McEnery, Anthony, and Helen Baker. "Whores, Harlots, Jilts and Prostitutes." *Corpus Linguistics and 17th-Century Prostitution: Computational Linguistics and History*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017. 183–197. Corpus and Discourse. *Bloomsbury Collections*. Web. 26 Apr. 2023. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781474295062.0010>>.

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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.¹ 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.² 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.'³ 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.'⁴ 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.⁵ 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

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

	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 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.’⁶ 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.⁷ 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.⁸

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.’⁹ 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*.¹⁰ 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.’¹¹ 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.’¹² 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 4¹³ as in the following example: ‘like a Town Jilt receives every new comer.’¹⁴ 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.