have discussed – so, for example, *WHORE* is classified both as ‘a prostitute’ and as an ‘unchaste or loose woman’. Note that the historical thesaurus entry for this word generally fits well with the analysis in Table 5.3, especially if we see the unchaste or loose woman category as being linked to an intent to wound or offend. However, there are words which, as Chapter 6 has shown, also refer clearly to prostitutes but which are not classified in the thesaurus under prostitution – for example, *harlot* and *strumpet*. As a noun *STRUMPET* is classified as an ‘unchaste or loose woman’ but not as ‘prostitute’ though it appears in other classes which define it as a verb ‘to bring to condition of whore’ and as an adjective ‘relating to or of the nature of prostitution’. *HARLOT* is even more interesting as many of its classes relate to males – something not attested as salient in our analysis of the word; like *strumpet* it appears in ‘unchaste or loose woman’ but not in the ‘prostitute’ class. So while the *Oxford Historical Thesaurus* represents the best historical thesaurus currently available, this brief investigation explains why it was only of passing use to our study. As was the case with the dictionaries explored in Chapter 4, a large corpus like EEBO will provide dictionary and thesaurus makers with the data which will allow them to greatly improve these resources, as they were able to do for present-day English when the large corpora of late-twentieth-century English became available. Hence our observations about the dictionaries and thesaurus are intended as proof of need for work in the area and as a spur to more work to improve those resources. The benefits that corpus data brought to lexicography of present-day English will be as relevant to Early Modern English now the data is available.

The work that lies ahead for linguists and historians in exploiting, at times together, at times separately, a resource like EEBO is vast. Returning finally to

observations made in Chapter 1, we hope that new techniques for exploring such data will become available. Indeed, as they speed and make more efficient our analyses they will be welcome. Yet we do not see a context at present, or in the near future, where computational techniques will negate the need for close reading or analysis and explanation by subject experts. Consequently, we look forward to a future in which tools continue to reduce the problem space that linguists and historians work with – focusing in on key texts or linguistic relations that help the analyst to rapidly investigate and account for large volumes of data. We do not believe in a future in which push-button analyses performed and interpreted by researchers with no expertise but the ability to programme and apply complex mathematical models are the norm. We look forward instead to a future in which interdisciplinary teams, using tools which undertake tasks that they find interesting and relevant from their disciplinary perspective and which offer explanatory, not simply descriptive, power dominate. The tools on the shelf today make that a viable prospect. Working with programmers and mathematicians to get the right tools on the shelf tomorrow strikes us as key.



# Notes

## Chapter 1

- 1 In exploring censorship in the seventeenth century, we were able to build upon previous work by McENERY (2005) on this topic.
- 2 See <http://clu.uni.no/icame/hc/index.htm>.
- 3 See <http://www.alc.manchester.ac.uk/subjects/lcl/research/projects/archer/>.
- 4 See <http://www.helsinki.fi/varieng/domains/CEEC.html>.
- 5 This describes version 3.2 of this corpus.
- 6 We have focused here on the diachronic component of this corpus – it has other components, including supplements for Scots and American English, but our interest here is in the diachronic English corpus as described.
- 7 See Krug (2000) for a study of modals using the Helsinki Corpus.
- 8 These assumptions are confirmed by the authors of the Culturomics paper at <http://www.culturomics.org/Resources/faq#dataquality>. They are, however, silent on the issue of variant spelling, which must be an issue, certainly prior to the early eighteenth century.
- 9 The corpus used here is a 50% sample of the UKWac corpus available via the CQPweb system at Lancaster University. The full UKWac is available through SketchEngine.
- 10 See <http://www.culturomics.org/Resources/A-users-guide-to-culturomics>.
- 11 Also, the point about there not being enough books prior to 1800 to reliably quantify queries is, to our mind, disputable. As this book will show, using the right corpus resources yields plenty of material to explore many hypotheses and to reliably quantify them.
- 12 While this book is not concerned with later periods, for readers interested in the period 1800 onwards, the corpora and interface produced by Mark Davies provides, in our view, a much better way of exploring American English over two centuries than Google Ngram Viewer does. See <http://corpus.byu.edu/>.
- 13 See <http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/>.
- 14 See <http://www.helsinki.fi/varieng/CoRD/corpora/CEEM/>.
- 15 For more details, see: <http://www.textcreationpartnership.org/home/>. The corpus used in this book is the third version of the EEBO corpus, though in the book this will simply be referred to as the EEBO corpus for the sake of brevity. In the period 1600–99, the corpus contains 996,472,953 words.

- 16 For more details see: <http://www.textcreationpartnership.org/tcp-texts/>.
- 17 The graph was drawn from 1600 to 2000, with no smoothing and as a case sensitive search.
- 18 [www.opensourceshakespeare.org/concordance](http://www.opensourceshakespeare.org/concordance).
- 19 Seitoshi Sekine has written a brief and very engaging account of the origins of named entity recognition available at <http://cs.nyu.edu/~sekine/papers/NEsurvey200402.pdf>.
- 20 For a broader overview of the relationship between digital resources and the work of historians from the late twentieth century to the present, see Hitchcock and Shoemaker (2015).
- 21 See <http://cass.lancs.ac.uk/?p=1133> for a brief introduction to the statistic.
- 22 Taken from file N20 in the British English 2006 corpus.
- 23 A subset of the British National Corpus called the BNC sampler.
- 24 This category bears some relation to the 'seasonal' collocate category of Gabrielatos and Baker (2008: 11). However, seasonal collocates were defined by them as being related 'to specific events' (Gabrielatos and Baker: 12). While specific events may indeed give rise to transient collocates, transient collocates need not be linked to events as such. For example, if a debate began in society about a certain topic, it may not be linked to an event as such, but it may well cause a transient collocate. So the category of transient collocate includes, but is potentially greater than, the category of seasonal collocate.
- 25 For the curious reader, using Gwet's (2008) AC1 agreement statistic reveals an agreement between the windows in the period between 0.66 and 0.81. However, comparing the results for 1600–9 with those for 1611–20 shows a very low agreement score of 0.11, providing support for our assumption that meaning change is slow-moving, so sampling decade-long chunks and contrasting them is a productive approach to looking at meaning change in the period.
- 26 See, for example, Norton (2013).

## Chapter 2

- 1 Taken from the description of a Mrs Williams in 'Harris's List of Covent Garden Ladies', reproduced in Rubenhold (2005: 140).
- 2 These figures are estimates made by Laurence (1994: 166). See Cressy (1977) for an in depth discussion.
- 3 See Thirsk (1985: 2).
- 4 Mendelson and Crawford (1998: 10).
- 5 See Laurence (1994: 8).
- 6 For a discussion of the historiography of prostitution, see Nash (1994: introduction).

- 7 Archer (1991: 205) has argued that the small number of indictments gives a misleading glimpse into criminal activity because they reduce its scope to the one occasion where the criminal was caught.
- 8 See Mowry (2004: 15–16).
- 9 Sharpe (1984); Archer (1991: ch. 6); Shoemaker (1991); and Griffiths (2008).
- 10 Sharpe (1980) and Gowing (1993).
- 11 Karras (1996: 7–9) has written of the dilemma faced by scholars who risk stripping their subjects of all agency if they choose to present prostitutes as passive victims forced against their will into the sex trade.
- 12 Ungerer (2003) and Clayton (2008).
- 13 See influential works by Laurence (1994); Gowing (1996); Mendelson and Crawford (1998); Froide (2005); Walker (2003); and Hughes (2012).
- 14 See Clark (2004: 137–9) and Knights (2010: 439–44) for a more in-depth discussion of these ideas.
- 15 Griffiths (2008: 198) notes a big spike in the use of *nightwalker* in the Bridewell records in 1638 in the wake of orders from the London authorities to crack down on women walking late. Referring back to Table 4.6 in Chapter 4, we can see that there is an accompanying peak in the EEBO corpus of mentions of *nightwalker* in the 1630s but that a more marked spike occurs between 1650 and 1669.
- 16 There are 349 mentions of *meretrix* in the seventeenth-century EEBO corpus – the majority of them appear in Latin texts and the remainder tend to give definitions of the term or refer to it in a historical sense. The term is, therefore, not often used to describe prostitutes by early modern English writers.
- 17 For example, Anon. (1635). *Putour* was also mentioned by Chaucer in the Parson's Tale from *The Canterbury Tales*.
- 18 Nash (1994: xv) also states that *courtesan* simply meant prostitute and only possessed 'elegant upper class' implications by the eighteenth century. Although we have not examined *courtesan* in depth, we believe that it was sometimes used to describe prostitutes who were wealthier or carried a higher social status before the eighteenth century. For example, Elisha Cole's *English Dictionary*, which defines a courtesan as 'a Court Lady, also a Strumpet' was printed in 1676 (See Chapter 1).
- 19 London had several streets named Gropecunt Lane, including one in the parishes of St Pancras and St Mary Colechurch. By the fourteenth century, most streets that shared the name had been altered to cleaner alternatives, such as Grape or Grove Lane. In 1275 an area of brothels known as Bordhawe in the parish of St Mary Colechurch is referenced. In 1305 the same area is called 'bordehawelande' and by 1405 had become known as 'Burdellane' ('Brothel Lane'). The word 'bord' is derived from a word meaning house or tenement. See Burford (1973: 38, 69–70); Emerson (2002: 27, 33); and Holt and Baker (2001: 206, 213).
- 20 Quoted in Orme (1987: 37).

- 21 Quoted in Wunderli (1981: 98).
- 22 Karras (1989: 404, 406–7).
- 23 The origins of the term *stews* is uncertain. It most likely referred to public bathhouses which sometimes doubled as brothels but the term may have arisen from the close proximity of the brothels to the carp ponds which supplied London with fresh fish.
- 24 Karras (1989: 410).
- 25 There are twenty-four matches of *Winchester Goose* (singular and plural) in the EEBO corpus: the majority refer to venereal disease, usually passed to a man by a woman, or to a prostitute suffering from venereal disease, rather than simply being a straightforward nickname for a prostitute. The *Chambers Slang Dictionary* notes that *Winchester Goose* referred to venereal disease in the mid-sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and offers the phrase *Winchester Pigeon*, of which there is only one unique match in the EEBO corpus, as a synonym.
- 26 Karras (1989: 403).
- 27 Henry VIII was intent on curbing other instances of supposed sinfulness. In 1533 he promulgated the act for the Punishment of the Vice of Buggery which made sodomy punishable by death. In 1548 this was softened to a small degree by exempting the offender's property and rights of inheritance.
- 28 Wunderli (1981: 96).
- 29 See Post (1977: 411); Browner (1994: 55); and Wiesner-Hanks (2000: 86).
- 30 Archer (1991: 249–51).
- 31 Quoted in Browner (1994: 60).
- 32 Shugg (1977: 296).
- 33 Ashton (1983: 14) and Browner (1994: 56). Ungerer (2003: 141) has written that, after the closure of the licensed brothels in 1546, prostitution spread into the very centre of London and, accordingly, prostitutes themselves were no longer geographically separated from the rest of city life.
- 34 Griffiths (1993: 42) mentions *Bridewell baggage* as a nickname of prostitutes and this phrase does appear in Thomas Cranley's *Amanda: or, the Reformed Whore* of 1635, but not elsewhere in the EEBO corpus. We found that *Bridewell bird* was a more commonly used nickname as it appears four times in the EEBO corpus (in both its singular and plural form), including in Thomas Dekker's *The second part of The honest whore* of 1630.
- 35 Beier (1985: 164).
- 36 Shoemaker (1991: ch. 7).
- 37 Ward usually avoided any kind of didactic element in his writing. Perhaps as a consequence, his periodical was extremely popular. It was devoid of any current affairs but carried descriptions of real-life Londoners, such as whores and the places where they traded their wares. See Burford and Wotton (1995: 92).
- 38 Mowry (2008: 216).

- 39 Shoemaker (1991: 173).
- 40 Quaipe (1979: 223) and Emerson (2002: 41).
- 41 Bond (1707: 186) quoted in Shoemaker (1991: 171). Also see Griffiths (1998: 212–38).
- 42 Shoemaker (1991: ch. 7).
- 43 Griffiths (1993: 41).
- 44 Beier (1985: 167).
- 45 Shoemaker (1991: 193) notes that these figures may be misleading as women accused of prostitution sometimes used the same aliases.
- 46 Shoemaker (1991: 195).
- 47 Quoted in Ashton (1983: 15).
- 48 Burford (1973: 169).
- 49 Griffiths (1993:54) and Archer (1991: 240).
- 50 Quoted in Nash (1994: 19). From the 1560s, the term Puritan was used as a derogatory term for those who were dissatisfied with the Elizabethan Religious Settlement of 1559. Stubbes was lambasted as a Puritan by his contemporaries and is often labelled a ‘Puritan pamphleteer’ by present-day writers even though there is no evidence he campaigned for ecclesiastical change. However, as Kidnie (1996: 8–10) has shown, the meaning of the term Puritan had extended by the 1570s to include someone who was judged to be excessively religious. Kidnie writes that Stubbes was a perfect example of a ‘busy, interfering killjoy’ who condemned the moral choices of his neighbours.
- 51 Griffiths (1993: 54).
- 52 Burford (1973: 208–9).
- 53 Mendelson and Crawford (1998: 69).
- 54 Sharpe (1984: 27); Henderson (1999: 84); and Quaipe (1979: 39).
- 55 Hair (1972: 27) and Wunderli (1981: 94).
- 56 Carroll (1996: 43).
- 57 Linnane (2003: 16–17).
- 58 Drury Lane, running north from the Strand into High Holborn in St Giles, was particularly notorious for its connection with prostitutes. The final stages of Hogarth’s *Harlot’s Progress* are set in Drury Lane. See Taylor (1642: 5).
- 59 Henderson (1999: 84–5).
- 60 Linnane (2003: 18).
- 61 Quoted in Thompson (1979: 58–9).
- 62 Thompson (1979: 59).
- 63 Henderson (1999: 85–6); Burford and Wotton (1995: 34–5); and Shoemaker (1991: 162).
- 64 Harman (1573).
- 65 Mowry (2008: 219–20, n.5) has argued that Charles II refined Elizabethan and Jacobean poor laws by characterizing the poor as ‘lewd’ as well as ‘loose’ and ‘idle’.



She explains how some women were described in the Bridewell Courtbooks as being 'loose, idle, and disorderly' while others were recorded as being 'lewd, idle, and disorderly'.

- 66 Slack (1974: 364–5) and Kent (1981: 39–41).
- 67 Shoemaker (1991: 93, 110).
- 68 Burford and Wotton (1995: 95).
- 69 In *Strange Newes from Bartholomew-Fair, Or, the Wandering-Whore Discovered*, a satire of 1661, the prostitute Besse of Whore and Bacon Lane complains that custom is slow: 'There's nothing to be got but by impudence, which I am well furnisht with, but dare not be too publick, lest like our dear sister Tory Rory, I be forç'd to bear out my living at the Hemp-block, or be transported as some of my brethren were yesterday.' See Aretine (1661: 2).
- 70 Under the poor law legislation of 1597 and 1601, parents who were unable to support young children were sometimes granted a meagre pension. Removing these children from the country seemed a simple way of dealing with this financial burden. In 1620, some parents who refused to give permission for their children to be sent away had their relief payments stopped. See Beier (1985: 162–3).
- 71 After persuasion failed, the women were put in solitary confinement on a diet of bread and water for more than a month until they agreed to be transported. The last to be broken was Sarah Cowden who was only twenty-one years old. See Linnane (2003: 184).
- 72 McMullan (1984: 4).
- 73 See Shugg (1977: 305).
- 74 Archer (1991: 219–21) and Martin (2009: 8).
- 75 Martin (2009: 8).
- 76 Linnane (2003: 173, 174).
- 77 Rubenhold (2005: 71).
- 78 Archer (1991: 231–2).
- 79 Griffiths (1993: 54–5).
- 80 See McIntosh (1988: 220–4).
- 81 Pound (1986: 5–10), for instance, has argued that the effects of enclosure may have been overstated and that it should not be categorized as a wholly bad phenomenon.
- 82 For a discussion of engrossing and the legislation attempting to curb it, see Thirsk (1984: 72).
- 83 McIntosh (1988: 218) and Beier (1985: 22).
- 84 Pound (1986: 10, 13–14) and Beier (1985: 20).
- 85 See McIntosh (1988: 219).
- 86 Pound (1986: 12–13).
- 87 See Hughes (2012: 14).

- 88 Boulton (2000: 55–6).
- 89 Linnane (2003: 14–18).
- 90 See Hoskins (1968: 15–31).
- 91 Hughes (2012: 42) notes that up to 80,000 men may have lost their lives in the war and it is likely a large number received life-altering injuries.
- 92 See Shoemaker (1992: 100–1) and Fraser (1984: 193, 267–9). In the broadsheet, *The Character of a Town Misse* (1675: 4), the protagonist pretends she is from a ruined Cavalier family but is really the daughter of a ‘Bumkin, lickt into a Genteel form by Town Conversation’.
- 93 Mistresses constitute a rather grey area of commercial sex and it can be argued that such women were not true prostitutes because they often remained with one man for long stretches of time and, in some cases, probably regarded him with real affection. Chapter 4, Section 4.4 addresses this issue and shows that mistresses were strongly associated in early modern popular discourse with being financially maintained by their lovers.
- 94 Fraser (1984: 394–5). McSheffrey (2006: 182) writes that male marital infidelity became acceptable in the latter half of the fifteenth century but only for men belonging to the landed classes.
- 95 One of the commonest routes to independence was to be bequeathed a lump sum or a pension in a keeper’s will.
- 96 See also Linnane (2003: 125, 135).
- 97 Ibid. (1984: 395 – 6) and Rubenhold (2005: 95).
- 98 Burford (1973: 191–3).
- 99 It was not until 1875, as a result of fears that very young girls were being sold into prostitution, that the age of consent was raised to thirteen and, in 1876, was increased again to the current level of sixteen.
- 100 See Burford and Wotton (1995: 57) and Rubenhold (2005: 219–21).
- 101 See Chaytor (1995: 384). Rape was, for the vast majority of cases, a consequence-free crime in early modern England. Levin and Ward (2008: 4) have written that a man was more likely to be executed for having intercourse with a sheep than for raping a woman.
- 102 Mendelson and Crawford (1998: 4) have written of the public obsession with controlling female sexuality and how women were assessed according to their sexual reputations.
- 103 The inheritance of sexual reputation was not limited to mothers and daughters. Some women were excluded from respectable society because of sexual transgressions by a sister or other female relative. In Cheshire the word ‘tilling’ was used to imply ‘not only a whore but the grandmother of a whore’. See Gowing (1996: 99).
- 104 Rubenhold (2005: 50).
- 105 Sharpe (1984: 115).

- 106 Perhaps the most famous case is that of Elizabeth Canning, a maidservant who disappeared for a month in January 1753 before returning to her mother, wounded, and in a state of extreme emaciation and frailty.
- 107 Levin (1999) has conducted research into the practice of women pleading pregnancy to avoid execution. The 1559–1625 statistics for the home circuit reveal that one third of the women found guilty of a felony claimed to be pregnant. However, as Levin goes on to show, a minority of women were executed after they had given birth and others were detained in gaol for up to seven years awaiting judgement.
- 108 See <http://www.londonlives.org/static/KnightMary.jsp>. [Consulted September 2015].
- 109 For a more detailed investigation of the geography of prostitution in early modern Britain, see McEnery et al. (forthcoming).
- 110 Thompson (1979: 59).
- 111 See Sharpe (1984: 109).
- 112 Ibid. (1984: 114–17) and Archer (1991: 213).
- 113 See McMullan (1987: 121) and Anon. (1675a).
- 114 McMullan (1987: 120–2) and Burford and Wotton (1995: 84).
- 115 Taylor (1635: 17–19, 23, 25, 29, 34).
- 116 Mowry (2004: 409, 410, 412–14).
- 117 Griffiths (1993: 47–8).
- 118 Ibid. (1993: 46).
- 119 See Ibid. (1993: 44–8); McMullan (1987: 128–9, 140); and Archer (1991: 231).
- 120 See Burford (1973: 192) and Burford and Wotton (1995: 60–1).
- 121 See Burford and Wotton (1995: 62, 135) and Rubenhold (2005: 56, 69).
- 122 See Rubenhold (2005: 55, 67–8).
- 123 Ibid. (2005: 44–5).
- 124 Ibid. (2005: 214); Clark (1983a: 236); and Burford (1973: 193, 194–6).
- 125 Burford and Wotton (1995: 71–4).
- 126 Turnbull Street contained many alleys and was densely packed with tenements reaching as high as four stories. By the end of the seventeenth century, the street had seen its wealthier residents flee as lower-class prostitutes and their clients replaced them. Griffiths (2008: 78) has observed that an insult which referenced Turnbull Street was cutting because of its well-known association with brothels. Although there are no direct references to *Turnbull whores* in the EEBO corpus, there are six unambiguous mentions of the street that are directly linked with bawds, whores or bawdy houses. For instance, the insult ‘thou tripe of Turnebull’ is used by Jonson (1641b) in a passage which also references whores, jades and bawds.
- 127 St Antholin’s Church stood on Budge Row which no longer exists but was located between Cheapside and Cannon Street, east of St Paul’s Cathedral. The church was rebuilt after the Great Fire by Sir Christopher Wren but was demolished in 1875 as a result of the Union of Benefices Act.
- 128 See also Shugg (1977: 298).

- 129 Anon (1642: 2).
- 130 Burford and Wotton (1995: 39) have identified it as present-day Kingsway.
- 131 Luthner Lane probably refers to Lewknors Lane, a street running off Drury Lane that is now called Macklin Street. The Cherry Garden in St Martin's-in-the-Fields by Trafalgar Square was an upmarket establishment run by one of several bawds who had opted for the unsubtle pseudonym of Mother Cunny. This particular Mother Cunny was well known for her aggressive manner that ensured the compliance of both her whores and their clients. See Burford and Wotton (1995: 37–41) and Rogers (1972: 78–80).
- 132 Kubek (2010: 457–8) refers to John Dunton's assumption that a 'fine Woman exposed in a Shop' must herself be a commodity.
- 133 Cupid's Garden probably refers to Cuper's Gardens, pleasure gardens opened in the 1680s around what is now the north end of Waterloo Road. The gardens were notorious for the licentious behaviour of their visitors.
- 134 Some mothers acted as bawds to their daughters and sisters sometimes procured clients for one another. See Griffiths (2008: 167).
- 135 McMullan (1984: 123); Linebaugh (1991: 147) and Rubenhold (2005: 293–4).
- 136 McMullan (1984: 125, 130) and Burford (1973: 77–8).
- 137 See Ashton (1983: 14) and Mowry (2004: 107). Griffiths (1993: 46–7), in research on Elizabethan London, found that prostitutes received relatively high fees in bawdy houses but those operating outdoors probably achieved a smaller sum.
- 138 See also McMullan (1984: 8) and Denlinger (2002: 361).
- 139 Burford (1973: 182).
- 140 See Styan (1996: 92–3); Burford (1973: 181–2); and Romack (2009: 5).
- 141 Though Cook (1981: ch. 6) has argued there were economic deterrents in place which discouraged many working men and women from attending the playhouses. Plays were usually staged at 2.00 pm in the afternoon which would have interfered with normal working hours while some Londoners would have struggled to pay the penny admission fee for basic seats.
- 142 Browner (1994: 66).
- 143 Quoted in Thompson (1979: 9).
- 144 See Ashton (1983: 14) and Cook (1981: 203).
- 145 See McMullan (1984: 137–8).
- 146 Burford (1973: 179).
- 147 Ashton (1983: 5).
- 148 Neville's ladies also demanded that 'no round head should dare to come into any of their quarters'; 'no malignant Lady presume to walk in Spring Garden after twelve a clock at night, upon any pretence whatsoever' and that 'every man coupled in the bond of Matrimony and wedlock, he is engaged to content his Mate and fellowfeeler, as often as the strength of his body will permit'. Neville (1647: 3, 5, 11–12) and Eales (1998: 55–6).

- 149 See Ashton (1983: 6).
- 150 See Denlinger (2002: 368) and Burford (1973: 118–19).
- 151 Ashton (1983: 51).
- 152 Fumerton (2002: 493–518) has examined the connection between the increase in alehouses and the upsurge of vagrancy in the early seventeenth century. She concludes the alehouse offered a liberating space to young men, away from domestic spaces that were dominated by the presence of women.
- 153 See Pelzer and Pelzer (1982: 1–3, 8) and Linnane (2003: 95).
- 154 Anon. (1691: 2).
- 155 Anon. (1692: 1).
- 156 See <http://www.pepysdiary.com/diary/1664/09>. [Consulted April 2016]. The phrase *slip a calf* is an expression used when a cow miscarries; hence Pepys is saying that the physicians induced a miscarriage on occasion. While the expression is not common, it is attested in dialect dictionaries; for example, see the first sense of *slip* as a verb in Upton et al. (1994).
- 157 Quoted in Thompson (1979: 160–1).
- 158 Anon. (1675: 4).
- 159 Beier (1985: 54). Paul Griffiths (1998: 220) has shown how concerns about increasing numbers of women abandoning their offspring outside doors or on the streets during the night led to a drive against female nightwalking in the first half of the seventeenth century.
- 160 Sharpe (1984: 61).
- 161 Wrightson (1975: 12, 15–16).
- 162 Linnane (2003: 27).
- 163 Hardening official attitudes towards prostitution in contemporary Europe have been attributed to a rapid spread of venereal disease but scholars are increasingly convinced that a renewed drive, accompanying the Reformation, against sexual activity outside of marriage was more to blame than any sanitary motivations. Official documentation of the time rarely cites the disease as a factor. See Orme (1987: 39–40) and Wiesner-Hanks (2000: 86).
- 164 Burford (1973: 31, 74).
- 165 Linnane (2003: 35). It was not a simple task to gain admittance to the Lock Hospital. Potential patients were required to present a letter of recommendation, signed by a governor of the hospital, and once discharged, a patient could not be readmitted. Although treatment was free of charge, patients were asked to give the sum of £1 11s. 6d. to the hospital. See Henderson (1999: 40).
- 166 See Griffiths (2008: 261–5). Griffiths (2004: 84) has explained how female paupers in sixteenth-century Norwich were often sent to one of the city's lazar houses (which primarily treated leprosy sufferers) when diagnosed with venereal disease.
- 167 Quoted in Burford (1973: 204).
- 168 See Latham (1985: 893–4).

- 169 Quaiife (1979: 186) has written that, contrary to the popular assumption that men passed venereal disease to their wives, the most common source of the pox was the wandering married woman on the verge of destitution who turned to prostitution from time to time. However, charges against such a woman may have arisen as an attempt to humiliate her or to embarrass her husband.
- 170 Fraser (1984: 411).
- 171 Ames (1691a: 3, 8, 14).
- 172 Anon (1691: 2).
- 173 Mandell (1992: 116).
- 174 Browner (1994: 58).
- 175 Anon. (1668: 1).
- 176 Henderson (1999: 39).
- 177 Linnane (2003: 27–8). No study has ever established that mercury was an effective treatment. It may have helped syphilitic sores to heal faster, but its impact on the long-term progression of the disease is uncertain. See Grimes et al. (2014: 428) for a brief overview of the use of mercury to treat syphilis.
- 178 Burford (1973: 205).
- 179 Henderson (1999: 39).
- 180 See Burford (1973: 198–9) and Linnane (2003: 30–1).
- 181 Karras (1996: 9).

### Chapter 3

- 1 See Nash (1994: ix).
- 2 Clark (1983b: 17–30).
- 3 Woodbridge (2001) roundly rejects rogue literature as a trustworthy source for social history but stresses that its comic depiction of people on the edge of society helped foster harsher attitudes towards the destitute and, therefore, must be taken very seriously. Griffiths (1993: 39, 54), investigating the relationship between early modern archival and literary sources, has argued that many academics have allowed themselves to become overly fixated on the mischief of flamboyant protagonists at the cost of a more measured approach. He concludes that unless literary sources are considered in the light of archival information, they will offer nothing but a corrupt and purely fictional narrative of everyday life.
- 4 Clark (1983b: 25–31).
- 5 Thompson (1979: 8–10).
- 6 See also Freist (1995: 465).
- 7 Thompson (1979: 11–13, 41, 53–4) and Rosenthal (2008: 22).
- 8 See Mowry (2004) for an in-depth discussion of seventeenth-century political pornography. Mowry argues that, despite not taking part in any political action or

revealing mass allegiance to one side or the other, prostitutes were portrayed by Royalists as civil war radicals and used as a symbol of the supposed degradation that would result if the political enfranchisement was expanded.

- 9 If one conducted a poll to find the name of the most celebrated seventeenth-century female intellectual, it would probably be that of Aphra Behn, the talented Restoration playwright. Less well known is Margaret Cavendish, the Duchess of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, a prolific author and polymath who published poetry and fiction alongside extensive works in natural philosophy and science. Her utopian novel of 1666, *The Blazing World*, is considered an early example of feminist science fiction. Other women wrote quietly, for instance, producing closet dramas that were never intended to be performed on a public stage but were either presented before a private audience or read aloud among small groups of like-minded women. Lady Jane Lumley authored *The Tragedie of Euripedes called Iphigenia*, one of only a handful of closet dramas which have survived. Written around 1553, it is not only the first known translation of *Iphigenia* into English but the earliest extant dramatic text by an English woman. Lumley was probably a teenager when she produced this work. See Straznicky (2004: ch. 2).
- 10 Thompson (1979: 61–2).
- 11 A second pamphlet also appearing in 1660, *Strange & true Nevves from Jack-a-Newberries Six Windmills: Or the Crafty, impudent, Common-Whore (turned Bawd) Anatomised* includes a further five orders of the chuck office.
- 12 Taylor also wrote another verse portrait entitled *A Bawd: A vertuous Bawd, a modest Bawd: As Shee Deserves, reprove, or else applaud* which has survived by means of a publication of 1635 but was probably written around the same time as *A Common Whore*. See Thompson (1975: 84).
- 13 Reproduced in Amster (2007).
- 14 Thompson (1975: 289–91) and Thompson (1979: 77–8).
- 15 *The Whores Rhetorick* has attracted attention from numerous scholars. Gallagher (1995: 28–9) highlights its emphasis on the prostitute’s ability to simulate affection for her clients as the essence of prostitution rather than any exchange of cash. Rosenthal (2006: 30–3) suggests the text’s image of a professional and sexually dispassionate prostitute heralded the nascent commercialization of English society in the eighteenth century.
- 16 See Thompson (1979: 34–7).
- 17 Ames (1691a: 2–3, 5, 6, 12).
- 18 Emerson (2002: 48).
- 19 Harris (1986: 537–56).
- 20 Seidel (1972: 437).
- 21 Also see Fouassier-Tate (2014: 84). Stone (1979: 391) has suggested that the apprentices targeted brothels on Shrove Tuesday in order to remove temptation before the beginning of Lent.

- 22 See Latham (1985: 893–4).
- 23 Quoted in Burford and Wotton (1995: 75).
- 24 Turner (2002: 61).
- 25 Harris (1986: 541) and Thompson (1979: 92).
- 26 See Burford and Wotton (1995: 83).
- 27 The 1664 Conventicle Act, which resulted in substantial fines, prison terms and even transportation for religious dissenters, relapsed in 1667 and those it targeted hoped it would be replaced by a bill of toleration. However, cowed by hostility from Anglican squires and clergymen led by Sheldon, Charles II reasserted his Act of Uniformity on 10 March, a few weeks before the Easter week riots.
- 28 Harris (1986: 540, 543–8). Also see Burford and Wooton (1995: 75).
- 29 Mowry (1999: 83).
- 30 Quoted in Archer (1991: 207).
- 31 Shoemaker (1992: 108–10).
- 32 In reality, as we have seen in Chapter 2, some prostitutes were married and had children of their own.
- 33 Griffiths (1993: 40–1) and Fouassier-Tate (2014: 81, 87).
- 34 Genevan prostitutes were ordered to wear red cuffs on their right sleeves and in Switzerland they were distinguished by caps of the same colour. In Toulouse, whores were made to wear armbands and in Avignon they were expected to wear a red rosette. In 1473, the mayor of London, William Hampton, ordered that prostitutes must wear striped hoods and be paraded in public on market days. See Orme (1987: 37–8); Burford (1973: 93–4); and McSheffrey (2006: 179).
- 35 Dunton (1696: vol. 1, no. 4).
- 36 For a discussion of the popular association between cosmetics, prostitution and trickery in the seventeenth century, see Drew-Bear (1975: 31–7).
- 37 Cranley (1635).
- 38 Dunton (1696: October issue). Gowing (1993: 10) has written that whores were believed to be physically recognizable as a result of inappropriate and luxurious clothing, the shape of their noses and their general demeanour. Although we found no collocate that specifically relates to noses, the transient collocates *filthy* and *painted*, discussed in Section 5.4.6, do give a strong indication that the appearances of prostitutes were generally viewed with disdain.
- 39 Also see Burford and Wotton (1995: 80).
- 40 Also see Shoemaker (1991: 292–6); Shoemaker (1992: 108–9, 302–6); and Thompson (1979: 90).
- 41 Henderson (1999: 43–4, 46–7, 101).
- 42 See McEnery (2006: 76–9); Shoemaker (1992: 100); and Bahlman (1957: ch. 2).
- 43 McEnery (2006: 76–9, 89); Shoemaker (1991: 248); and Shoemaker (1992: 101–2, 105–6).



- 44 There was a distinction between a bawd who ran a closed household brothel and those who kept a disorderly house. The latter rented rooms to ‘pennyrent whores’ living in lodging houses, discussed in Chapter 2, that sometimes housed dozens of similar women. This living and working space varied in quality, sometimes being smartly decorated and furnished but, more commonly, consisting of a single room in a slum tenement. A disorderly house was loosely defined as a house in which indecent or corrupting behaviour took place so might also refer to an unlicensed alehouse or a gambling den.
- 45 Linebaugh (1991: 58); Linnane (2003: 175); and Shoemaker (1991: 134). Also see Anon. (1698).
- 46 Woodward (1700: vi).
- 47 McEnery (2006: 89); Bahlman (1957: 47–50); Shoemaker (1991: 252–60); and Shoemaker (1992: 114–15).
- 48 Quoted in Norton, *The Gay Subculture in Georgian England*. Updated 23 May 2013 <http://rictornorton.co.uk/subcult.htm>. [Consulted December 2015].
- 49 Shoemaker (1991: 261–2).
- 50 McEnery (2006: 93–5); Bahlman (1957: 83–92); and Henderson (1999: 89).
- 51 Linebaugh (1991: 147).
- 52 Ibid. (1991: 341).
- 53 The Proceedings of the Old Bailey, 1674–1913 <http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/browse.jsp?id=t17200907-18&div=t17200907-18&terms=whore#highlight>. [Consulted September 2015].
- 54 The Proceedings of the Old Bailey, 1674–1913 <http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/browse.jsp?id=t16950403-9&div=t16950403-9&terms=whore#highlight>. [Consulted September 2015].
- 55 The Proceedings of the Old Bailey, 1674–1913 <http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/browse.jsp?id=t17270830-40&div=t17270830-40&terms=whore#highlight>. [Consulted September 2015].
- 56 *London Lives 1690-1800 – Crime, Poverty and Social Policy in the Metropolis* is an excellent starting place for historians of crime in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century London. Co-directed by Tim Hitchcock and Robert Shoemaker, the website is a searchable database of 240,000 manuscripts from eight archives and fifteen datasets created by other projects. *London Lives* provides a relatively effortless opportunity to search for over 3.35 million individuals and, in many cases, link together records of the same person in order to compile their criminal biographies. <http://www.londonlives.org/>.
- 57 *London Lives 1690-1800* <http://www.londonlives.org/static/WalkerCharlotte1806.jsp>. [Consulted September 2015].
- 58 Linebaugh (1991: 47).
- 59 It is unlikely most prostitutes were able to take advantage of their pregnancies. Bearing a child was usually regarded as a disaster for whores and, as we saw in

- Chapter 2, the mortality rate for the babies of such women was markedly high. See Linebaugh (1991: 147).
- 60 Fraser (1984: 197).
- 61 McMullan (1984: 1–3, 15). A cony-catcher was a conman who, often looking the part of the respectable gentleman, sought out a naïve pedestrian or ‘cony’ to trick. The word ‘cony’ (sometimes spelt ‘conny’ or ‘coney’) means a tame rabbit that is raised to be eaten. The cony-catcher employed the methods of a confidence trickster and often made his cash by means of gaming or cheating at dice.
- 62 Griffiths (2008: 8) believes that magistrates may have deliberately embellished London’s reputation for lawlessness in order to encourage inhabitants to contribute greater amounts to the public purse.
- 63 Authors of rogue pamphlets of the mid-sixteenth century also promoted their work as being morally beneficial: Bayman (2007: 2–3) has described how these pamphlets maintained a solemn tone and insisted that their ultimate priority was to educate their readers of the practices of tricksters in order to enable them to protect themselves.
- 64 *Antimoixeia: or, the Honest and Joynt-Design of the Tower-Hamblets for the General Suppression of Bawdy-Houses, as Incouraged by the Publick Magistrates* (1691), quoted in Shoemaker (1991: 249).
- 65 See also Archer (1991: 215) and Sharpe (1984: 117).
- 66 Robert Greene has described the trick of crossbiting: a whore persuades a potential client to buy her a drink at a tavern and the couple are then accosted by the former’s ‘husband’ who is full of indignation to see them together. The hapless client willingly pays forty shillings just to escape the situation. See *A Notable Discouery of Coosnage* (1591), quoted in Shugg (1977: 301).
- 67 Archer (1991: 208) and McMullan (1984: 131–4).
- 68 Quoted in Griffiths (1993: 51).
- 69 Henderson (1999: 187) has described how, by the middle of the latter half of the eighteenth century, a standard story had emerged concerning fallen women. Such a woman was born into a respectable but poor household: her father was usually a half-pay army officer or a clergyman. After succumbing to the attentions of a wealthy seducer, she is disowned by her family and accompanies her lover to London. Growing bored after a few months, he abandons her in lodgings she later realizes are operating as a brothel. She owes the bawd money for her lodgings and food so has no option but to take her first customer. The bawd continues to force as many clients on her as she can find and the girl’s health and beauty rapidly deteriorate. Becoming reliant upon alcohol, she is thrown out of the bawdy house and becomes a destitute streetwalker but is not beyond redemption.
- 70 Nevala & Hintikka (2009), comparing the language of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century texts about prostitution, found that the latter tended to present commercial sex as a social evil and presented prostitutes themselves as victims of the trade.
- 71 McEnery (2006: 99).

## Chapter 4

- 1 Throughout note that our focus will be on nouns. While these nouns can be turned into adjectives – for example, *whore* to *whorish* – we will not look at these adjectival forms. Our focus in this book is on social actors – hence our interest lies in nouns used to refer to these actors as we want to look at their representation as directly as possible. Note, however, that even when focusing on nouns, similes and insults, we do not always see the social actors we are interested in referred to directly, as will be shown in Section 5.4.9. We also need, at times, to set aside verbs, as will be discussed shortly.
- 2 Another means of accessing the *OED* is via its thesaurus function. This is not used here for reasons that will be explored briefly in Chapter 7 of this book.
- 3 After this book was submitted, Jonathan Green very generously made an electronic version of the dictionary available to us. While we received it too late to be used in this book, we have no doubt that this exceptionally useful resource will be of great value to scholars engaged in work similar to ours in the future.
- 4 See <http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/fass/projects/newsbooks/dict.htm> for early work using this publication to discover slang terms of the period.
- 5 Nevala & Hintikka (2009) have taken a similar approach in a paper investigating changes in prostitute terminology in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Their research concentrates on thirteen pamphlets published between 1630 and 1760 that are available in EEBO and the Eighteenth Century Collection Online (ECCO).
- 6 When lifting text from the Early English Books Online corpus, we have reproduced all quotations verbatim; this includes the retention of original spellings and punctuation.
- 7 Taylor (1642). While ambiguous we feel this may be a reference to prostitution.
- 8 Crown (1675a). While ambiguous we feel this may be a reference to prostitution.
- 9 Motteux (1696). While ambiguous we feel this may be a reference to prostitution.
- 10 Refers to female sexual transgressors in general, including bawds. See, for example, Heywood (1637). The word can broadly be applied to any collection of women – for example, in ‘the sisterhood at Billingsgate’, the women being referred to appear to be scolds. See Edwards (1697).
- 11 We used the Log Ratio statistic, with a window of +/-5 and a minimum co-occurrence of ten and collocata node frequency of ten to determine collocates in this case.
- 12 The reader may be wondering at this stage whether the word *hydra* is an exception here. It is not. None of the examples of *monster* collocating with *hydra* refer to prostitution simply because no examples of *hydra* refer to prostitution.
- 13 Niccols (1607).

- 14 Aylett (1623).
- 15 The corpus contains 22,855 examples of this word as a noun in 4,289 texts.
- 16 The corpus contains 1,536 examples of this word as a noun in 1,003 texts.
- 17 The word *cracks* as a noun was also investigated. The corpus contains 994 examples in 709 texts of this word as a noun. No collocates of this word indicates a use of the word to refer to a prostitute.
- 18 The word *commodity* as a noun was also investigated. The corpus contains 12,094 examples of the word in 3,604 texts. No collocates of this word indicates a use of the word to refer to a prostitute.
- 19 The word *misses* as a noun was also investigated. The corpus contains 459 examples of the word in 334 texts. This word is productive and is discussed in the main text.
- 20 The corpus contains 10,573 examples of *traffic* as a noun in 3,221 different texts.
- 21 While *intercourse* may look like a collocate which might indicate sexual activity, the meaning of *intercourse* relating to *traffic* in EEBO relates to trade, not sex, as in the following example from Galvão (1601): ‘The renewing again, after many years disturbance, of the traffic and intercourse of The East Indie.’
- 22 Bouhours (1688).
- 23 A ninth example, *Miss of London Town* is clearly linked to this pattern also. See Anon. (1682a). Note that this *miss of* pattern is well attested in the dictionaries used.
- 24 Note that neither the *OED* nor the *Chambers Dictionary of Slang* covers this meaning of *miss of the town* that is, as a woman who buys sex.
- 25 Anon. (1690).
- 26 Chamberlayne (1678).
- 27 Anon. (1675).
- 28 *Keeping* collocates with *misses* 17 times in 7 texts; *keep* collocates with *misses* 11 times in 7 texts.
- 29 Bohun (1693).
- 30 Brown (1690).
- 31 Shannon (1689).
- 32 Sallust (1692).
- 33 Shannon (1689).
- 34 Tryon (1684).
- 35 Shannon (1689).
- 36 Sedley (1668).
- 37 Brome (1659).
- 38 Cavendish (1664).
- 39 Author of *Teaqueland Jests* (1689).
- 40 In searching for the plural of *person*, both *people* and *persons* were searched for.

- 41 W. P. (1677) is especially interesting in suggesting a distinction between a *kind woman* and a *whore*.
- 42 Flecknoe (1665).
- 43 De Blégny (1676).
- 44 Diogenes Laertius (1688).
- 45 Anon. (1697).
- 46 The pattern is also attested in both dictionary sources.
- 47 J. W. (1698).
- 48 Leti (1685).
- 49 Rich (1618).
- 50 R. B. (1695).
- 51 See Considine (2008) for an excellent overview of the history of dictionary making in general. Considine (2008: 299–306) also covers Wilkins' work in the broader context of European dictionary development in the seventeenth century.
- 52 Considine (2008: 301).
- 53 If we look at earlier dictionaries, we find *strumpet* defined simply as *whore* in Timothy Bright's 1588 work *Charactery: An Art of Short, Swift, and Secret Writing by Character*.
- 54 Note that the word *nag* is another word which may have extended its meaning metaphorically from woman to prostitute.
- 55 Jevon (1686).
- 56 Anon. (1681).
- 57 Anon. (1690).
- 58 Anon. (1681).
- 59 See Williams (1994: 208).
- 60 In this argument we are following lines similar to those explored by Geeraerts (2006).
- 61 This is a point to be kept in mind for when we explore the collocates of *WHORE* later in the book as this may also make some sense of the collocation of *WHORE* with other words denoting prostitute.
- 62 Heywood (1636).
- 63 Lover of ha, ha, he (1674) and Duffett (1675).
- 64 Anon. (1692).
- 65 Anon. [between 1680 and 1689].
- 66 Horace (1565); Ridley (1548); and Norris (1683).
- 67 It would seem in this case that the Drab is not giving what is being paid for as she appears to be chaste.
- 68 Parrot (1606) and Heywood and Rowley (1655).
- 69 In each case, any variants of the word are counted together; for example, *night walker* and *nightwalker* both contribute to the frequency of the word *nightwalker*.

Also, for words such as *whore* and *prostitute* we are looking at the nominal, not verbal, form of the word.

- 70 We would like to thank Dr Vaclav Brezina for his help in preparing the candlestick plots and correlation tests in this chapter.

## Chapter 5

- 1 We discuss the rationale for the decade-based approach in Section 1.2.
- 2 Note that in principle this procedure can work with phrases such as ‘she friend’. However, as shown in Chapter 4, no phrases of this sort were frequent enough to support the detailed analysis pursued in this chapter.
- 3 There are 7.5 uses of STRUMPET per million words in the 1630s versus a mention of 3.7 per million words in the 1640s.
- 4 The procedure used in this chapter to explore collocation is outlined in Section 5.3.
- 5 Another possible explanation for the difference – there is less data in the 1640s than the 1630s hence there are fewer collocates – is not true. As will be shown later in the chapter, there is, in fact, more data in the 1640s than the 1630s. See Section 6.1 for a fuller discussion of this point.
- 6 Taavitsainen and Jucker (2003: 12) have discussed the difference between *ye* and *thou* in early modern texts. *Thou* is presented as a term usually used to address social equals or inferiors and in more informal situations.
- 7 Salmon (1647).
- 8 Archer (1991: 251–3) and Fouassier-Tate (2014: 78) have shown how prostitution was used as a weapon with which to attack the Catholic Church in the early modern period.
- 9 Sutcliffe (1602).
- 10 The EEBO v3 corpus is not marked up for genre. However, from initial work done by the authors we estimate that there is a preponderance of religious material in the data – texts concerning religion appear to make up at least half of the corpus. This is unsurprising given the salience of religion in seventeenth-century life. Readers should be aware that this focus on religion pervades not only the corpus, but findings based on it also.
- 11 It has been reported that an evaluation of the system showed it to work with 83 per cent accuracy on Early Modern English; Paul Rayson, personal communication.
- 12 Note that while we also use one label for religion in this chapter, as discussed our label applies only to religious allegories surrounding whoredom – not to the whole of religion itself.
- 13 Note that we will not repeat the discussion of near synonyms here from Chapter 4, Section 4.4, though that analysis should be kept in mind throughout this chapter.

- 14 Crashaw (1609).
- 15 Ness (1683).
- 16 Taylor (1630).
- 17 Mill (1640).
- 18 Ford (1629); Penn (1673); and Peyton et al. (1696). Note none of these examples refer to the Whore of Babylon.
- 19 There is a strong argument to say that 'play the whore' is almost a fixed expression – 67.6 per cent of the time when PLAY collocates with WHORE it occurs in this pattern in the data.
- 20 Durham et al. (1676); Anon. (1683a); and Shaw (1683).
- 21 Crown (1675b) and Brome (1659).
- 22 The one concession we must make here is to reduce the threshold at which we declare something to be a collocate as there is less data available for this pattern. As a result, the collocation calculation is the same as used elsewhere in this chapter with the exception that collocates must only appear with the phrase five times, not ten, to be considered a candidate collocate.
- 23 Lenton (1640).
- 24 Taylor (1630); Dekker (1604); and Dekker (1630).
- 25 Note in this context that the phrase 'play the whore' takes on an ambiguity – it is not necessarily clear whether the phrase refers to the wife acting like a whore because she is engaged in extramarital sex or whether it indicates that the wife is 'playing the whore' as a true whore would, for example, there is a payment involved. In many cases, either reading could be plausible, but it seems likely that infidelity is a more likely answer than prostitution.
- 26 Anon. (1697); Jonson (1641a); and Lover of ha, ha, he (1674).
- 27 Note that the consistent collocate *you*, which is not considered here as we are only looking at content words, is clearly linked to the insult category and could reasonably have been put in it. In the L1, L2 and L3 positions, *you* typically only collocates with *whore* as it is being used to form an insult, such as 'you whore', 'you damned whore' or 'you are a whore'.
- 28 Jackson (1625); Maton (1652); and Dekker (1609).
- 29 BNC texts A0R 1771, HJC and KC2.
- 30 Gouge (1632).
- 31 West (1607).

## Chapter 6

- 1 For readers familiar with the Log Ratio statistic, it is worth noting that this effect may be expected as Log Ratio uses log-likelihood as a collocation filter, and

Log Ratio relies directly on the amount of evidence we have in the data, that is, as described the more evidence, the more collocates.

- 2 One word in the Disease category, *pox*, is ambiguous – collocating to the right of *WHORE* it relates to disease. This covers the majority of cases of the word collocating with *WHORE*. However, collocating to the left, *pox* is generally, though not exclusively, an insult.
- 3 Porter (1664) and Cavendish (1662).
- 4 Dixon (1683); Phillips (1685); and Leyburn (1662).
- 5 To give a little context, the phrases *harlots house*, *whores house*, *bawdy house* and *brothel* occur 65, 7, 204 and 380 times respectively in the seventeenth century in the EEBO corpus.
- 6 Seller (1611) and Hutcheson (1691).  
 Note that the inclusion of *lovers* as a word referring to intercourse is heavily influenced by Jeremiah (3.1) in the Bible where the phrase quoted occurs. See the later discussion of *house of harlots* and the *Money* collocates for a further discussion of such phrases being taken from the Bible.
- 7 In the following the claims are based on verses in the King James Bible.
- 8 There are forty-eight uses of *harlot* and eight of *harlots* in the King James Bible. Joshua (2.1), Joshua (6.22) and Jeremiah (5.7) discuss harlots and their houses in one form or another. By way of comparison, there are sixty-five mentions of *whore* and two of *whores*.
- 9 Cressy (1668). As a general note, we concede that there may be another interpretation of substance that would be possible. If that were to be the case, a new semantic field would be spawned. We decided, on balance, not to generate a new field in a case that we thought to be ambiguous, but which could be plausibly dealt with by the scheme we had developed.
- 10 Griffiths (2008: 205, 207, 209) has shown that only one-quarter of Bridewell residents who were described as *lewd* were female in the 1570s. By the turn of the century, this had increased to over 57.4 per cent and, by 1635, had risen to 94.69 per cent. Similarly, there was a fourfold increase in the ratios of women who were labelled *disorderly*. Griffiths advises against the assumption that *lewd* had a sexual meaning, instead arguing that it was used to describe any kind of transgressive lifestyle, including brawling, heavy drinking and theft. He notes that its inclusion in the language of the Infanticide Act of 1624 influenced labelling practices. Our analysis suggests that *lewd*, being a collocate of *whore* and *prostitute*, was often intended to highlight perceived sexual immorality during the seventeenth century.
- 11 Ames (1691a).
- 12 Menton (1698).
- 13 There are six occurrences of *town jilt* in EEBO.
- 14 Ames (1691b).



## Chapter 7

- 1 Specifically Koselleck (2002, 2004).
- 2 Withington (2010: 75).
- 3 See Withington (2010: 75). Note also that Williams' concept of the keyword is quite distinct from that presented in this book. Williams' selection of keywords appears to be highly subjective, as opposed to the process of objectively identifying keywords used in this book.
- 4 Note that the *OED* also notes that prostitute could occur as a noun in the century.
- 5 See Karras (1996: 8–9) for a discussion of this.
- 6 See <http://www.oed.com/thesaurus>.

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