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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.¹

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.² 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.³ 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.⁴ 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.⁵ 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.⁶

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 ⁷	7	6
Hydra	0	1,448	981
Hydras	0	73	66
Nocturnal privateer	0	0	0
Nocturnal privateers	1	1	1
Nymph	1 ⁸	4,713	1,110
Nymphs	1 ⁹	4,465	1,253
Pirate of the night	0	0	0
Pirates of the night	1	1	1
Sisterhood	17 ¹⁰	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?¹¹ 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 (e.g. *hideous*),

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.

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.¹² 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 pleasures¹³

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, disgrace¹⁴

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*,¹⁵ *crack*,¹⁶ *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) ¹⁷	<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> ¹⁸	<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) ¹⁹	<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) ²⁰	<i>Commutative, Commerce, merchandising, bartering, Negros, Merchandice, merchandise, Staples, intercourse,²¹ 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.²²

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.²³ This pattern clearly does relate to women who are prepared

to either expend money on having sex²⁴ 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.²⁵

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

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.²⁷

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.²⁸ 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.²⁹

most of the Limberhams of this end of the Town keep their Misses a great deal finer than their Wives³⁰

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'.³¹ 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 then in their Household Furniture . Therefore let them always follow their Pleasures and Delights; let them keep their Misses, let them Drink and Revel.³²

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.³³

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'.³⁴ 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.³⁵

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',³⁶ 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',³⁷ 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.'³⁸ 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.'³⁹ 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 ⁴⁰	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 ⁴¹	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.⁴²

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'),⁴³ have engaged in extramarital affairs ('when he came to be a Man, he debauched

Women from their Husbands')⁴⁴ 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').⁴⁵

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*.⁴⁶ 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.⁴⁷

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'.⁴⁸ 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.⁴⁹

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?⁵⁰

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.⁵¹ 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'.⁵² 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'.⁵³ 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.⁵⁴

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',⁵⁵ and others in which the jade is linked to sexuality 'For the Zealous Jade, Ben a True Cuckold made'.⁵⁶ 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'.⁵⁷ 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?'.⁵⁸ In this example, the writer asks if a whoring duchess would be 'carted' as a *jade* is. Given that carting was a punishment for whores⁵⁹ 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 5⁶⁰ 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*.⁶¹ – If this is the case, it makes a little more sense of examples like ‘strumpet, whore, I will not call her daughter’.⁶² 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’.⁶³ 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’.⁶⁴ 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’.⁶⁵ 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-scol'd the strong-lung'd Drab and Trull'.⁶⁶ 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'⁶⁷ and 'heres drink money, dice money, and drab money'.⁶⁸ 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.⁶⁹ 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.⁷⁰ 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	1	.057	.738*	.113	-.093	-.205	.425	.519	.316	.194	-.699*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.875	.015	.757	.798	.570	.221	.124	.373	.591	.024
harlot	Pearson Correlation	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.057	1	-.184	-.713*	.456	-.780**	-.488	.077	.396	.108	-.533
jade	Pearson Correlation	.875	10	.610	.021	.185	.008	.153	.833	.258	.766	.113
	Sig. (2-tailed)	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
jilt	Pearson Correlation	.738*	-.184	1	.123	-.070	-.186	.479	.108	.370	.579	-.566
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.015	.610	.735	.735	.848	.607	.162	.766	.292	.080	.088
nightwalker	Pearson Correlation	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.113	-.713*	.123	1	-.665*	.903**	.622	.341	-.379	-.419	.219
prostitute	Pearson Correlation	.757	.021	.735	.036	.036	.000	.055	.335	.281	.229	.544
	Sig. (2-tailed)	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
punk	Pearson Correlation	-.093	.456	-.070	-.665*	1	-.563	-.686*	.057	.417	.218	-.198
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.798	.185	.848	.036	10	.090	.028	.877	.230	.545	.583
quean	Pearson Correlation	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
	Sig. (2-tailed)	-.205	-.780**	-.186	.903**	-.563	1	.409	-.320	-.550	-.530	.535
strumpet	Pearson Correlation	.570	.008	.607	.000	.090	.090	.241	.367	.099	.115	.111
	Sig. (2-tailed)	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
trull	Pearson Correlation	.425	-.488	.479	.622	-.686*	.409	1	-.060	.106	.083	-.230
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.221	.153	.162	.055	.028	.241	.771	.869	.771	.819	.522
whore	Pearson Correlation	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.519	.077	.108	-.341	.057	-.320	-.060	1	-.020	-.011	-.104
strumpet	Pearson Correlation	.124	.833	.766	.335	.877	.367	.869	.869	.957	.975	.775
	Sig. (2-tailed)	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
trull	Pearson Correlation	.316	.396	.370	-.379	.417	-.550	.106	-.020	1	.703*	-.804**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.373	.258	.292	.281	.230	.099	.771	.957	.023	.005	.005
whore	Pearson Correlation	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.194	.108	.579	-.419	.218	-.530	.083	-.011	.703*	1	-.483
strumpet	Pearson Correlation	.591	.766	.080	.229	.545	.115	.819	.975	.023	.158	.158
	Sig. (2-tailed)	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
trull	Pearson Correlation	-.699*	-.533	-.566	.219	-.198	.535	-.230	-.104	-.804**	1	-.483
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.024	.113	.088	.544	.583	.111	.522	.775	.005	.158	.158
whore	Pearson Correlation	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
	Sig. (2-tailed)											

*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.