Wicked, nasty, filthy, bawdy, and obscene': the Development of *Harris's List of Covent-Garden Ladies* from 1760 - 1794.

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March 2024

Contents

Abstract

Thirty-one editions of *Harris's List of Covent-Garden Ladies* were printed between 1760 and 1794. The *List* documents a variety of female sex workers that were operating in different areas of London at the time of publication. Each entry names the woman, lists her location, and provides a description of what sex buyers can expect if they choose to solicit her services. *Harris's List* resists categorisation as it interweaves tropes and conventions of a variety of different forms and genres. Arguments around the extent to which the text has been fictionalised have abounded since the *List* was first published and continue today. Through structuring my thesis in two separate chapters, I hope to present both sides of this argument. Initially I will assess the evidence that supports claims, made primarily by the text itself, that it is a tool that can be used to access information about the sex trade in eighteenth century London. Then I shall focus on the question of fictionality to see if the *List* was created to be used or to be read.

While the text is regularly cited in passing by scholars of sexuality and prostitution, it has only recently become the centre of academic attention. This thesis aims to question the intended purpose of *Harris's List* and evaluate whether it should be read as a piece of fiction or seen as a tool for navigating eighteenth century London's sexual economies. Through building on scholarship by Hallie Rubenhold, Janet Ing Freeman, Nicola Parsons, Amelia Dale and others – I hope to address some of the common misunderstandings and misconceptions surrounding *Harris's List.*

Acknowledgments

This thesis has undergone many iterations before becoming the piece of work that I have finally submitted, and it has been my fond and feared companion during some of the most challenging times of my life. When I first enrolled on the research program in 2019, I could not have predicted that I would be left permanently disabled by the results of a global pandemic. Although my physical health issues led to cognitive problems that have severely impacted my ability to research, I have always continued to find solace in eighteenth century novels and support from the wonderful department of English and Related Literature as well as the Centre for Eighteenth Century Studies at York. The Zooms and group chats that were born out of lockdowns continued as I became housebound and bedbound, and I am extremely grateful for the very special community that the staff and students have created.

My supervisor, Emma Major, has been incredibly supportive and patient with me as I have gone on a challenging journey to reach this stage! She has been very compassionate and understanding about my health situation while also doing her best to help me to do the highest quality of research that I could achieve under unique circumstances. I have been fortunate enough to have many valuable and enriching conversations with her over the course of this project.

Especially in her role as Graduate Chair, but also as my TAP member, Chloe Wigston-Smith has been exceptionally kind and helpful to me in seeking out support and suggesting different ways that I could structure the project. Thanks also to Alison O'Byrne for her expertise and feedback in the earliest stages of my degree.

I would like to thank the British Association for Romantic Studies (BARS) for giving me the Stephen Copley award which meant that I could visit the National Library of Scotland in Edinburgh for a fascinating research trip. I was fortunate enough to work as both the Digital Events Fellow and later a Communications Assistant for BARS which was a genuine pleasure. Also, I have been fortunate enough to benefit from financial support from Wolfson, the University of York, and the Yorkshire Ladies Council for Education. These grants enabled me to continue to study when I was no longer able to support myself with paid employment as my health deteriorated.

I have to say a special thanks to Katie Crowther and Clémentine Garcenot for their unwavering dedication to keeping me embedded in academic circles and their fierce loyalty as the best friends anyone could be lucky enough to meet. A massive thank you to Charlotte Vallis for being my favourite colleague, the best bookseller in York (especially now that I have moved out of the city!), and for sending me a constant stream of great books and reassuring text messages.

I would like to say a special thanks to my wonderful parents, who have put up with me moving back to live with them and filling every available space with books! My mother, Lorraine, has become my caregiver and I am eternally grateful for everything that she does for me. The rest of my family and friends may be expecting that with the submission of this thesis I will finally stop rambling on to them about why the eighteenth century is just the coolest and they are going to be sorely mistaken. My final thanks are to my wonderful fiancé Andy, thank you so much for always believing in me and my work.

We did it!

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References.

'Wicked, Nasty, Filthy, Bawdy and Obscene': the Development of *Harris's List of Covent-Garden Ladies* from 1760 - 1794.

Introduction

In 1794, two booksellers were taken to court for selling a 'wicked, nasty, filthy, bawdy and obscene' text.[1] These trials were as a consequence of them selling copies of *Harris's List of Covent-Garden Ladies; or, A Man of Pleasure's Kalender for the Year 1794.* This was the final edition of a text that was published annually from 1760 with only a brief pause in publication between 1768 and 1770. The thirty-one editions of *Harris's List* are each a compilation of female sex workers who were working in London during the eighteenth century. Although there are differences and developments in the text across its long publication history, the various copies follow the same simplistic structure. Each of the women are named, their location is given, and then there is a description of the sex worker and any skills or services that she offers. The indictments against James Roach and John Aitkin use the adjectives 'wicked, nasty, filthy, bawdy, and obscene' as they were the standardised language of libel trials. In the case of *Harris's List,* there was no doubt that this text was bawdy and obscene as it offers readers unrestrained access to eighteenth century sex workers in London.

Harris's List of Covent-Garden Ladies gives a fascinating insight into the development of London's, specifically Covent Garden's, sex industry over the second half of the eighteenth century. However, although it is frequently cited in conversations about sex work in the capital, very little scholarly attention has been paid to this text and the studies of this text seem to be extremely contradictory. For example, Elizabeth Campbell Delinger

[1] National Archives, Kings Bench 1794 KB 28/370/ roll 5, 1.
National Archives, Kings Bench 1794 KB 28/371/ roll 23, 1.

states that the first edition of *Harris's List* was published in 1756.[2] Meanwhile, public historian Hallie Rubenhold argues that the *List* made its debut in 1759.[3] This is further contested by Janet Ing Freeman who believes that it was initially published in 1760.[4] For the purpose of this thesis, I am agreeing with Freeman's 1760 date as this is the first year that the text was mentioned in *The Public Advertiser.* Although there are references to versions of *Harris's List* prior to 1760, there is a lack of evidence that these versions were formally printed and published. In the first chapter of this dissertation, I will discuss the possibility that the earlier editions of *Harris's List* that Rubenhold and Delinger cite could be the handwritten pimp ledger of the inspiration behind the *List,* John Harrison. The pimp ledger is one example of the ephemeral non-fiction forms that I believe *Harris's List* draws upon to form a genre-defying text.

Since I began researching this topic in 2019, there has been a variety of exciting research projects and new media focusing on *Harris's List*. Hallie Rubenhold's book *The Covent Garden Ladies* is the culmination of her research over multiple years and is the only sustained study of the *List*; it was published in 2020. This text builds upon her two earlier books.[5] Furthermore, in 2022 Nicola Parsons and Amelia Dale published their innovative article "Harris's List of Covent-Garden Ladies (1760-1794): New Copies and New Evidence regarding its History" which highlighted new editions which have been recently acquired by public libraries.[6] Even in twenty first century popular culture and media, *Harris's List* has

[2] Elizabeth Campbell Delinger, "The Garment and the Man: Masculine Desire in 'Harris's List of Covent-Garden Ladies' 1764 -1793", *Journal of the History of Sexuality,* Vol. 11, No. 3 (July, 2002) 357 – 394, 371.
[3]Hallie Rubenhold, *The Covent Garden Ladies* (Cambridge: Black Swan, 2020), 118.
[4]Janet Ing Freeman, "Jack Harris and 'Honest Ranger': The Publication and Prosecution of 'Harris's List of Covent-Garden Ladies, 1760 -95", *The Library,* Vol 13, Issue 4, December 2012, 423 – 456, 433.
[5] Hallie Rubenhold, *Harris's List of Covent-Garden Ladies; Sex in the City in Georgian Britain,* (Stroud: Tempus, 2005)
Hallie Rubenhold, *The Harlot's Handbook: Harris's List,* (Stroud: Tempus, 2007)
[6] Nicola Parsons and Amelia Dale. "Harris's List of Covent-Garden Ladies (1760 – 1794): New Copies and New Evidence Regarding Its History", *Library* 23, no. 4 (2022): 458-488.

become a recognisable symbol that is synonymous with the sexual economies of eighteenth century London. It makes a physical appearance in ITV's 2017 television series *Harlots*[7] and in the 2022 historical crime novel *Daughters of Night.*[8] This increase in attention proves that *Harris's List* should be explored and understood as a nuanced and complex text and not merely an amusing anecdote in the footnotes of the study of eighteenth century prostitution.

Harris's List inhabits an intriguing relationship to fiction, as the conceit that is central to the text's existence is that it is a work of non-fiction. However, the text draws upon a variety of literary tropes and conventions which have caused there to be doubt over the authenticity of the document since the eighteenth century. *Harris's List* blends a mixture of non-fiction genres to establish itself as a tool which can be used to navigate London's sexual economies and also read as a work of literary erotica. In his foundational text, *Before Novels,* J. Paul Hunter posited that the 'early wave of novelty was unfocused, sprawling across genres and modes'.[9] Throughout this thesis, I will aim to show the ways in which *Harris's List of Covent-Garden Ladies* reflects this interdisciplinary and indecisive modal form. As it was published between 1760 and 1794, *Harris's List* develops parallel to the development of the novel form. Although the text maintains the same basic structure across its long publication history, *Harris's List* changes in various other ways over the decades.

The first chapter of this thesis will discuss the prevalence of prostitution in eighteenth century urban spaces. As *Harris's List* only represents the dynamic of female sex worker engaging in assumed heterosexual activities with a presumably male customer, it is beyond

[7] *Harlots,* season 1, episode 1, "Episode 1" directed by Coky Giedroyc, written by Moira Buffini, aired 27 March 2017, on ITV.
[8] Laura Shepherd-Robinson, *Daughters of Night* (London: Pan Macmillan, 2022).
[9] J. Paul Hunter, *Before Novels: The Cultural Contexts of Eighteenth-Century English Fiction,* (London: w. w. Norton & Company, 1990), 16.

the scope of this dissertation to discuss male prostitution or queer sexual relationships.[10] Viewing *Harris's List* as a factual work of non-fiction allows this unique text to become a lens through which the heterosexual erotic economies of London in the eighteenth century can be examined. Sex work and prostitution in the eighteenth century was a rapidly expanding industry and attitudes towards the women who were selling sexual services were frequently the topic of debate and discussion. As *Harris's List* has an expansive publication history that covers the second half of this century, identifying the different ways that it develops over the thirty-four-year period between 1760 and 1794 is significant in surveying the realities of the sex industry at that time.

Many of the arguments against the authenticity of the *List* both from current critics and eighteenth century contemporaries of *Harris's List* posit that the text is pornography rather than a work of non-fiction. Pornography and prostitution have a deep interconnected relationship. The Oxford English Dictionary shows that the term pornography was initially created as 'a description of prostitutes or of prostitution'.[11] James Grantham Turner explains the etymology of the term pornography combines the Greek terms *pornē* (meaning 'the prostitute openly revealed and reviled') and *graphē* ('the expressive mark or engraved sign').[12] While the term pornography was not coined until the nineteenth century, it would be ahistorical to argue that pornography was not available in the eighteenth century and earlier. Moreover, by the eighteenth century, pornography was not just restricted to visual culture. In the second chapter of this thesis, I will examine the relationship between *Harris's List* and

[10] For more information on the this see Randolph Trumbach "Male Prostitution and the Emergence of the Modern Sexual System: Eighteenth-Century London" in *Prostitutes and Eighteenth-Century Culture,* (Abingdon, Routledge: 2016), 185 – 202., and Rictor Norton's *Mother Clap's Molly House: The Gay Subculture in England 1700 – 1830,* (London: Gay Men's Press, 1992).
[11] *Oxford English Dictionary*, s. v. "pornography (n.), sense 2" July 2023. Accessed December 2023. https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/6061510910.
[12] James Grantham Turner, *Libertines and Radicals in Early Modern London: Sexuality, Politics, and Literary Culture, 1630-1685* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002): 1.

Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure; or, Fanny Hill (1748). *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* is commonly regarded as the first work of literary pornography. Pornography in the eighteenth century was 'discursively entangled among other closely related genres and subgenres'.[13] Bradford Keyes Mudge argues that the eighteenth century development of the middle class permitted pornography and the novel to be 'invented together'.[14] This argument has formed the structure of my second chapter where I will examine the development of *Harris's List* as a direct parallel to the development of various fictional forms and modes.

To a certain extent, the influence of prostitute narratives from early novels such as Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722) and *Roxana; or, The Fortunate Mistress* (1724) impacted the ways that the sex worker's experience could be read. The literary conventions of giving voices to sex workers through sentimental literature, the emerging genre of whore biographies, pornography, comedy, and amatory fiction all contribute to different ways that *Harris's List* was created and read. The second half of this dissertation will consider the ways that the evolution of literary genres and conventions impacted the development of *Harris's List.* Sophie Carter argues that:

> *Harris's List* was primarily a work of erotica and it seems unlikely that it was genuinely a practical aid to procuring sex in eighteenth century London. Given the precarious and often transient nature of the profession it is doubtful that Covent Garden prostitutes would be able – let alone willing – to confirm their addresses in an annual publication. This text is illuminating, however, in the degrees to which it resembles nothing so much as a shopping list. Here prostitutes are paraded like a range of diverse and differently

[13] Mudge, *The Whore's Story*, 28.
[14] Ibid.

> packaged commodities competing for the delectation of the male consumer, they await his intervention to institute an exchange. The fantasy that *Harris's List* offers is, therefore, the pornographic paradigm of male agency.[15]

This argument is prevalent among scholars of the *List* who tend to dismiss the capacity of the text to be used as a practical non-fiction guide to navigate the sex industry. However, the text's pornographic literary meanderings and moments of unreliability do not negate the fact that *Harris's List* uses genres and modes beyond typical erotica. While there would be concerns around security for the sex workers who may be reluctant to reveal identifying personal information such as their names and addresses, the references to *Harris's List* in whore memoirs and biographies reveal that it was a prolific text. It could actively harm a sex worker's earning potential if they were excluded from the *List* and the text changed the habits of sex buyers. Moreover, this reiterates Carter's argument that the text is a paradigm of male agency. *Harris's List* usurps the roles of the pimp and the bawd to transform London's sexual economy. Both literally when considering the ways that the text can be used practically, and metaphorically through viewing the text as a work of eroticised pornographic fiction.

Although it would be reductive and false to assume that every sex worker in eighteenth century London was a victim who was coerced into sex work against their will, the dangers of the sex industry in this period cannot be overstated. The 1761 edition of the *List* records that Hannah D—lt—n was 'most agreeable when half-drunk'.[16] This sinister description of her reluctance to engage in any form of sexual activity is maliciously dismissed by the writers of *Harris's List.* Instead of excluding her from the catalogue, punters are

[15] Carter, *Purchasing Power,* 55.
[16] *Harris's List of Covent-Garden Ladies; or, New Atlantis for the Year 1761,* (London: H Ranger, 1761), 23.

recommended to only approach her when she is intoxicated, and the record goes on to further advise that punters manipulate Hannah into intercourse by plying her with alcohol. The text does not develop a sense of morality as the years pass. Emily Brand highlights that readers of the 1791 edition of *Harris's List* are warned about Miss Nunn, who once bit part of a man's tongue off.[17] The *List* tells this anecdote in a jovial way and suggests that the bite was because of Nunn's sheer enthusiasm for her male partner. However, earlier on in her record it is suggested that she was previously sexually assaulted.[18] Perhaps, then the bite was an act of self-defence and her entry in *Harris's List* is an attempt to control the narrative so that she still receives customers.

When discussing the genre of whore biographies that were popularised in the eighteenth century at the same time as *Harris's List,* Julie Peakman argues that

> the professed autobiographical memoirs of the courtesan fit in snugly between the Gothic novel and soft-core pornography, a high-handed account of daring adventures including all the ingredients of the best-seller.[19]

This promotes the idea that there was a dedicated audience who wanted to read and interact with prostitute narratives in the eighteenth century. From novels to pornography, stories surrounding the sex worker's experience were commercially successful. Rather than offering an autobiographical account of sex work, each edition of *Harris's List* shares numerous brief glimpses into the industry. The daring adventures are almost exclusively left to the fantasies of the paying customers, but this lack of plot does not prevent *Harris's List* from becoming a best-seller. Freeman found evidence that 'according to a contemporary German visitor,

[17] Emily Brand, *The Georgian Bawdyhouse,* (Sussex: Shire Publications, 2012), 38.
[18] *Ibid*., 39.
[19] Peakman, "Memoirs of Women of Pleasure: the Whore Biography", 181.

Johann Wilhelm von Archenholz, 8,000 copies of *Harris's List* were sold annually'.[20] This is an exceptionally large number as James Raven has noted that it was rare for more than 2,000 copies to be printed for a novel at this time.[21]

While Peakman describes the ways that the whore memoir fits snugly in the gaps between genres, *Harris's List* is an evolving text that builds upon different literary and textual modes to defy genre constraints and offer different glimpses into the sex trade. Over the course of the latter half of the eighteenth century the *List* changes its subtitle, incorporates poetry, and amends the language that it uses to reflect changing attitudes towards London's society and the ever-evolving industry of sex work. In this dissertation, I will examine the ways that *Harris's List* develops and establishes itself as a genre-defying text that has become synonymous with eighteenth century prostitution.

[20] Johann Wilhelm von Archenholz, *A Picture of England,* (London, 1789), II, 101 – 102 quoted by Janet Ing Freeman, "Jack Harris and 'Honest Ranger': The Publication and Prosecution of 'Harris's List of Covent-Garden Ladies, 1760 -95", *The Library,* Vol 13, Issue 4, December 2012, 423 – 456, 432.

[21] James Raven, *British Fiction 1750 – 1770: A Chronological Check-List of Prose Fiction Printed in Britain and Ireland,* (London, Associated University Presses: 1987), 40.

Chapter 1- 'A whole skin of parchment': A History of Listing Sex Workers

Memoirs of the Celebrated Miss Fanny Murray, a 1759 whore biography, describes the moment that the titular famous courtesan's information is taken and inscribed upon 'a whole skin of parchment'.[22] The parchment belongs to the figure of Jack Harris and formed the foundation for what would later develop into *Harris's List.* The derogatory misnomer that prostitutes sell their bodies has often led to the sex trade being viewed as a flesh market. Referring to the moment that a sex worker's name and description is written down in terms of engraving the skin of parchment disrupts the previously established power dynamic. Viewing the parchment in terms of skin and flesh presents the written text as the body for sale in this exchange. *Harris's List* prostitutes itself just as much as the sex workers included in the text do. In this thesis I argue that *Harris's List* is more than a mere guide to sex workers: it is a literary text offering multiple pleasures. As a result, the text blurs the boundaries between practical uses and pornography. This chapter will examine the different functional conventions that *Harris's List* draws upon to create its genre-defying form. While *Harris's List* was far from the first inventory of sex workers, the series of *Harris's List* is unique in the way that it moves between literary and non-literary genres and forms to formulate a text with a dual purpose. I will begin by assessing the practicality of using the text to locate and solicit the services of female sex workers in eighteenth century London.

The entire premise of *Harris's List* is centred around the conceit that it is a catalogue of the sex workers who operate in the theatre district of Covent-Garden and its surrounding areas. As previously discussed, Carter has claimed that it 'seems unlikely that [*Harris's List*] was genuinely a practical aid to procuring sex'.[23] Concerns around the legitimacy of the text

[22] *Memoirs of the Celebrated Miss Fanny Murray. Interspersed with the intrigues and amours of several eminent personages. Founded on real facts.* (Dublin: S. Smith at Mr Faulkner, 1759), 67.
[23] Sophie Carter, *Purchasing Power: Representing Prostitution in Eighteenth Century English Popular Print Culture* (Hampshire: Aldershot, 2004) 55.

and the extent to which it was fictionalised have led to dismissing the practical uses of the *List.* Details about famous courtesans such as Charlotte Hayes are included in *Harris's List.* The presence of actual historical women in the *List* does not refute all claims of fictionality. Of the surviving copies of the *List,* Hayes only appears in the 1761 edition. Her fame is immediately addressed as the entry states:

> Time was, when this lady was reigning toast; when she rolled about in her chariot; shone in a front box; and, who but she. She has been, however, a good while in eclipse.[24]

Although the author acknowledges Hayes' celebrity status, she is also described as 'a good while in eclipse' which disrupts the initial claim.[25] The 1761 edition of *Harris's List* is the only surviving text in the series that includes the full names of the sex workers without censoring vowels. Later editions make a cursory attempt to elude claims of libel through blanking out multiple letters in the names of the workers listed. Hayes' presence in the *List* has been used by some scholars as evidence that at least some of the women included in the series were actual sex workers.

The functional genres that *Harris's List* borrows from include the catalogues and inventories of sex workers that preceded it. *Harris's List* is a form of bawdy pamphlet. According to the Oxford English Dictionary the adjective 'bawdy', referring to language or actions that are 'befitting a bawd; lewd, obscene, unchaste', has circulated since approximately 1513.[26] The OED also identifies that the term 'bawdy' has been historically linked with indecent literature since the sixteenth century as the compound noun 'bawdy-

[24] *Harris's List of Covent-Garden Ladies; or, the New Atalantis for the Year 1761,* 55.
[25] *HL 1761*, 55.
[26] *OED Online,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) s.v. "Bawdy, adj.2". accessed Apr 4, 2021, https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/3835878063

basket' refers to 'a hawker of indecent literature'.[27] *Harris's List of Covent-Garden Ladies* is, on one level, exactly that – a list of female sex workers who operate in Covent Garden. However, the series of lists also contain and usurp elements from other genres such as pimp ledgers, livestock auction catalogues, and even topographical guidebooks.

Pamphlets are defined by their size and are demonstrably smaller than books. Timothy G. Young describes pamphlets as having a 'hard time standing up' and existing of 'limp pages unprotected from wear'.[28] I refer to *Harris's List* as a pamphlet, although it regularly reached about one hundred pages each year. The reason I have categorised the *List* as a pamphlet and not a book is because of the ephemeral qualities of the text. Bawdy pamphlets such as *Harris's List* are transient pieces of ephemera that are extremely useful in revealing an insight into the sexual economies of an area but are not intended to last. The physical vulnerability of pamphlets explains why so many editions of *Harris's List* have not survived the centuries between its publication and the present day. Despite being bound in what James Raven refers to as a beautiful and fashionable style,[29] Delinger notes that the 'paper is surprisingly thin and flimsy'.[30] She goes on to argue that

> These little volumes were made by men who were aware of the attractions of books as commodities but who were not going to spend a great deal on the physical quality of a publication that was wholly unsuitable for display on the shelves of a public library.[31]

[27] *OED Online,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) s.v. "Bawdy, adj.2".
[28] Timothy G. Young, 'Evidence: Toward a Library Definition of Ephemera', *RBM: A Journal of Rare Books, Manuscripts and Cultural Heritage,* 4 (2003), 11 – 26, 16.
[29]James Raven, *Judging New Wealth: Popular Publishing and Responses to Commerce in England, 1750 – 1800* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 52.
[30] Delinger, 'The Garment and the Man: Masculine Desire in "Harris's List of Covent-Garden Ladies" 1764 – 1793', 372.
[31] Ibid.

Harris's List was not physically built to last. The publishers made deliberate decisions in the production process to leave the physical item of the book as something that was flimsy and not able to stand the test of time. The fact that the text was updated annually highlights the ephemeral quality of the bawdy pamphlet.

The implication that the buyers of *Harris's List* were the sort of readers who owned a public library is perhaps reiterated by the cost of the publication. For example, the 1788 edition has the price of six shillings and sixpence written on the front page. However, although this price was prohibitive for working class readers and sex buyers, it is considerably cheaper than the women included in the pages. Indeed, Mrs. G-frey's formal price is one pound but the 1793 list notes that she would be willing to take ten shillings and six pence.[32] Especially if one copy was being shared amongst a group of readers, this would have been a far cheaper method of accessing the sex industry. The text could be read as a piece of erotic literature not only because of its bawdy content but also as it lets less affluent sex buyers access detailed descriptions of sex workers that the typical working man would not be able to afford. However, as will be discussed in depth in the next chapter, the elitist language and literary allusions of this text suggest that the intended audience of the *List* would be highly educated readers, rather than simply anyone who is looking for an encounter with a lady of pleasure in Covent Garden and the surrounding areas.

The genre of bawdy pamphlets predates the first edition of *Harris's List of Covent-Garden Ladies* by over a century. *The Wandering Whore* (1660 – 1661) and the succinctly-titled *A Catalogue of Jilts, Cracks & Prostitutes, Nightwalkers, Whores, She-Friends, Kind Women and Other of the Linnen Lifting Tribe who are to be seen Every Night in the Cloysters in Smithfield, from the hours of eight to eleven, during the time of the FAIR* (1691) exemplify

[32] *HL 1793*, 61.

the differences in Restoration and Glorious Revolution bawdy pamphlets. *The London Belles, or A Description of the Most Celebrated Beauties in the City of London* was printed in 1707 and listed thirty-two sex workers.[33] This is one of the first examples of this genre from the eighteenth century. Importantly, *The Wandering Whore* and *A Catalogue of Jilts* are some of the very few examples of this genre where the full text has survived. The similarities between *Harris's List* and other published lists of prostitutes may seem obvious. However, it would be an oversimplification to state that all bawdy pamphlets follow the same structure, as different texts use extremely different forms. The differences between these surviving bawdy pamphlets are significant and create a deep chasm that can be filled with tropes and conventions from other non-fiction genres. While *A Catalogue of Jilts* follows the stylistic conventions of an inventory, *The Wandering Whore* embeds the listing of names within a fictionalised dialogue which satirises condemnations of the sex industry. However, the unwavering constant is that all these publications provide a list of sex workers. To this point, while the term 'bawdy pamphlet' can be generally used to refer to any short and salacious piece of writing, I am using it to refer to any text that provides a list of sex workers in one specific location.

As I will show, *Harris's List* offers readers much more information than just a simple list of names of sex workers. It exists not merely as an operational guide with the simple objective of connecting customers with sex workers but also as a literary text that could be read as a sentimentalised piece of erotic fiction. As the form of the *List* evolved over the thirty-four-year period between 1760 and 1794, it increasingly distanced itself from the conventions of bawdy pamphlets that preceded *Harris's List*. This chapter focuses on the practical functionality of the text's subversive genre.

[33] Joseph Browne, *The London Belles, or A Description of the Most Celebrated Beauties in the Metropolis of Great Britain*, (London: Samuel Bunchley, 1707).

'Man of Pleasure's Kalendar': The Erotic and the Ephemeral

Erotica and ephemera have a long history that predates *Harris's List*. Part of the subtitle of the 1771 – 1790 editions of *Harris's List* is *Man of Pleasure's Kalendar*. In 1791 this spelling changes to *Kalender* and in the final edition of 1794 it becomes a *Calender*. Referring to the *List* as a calendar explicitly identifies the text as specific and tailored to a particular year. Moreover, the fact that this series was updated annually increases the ephemeral qualities of the editions as if they were designed with precise information that was updated annually then they would have been designed to be replaced by a more updated version. However, this assertion by the creators of the text that it is specific to the year listed is complicated by the fact that various editions contain duplicates of the same entries.

Harris's List of Covent-Garden Ladies; or, New Atalantis For the Year 1761 begins its prefatory advertisement by stating that

> Several ladies truly eminent for their amorous pursuits, have sent their just complaints to us, for having omitted them in the first part of Harris's List; wherein they insist, with all female vehemence, that if they did not deserve a preference, they had at least an undoubted claim to a place there, as well as the most reactive she which it exhibited to view.[34]

This advertisement reveals that the sex workers who were excluded from the very first edition of *Harris's List* seem to have missed out on trade and business. It is impossible to be certain if this is a legitimate concern from sex workers or if this is a fabricated fictional conceit to justify the sequel. The preface declares that there was no bias or discrimination 'in regard to the choice of the ladies made in the first part'.[35] However, certain entries are filled with

[34] *HL 1761*, 3.
[35] *HL 1761,* 3.

vitriol and unflattering descriptions, for example Mrs Th-nt-n is described in 1773 as being 'ugly almost as sin'.[36] I will discuss at length in the next chapter how the unflattering entries of certain women disrupt the pornographic, eroticised fantasy of sex work. However, if *Harris's List* was being used as a practical tool to access sex workers, then it adds pressure on women not simply to be included but to be depicted in a positive and attractive manner.

The ephemera of the eighteenth century has received an increased amount of critical and scholarly attention recently. Gillian Russell's *The Ephemeral Eighteenth Century* (2020) provides comprehensive and detailed coverage of different forms and genres of ephemera across the century, while Michael Harris has argued that ephemera is the 'great sea of flimsy print continuously washing up against the sturdy breakwaters of the book'.[37] The fact that *Harris's List* has remained a relatively obscure text despite having multiple editions surviving reflects this. Instead of defining ephemera in direct opposition to the codex, Russell demonstrates 'how the categories of the book and ephemera as we know them created each other in the long eighteenth century'.[38] This sense of ephemeral texts collaborating with texts that are more recognisably literary is reflected in the unusual genre of *Harris's List.* In the same way that the series plays with both fiction and non-fiction tropes, the text seems to exist in a liminal space between ephemera and the codex. Unfortunately, not every edition has survived to be able to be read today as the pocketbook style of the *List* combined with the content means that the text would not typically be amongst the first choices for conservation among relatives who find the list amongst a relative's personal library.

[36] *HL 1773*, 72.
[37] Michael Harris, 'Printed Ephemera', in *The Oxford Companion to the Book*, eds. Michael F. Suarez, S. J. and M. R. Woudhuysen, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), I: 120–8 (120).
[38] Gillian Russell, *The Ephemeral Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 4.

***Covent Garden Ladies:* Guidebooks and the Importance of Location**

Richard Newton created a print which was published in 1794, titled *Harris's List; or, Cupid's London directory.*

Figure 1: Richard Newton, "Harris's List; or, Cupid's London Directory". London, 1794. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Online. Licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

This etching shows a man with an open copy of *Harris's List* standing outside of an establishment that is assumed to be a brothel as three women appear from within. His

pamphlet is open to the entry of 'Miss Love' implying that he is on a quest to find love with the help of *Harris's List.* This satirical print has one of the sex workers forming horns with her index finger and little finger raised; this is in reference to the horns of a cuckhold. James Caulfield noted in *Blackguardiana; or, a Dictionary of Rogues, Bawds, Pimps, Whores, Pickpockets, Shoplifters* (1793) that the name Acteon is slang for a 'cuckold, from the horns planted on the head of Acteon by Diana'.[39] While the print is mocking the man who is using *Harris's List* as a manner of finding love, Newton is showing that the text had the capability used as a guidebook to direct sex buyers towards the prostitute of their choice.

Michael Harris argues that the 'connections between guide publications and an interest in maps and prints were established early in the eighteenth century'.[40] There was increasing demand for guidebooks and literary rambles in the eighteenth century metropolis. This is evident if we compare the earlier *A Catalogue of Jilts* (1691) with *Harris's List*. The title of *A Catalogue of Jilts* specifies that this bawdy pamphlet covers the sex workers who 'are to be seen every Night in the Cloysters in *Smithfield*, from the hours of eight to eleven, during the time of the FAIR'.[41] In this, it is like *Harris's List of Covent-Garden Ladies* which also includes the location in the title. But *A Catalogue of Jilts* covers a considerably smaller area and population than the whole of Covent-Garden and is too niche and restricted to be considered a guide, whereas *Harris's List* could be viewed as a form of guidebook as it covers an area of London in detail.

Harris's List opens with a contents list of the sex workers which groups them all alphabetical order. Despite this initial order, the entries themselves follow no evident

[39] James Caulfield, *Blackguardiana,* (London: John Shepherd, 1793), 12.
[40] Michael Harris, 'London Guidebooks before 1800' in *Maps and Prints: Aspects of the English Book Trade*, ed. Michael Harris and Robin Myers (Oxford: Oxford Polytechnic Press, 1984), 31-66, 50.
[41] *A Catalogue of Jilts, Cracks, Prostitutes, Night-walkers, Whores, She-friends, Kind Women, and Others of the Linnen Lifting Tribe who are to be Seen Every Night in the Cloysters in Smithfield, from the Hours of Eight to Eleven, During the Time of the FAIR.* (London: R.W. near Smithfield, 1691), 1.

structure. The list is neither a cohesive tour of London's sexual locations, nor an alphabetical collection of various sexual encounters over the year. The route is not intended to be completed in one go but instead over the full year, much like a calendar's fundamental purpose is to document and organise a year. As *Harris's List* is updated annually, in a twisted parody of a calendar it does seem to document a year. The changes of the number of women that are included and the variation in their descriptive entries shows time passing. This leads to an erratic tour of Covent Garden: if the reader had followed the suggested directions, they would have been jumping across different streets and back again. The *List* is therefore not a conventional walking tour but more likely a guidebook that reflects the sexual economy and is designed to instruct a self-titled man of pleasure for a year until it can be updated. As it was produced annually, for those who used the text as a guidebook, the women were reduced to tourist attractions that sex buyers were going on a pilgrimage to visit.

Matthew Sangster's ongoing research project 'Romantic London' examines London and spatial elements of texts during the Romantic Period. On the website affiliated with this project, Sangster has mapped out the 1788 edition of *Harris's List* overlain on top of Richard Horwood's *Plan of the Cities of LONDON and WESTMINSTER the Borough of SOUTHWARK, and PARTS adjoining Shewing every HOUSE* (1792 -1799). Sangster has explained his methodology by saying that 'the map locates the list's descriptions at the addresses which its headings provide'.[42] By 1788, it would be more appropriate to refer to the women included in the text as London ladies, as the *List* covers a wider area than just Covent Garden. The icons that represent two women, Mrs H-w-rd from Lambeth and Mrs Cr-sby of George Street are south of the river Thames. Miss Harriet J-n-s and Mrs Gr-ff-n are based in Wapping in East London. While there are other outliers, most of the sex workers are grouped

[42] Matthew Sangster, "Mapping Harris's List of Covent-Garden Ladies (1788).", *Romantic London,* accessed Sep 24, 2022, http://www.romanticlondon.org/harris-list-1788/#13/51.5479/-0.1188

around central London. Very few of the women are based in the same location, but there are clusters around certain streets such as Glanville-Street where both Miss H-ll-n and Miss T-f-n are based out of number 2.[43] Two more women are working out of other houses on this street. However, the majority of sex workers are still concentrated in and around the theatre district of Covent-Garden. Seeing the spatial realities of the women across the map shows the geographical range of *Harris's List*.

The earliest editions of the list were almost exclusively sold in the area that the women listed operated. The printer was located initially at No.23 Fleet Street, before moving near to Drury Lane Playhouse. Here customers could find an archive of lists from previous years available to purchase.[44] Rubenhold has argued that the text could originally be bought from the Shakespear's Head tavern, where John Harrison worked, but as its popularity grew over the years it became more readily available with punters being able to acquire the latest copy from the kiosk in the Covent Garden Piazza and from most brothels in the Covent Garden area.[45]

An essential argument in defence of the practical uses of *Harris's List* is the fact that every entry has a detailed and specific address. Unlike the earlier bawdy pamphlets such as *A Catalogue of Jilts* and *The Wandering Whore,* this publication details a specific house number, street name, and often further information about the area this road is found in. Although the organisation of this information is not always laid out in a manner that makes spatial sense, it is much more specific than *A Catalogue of Jilts* which states that all of the sex workers can be found in the 'Cloysters in Smitherfield'.[46] *Harris's List* is always defined

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[43] Ibid.
[44] *Harris's List of Covent-Garden Ladies; or, Man of Pleasure's Kalendar for the Year 1783,* (London: H. Ranger, 1783), 1.
HL 1793, 1.
[45] Rubenhold, *The Covent Garden Ladies,* 70.
[46] *A Catalogue of Jilts, Cracks, & Prostitutes, Nightwalkers, Whores, She-Friends, Kind Women and Other of the Linnen Lifting Tribe,* 1.

by its location as the women included in the text are always identified as 'Covent Garden ladies'.[47] The epicentre of London's sex industry is Covent Garden, not just for procuring sex but also for publishing pornography.[48] Francis Place notes that 'obscene Prints were sold at all the principal print shops and at most others'.[49]

Beyond simply identifying the location that the sex workers of *A Catalogue of Jilts* can be found, the fact that it is specifically noted that prostitutes operate in the cloisters shows the connection between religion and sex work. Emma Major has discussed how the eighteenth century oversaw the popularisation of female religious communities becoming associated with sex work.[50] This expanded from anti-Roman Catholic satires from the previous century and became a common comparison. The development of the King's Place Nunneries in St James's in the 1760s oversaw 'the popularisation of nuns, abbesses, and convents as common terms for London prostitutes, bawds, and brothels'.[51] *The Wandering Whore* and *A Catalogue of Jilts* both precede this phenomenon but do each present prostitution in terms of religion – the former most explicitly through the reformation narrative put forth by the narrator, and the latter by the fact the sex workers have claimed the religious cloisters as their own work space. In the 1788 edition of *Harris's List* the author shows an awareness of the complexities of eighteenth century religion in the entry for Madamoiselle Du Par, a former teacher from a French boarding school. She is said to have taken a

[47] *HL 1761,* 1.
[48] Julie Peakman, *Mighty Lewd Books: The Development of Pornography in Eighteenth-Century England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 23.
[49] *The Autobiography of Francis Place*, ed. by Mary Thale, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 51.
[50] Emma Major, *Madam Britannia: Women, Church, and Nation 1712 – 1812,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 145.
[51] Ibid.

> liking to a young Clergyman in the neighbourhood, she made a conjunction of calvanism with the established church, and he propagated the gospel in her *foreign parts* with great assiduity.[52]

The creativity of the religious euphemisms of the 1788 edition of *Harris's List* show the ways that religion, and in particular anti-Roman Catholic sentiments, permeated discussions of sex work.

Tony Henderson states that across the entirety of the capital 'prostitution was a visible, material presence'.[53] *Harris's List* is a physical reminder of the materiality of sex work which was seen 'on the streets, in the parks, the theatres and public gardens of the city'.[54] Sex work was a visible and prominent concern in eighteenth century urban spaces. Covent Garden's piazza had

> once been aristocratic, but by the early eighteenth century the grand people had moved westwards leaving it to market stalls and itinerant shows. As coffee-houses, taverns and bagnios multiplied, it became the centre of a proto-Bohemia.[55]

This bohemian lifestyle is typified by the prevalence of sex workers and licentiousness of their customers. This is not to suggest that members of the upper classes did not regularly visit Covent Garden. Just as today, Covent Garden was the primary theatre district of London because of Drury Lane Theatre and the Royal Opera House. These institutions appealed to a fashionable clientele of the beau monde, as did the courtesans who were too expensive to be

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[52] *Harris's List of Covent-Garden Ladies; or, Man of Pleasure's Kalender for the Year 1788,* (London: H. Ranger, 1788), 143.
[53] Tony Henderson, *Disorderly Women in Eighteenth-Century London: Prostitution and Control in the Metropolis, 1730-1830* (New York: Addison Wesley Longman, 1999), 174
[54] Ibid.
[55] Vic Gatrell, *City of Laughter: Sex and Satire in Eighteenth-Century London,* (New York: Walker & Company, 2006), 82.

included in *Harris's List*, as Gatrell estimates that the women who ran their services out of 'chandeliered bordellos' would charge fifty guineas a night.[56]

Figure 2: William Hogarth, "Morning". London, 1738. British Museum, Online. Licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

Morning, the satirical print by Hogarth depicts an early morning scene in the centre of Covent-Garden. This etching places sex workers at the literal centre of Covent-Garden. There are multiple women engaging with their clients, while a woman with visible pox scars walks past them. Tom King's Coffee House is in the background where a fight is beginning to

[56] Gatrell, *City of Laughter,* 86.

sprawl outside. This print highlights the relationship between prostitution, coffeehouses, and Covent Garden. Markman Ellis shows that coffee-houses are often 'scapegoated as a kind of brothel, or market for sex'.[57] This connection is also seen in the second edition of *The Wandering Whore* as it lists 'Mrs. G- neer the Coffee-house'.[58] This sex worker operated out of a coffee house in Moregate in the seventeenth century.[59] By the eighteenth century, the most lascivious coffee house in London was considered to be King's Coffee-House in Covent Garden; particularly when Moll King was the proprietor as she advertised her 'transgressive qualities, and the riotous, bawdy and vulgar sociability of her establishment'.[60] I have been fortunate enough to view the National Library of Scotland's copy of the 1761 edition of *Harris's List* which is bound with a copy of *The Ghost of Moll King; or, a Night at Derry's*.[61] This compilation was done by the publisher as on the title page of *Harris's List* it notes 'to which is annexed, the Ghost of Moll King; or, A Night at Derry's'.[62] These two texts compliment each other as they both suggest debauchery and adventures to the readers. While *Harris's List* offers a menu of sex workers from which customers can select their chosen companion, *The Ghost of Moll King* discusses an evening of drunkenness in London.

The preface to *The Ghost of Moll King* begins by saying

> In an age when we are obliged to disturb the ashes of the memorable dead, that by a recital of their glorious actions, we may stimulate our corrupted moderns to emulate their virtues.[63]

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[57] Markman Ellis, *The Coffee House: a Cultural History,* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2004), 44.
[58] *The Wandering Whore vol. 2,* (London: John Garfield, 1660), 7.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Ellis, *The Coffee House,* 112.
[61] *Harris's List of Covent- Garden Ladies; Or, New Atlantis for the Year 1761. To Which is Annexed, The Ghost of Moll King; or a Night at Derry's*, (London: H Ranger, 1761).
[62] Ibid.
[63] *HL 1761*, 145.

The obvious satire in praising Moll King for her virtuous behaviour continues across this text as it praises King's industrious nature. In her bibliography, Rubenhold claims that *The Ghost of Moll King* was written by Samuel Derrick, who will be discussed later in this chapter, but there is little evidence to corroborate this argument beyond the fact that the text was initially introduced as an extension of *Harris's List.*

Furthermore, the Shakespear's Head pub was next door to the Bedford Coffee House, which was on the north side of the Covent Garden Piazza.[64] Copies of *Harris's List* were sold here. Rubenhold has found evidence that indicates that there was a bawd who operated out of the Bedford Coffee House from 1741.[65] She has posited that

> The presence of Jack Harris's enterprise would have in the first instance threatened to impede the natural flow of drunken, sex-hungry punters from the Shakespear into her adjacent parlour. A financial settlement must have been made to appease her, which may have also included an agreement to proffer her girls to the Shakespear's patrons.[66]

This agreement perfectly demonstrates the symbiosis between coffee shops, taverns, and sex work. James Boswell documents one night of 'high debauchery' in the Shakespear Tavern where after engaging in a sexual menage-a-trois with two young sex workers he 'came home in a glow of spirits'.[67] This anecdote shows that the Shakespear was recognised and known for more than just the ale it sold. In Boswell's writing it is implied that he met the prostitutes at the Shakespear, and so it seems that these women were nearby, either on the streets or in

[64] Ellis, *The Coffee House*, 156.
[65] Rubenhold, *The Covent Garden Ladies*, 70.
[66] Ibid.
[67] James Boswell, *Boswell's London Journal 1762 – 1763,* ed. Frederic A. Pottle, (London: McGraw-Hill, 1950), 263 - 264

the Bedford Coffee House ready to seek out customers among the pub going clientele. Businesses that supported one another such as brothels and public houses would naturally exist in close proximity forming London's urban ecosystem.

The relationship between sex work and walking has a deep history. Selling sex on the streets of London was extremely visible in the eighteenth century. In *A Catalogue of Jilts*, one of the titular synonyms for a sex worker is 'Nightwalker'. This term is often used to refer to sex workers alongside the phrase 'streetwalker', and indeed Laura Rosenthal has compiled a collection of prostitute narratives from the eighteenth century, entitled *Nightwalkers.*[68] The term 'nightwalker' has been used since the seventeenth century to describe 'a prostitute […] one who solicits on the streets'.[69] The reformer John Dunton wrote *The Night-Walker; or, Evening Rambles in Search after Lewd Women* (1696). From the title of this text, it is ambiguous as to who is the nightwalker. The moralising reformer who disguised himself as a client appears to be the nightwalker in this situation as he is the one actively walking in the hope of discovering some sex workers upon his rambles. Positioning both the prostitute and the client as being interchangeable in terms of being the nightwalker blurs the boundaries of who is soliciting. In attempting to find sex workers to scold, the narrator of the poem is actively seeking out a figure who sells sex. Meanwhile the prostitutes of the city are described as loitering, and are thus the passive counterpart in this exchange. Moreover, an anonymous poem titled *The Lady's Ramble; or, The Female Night-walker* is thought to have been first published in 1720. This poem relays the various ways in which a sex worker solicits customers on London's streets. The narrator reveals her 'Account of the Tricks of a Miss' which involve petty theft, bribery, and deception.[70] She goes on to say that she

[68] Laura Rosenthal, *Nightwalkers; Prostitute Narratives from the Eighteenth Century* (Plymouth: Broadview Press, 2008)
[69] *Oxford English Dictionary Online,* s, v. "night-walker (n.), sense 1.b," July 2023: Accessed January 2024.
[70] *The Lady's Ramble; or, the Female Nightwalker,* (London, [1720?]), 1.

regularly takes a 'Ramble in *Fleet Street* oft times with Success'.[71] While middle-class men are permitted by society to wander, if lower class women were to walk the streets of London, this rambling is perceived to be solicitation. Selling sex in the eighteenth century was by no means confined to the darkness of night and yet women who were seem as being out in public without a chaperone or a purpose are viewed as sex workers.

Frances Burney's *Evelina; Or the History of a Young Lady's Entrance Into the World* (1778) is also concerned with the dangers that women face within metropolitan society. The paternal figure of Mr Villars directly discusses these concerns by stating that 'nothing is so delicate as the reputation of a woman; it is at once the most beautiful and most brittle of all human things'.[72] This relationship between beauty and fragility is central to the novel. Evelina is subtitled *the History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World,* and this alternative title shows the conflation between London and the wider world. Viewing the metropolitan elite experience of London as the entire world demonstrates the significance of being accepted by those who operate within this circle and, as Evelina encounters the elite social circles of London for the first time, she makes a series of comical errors. Evelina's blunders prove the precariousness of her position as, if these mistakes had been more dramatic, she would have been exiled from fashionable society and thus unable to stay in London. The larger consequences of this exclusion would mean that Evelina would be isolated from the entire social world. Moreover, as Burney published *Evelina* as a twenty-six-year-old, this dichotomy between beauty and vulnerability would have been central to her own navigation of life in urban society. *Evelina's* popularity was in part because it resonated with its contemporary readers.

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[71] *The Lady's Ramble*, 2.
[72] Frances Burney, *Evelina,* ed Vivien Jones and Edward A. Bloom, (Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 2008), 166.

Evelina's concerns with the judgements of others at times puts her in danger. Evelina gets separated from her party during a visit to the Marybone pleasure gardens, she feels threatened by the 'bold and unfeeling men' who approach her with lewd suggestions.[73] The sight of a solitary woman in the pleasure gardens has immediate connotations of prostitution. As her many assailants were men, Evelina was relieved when she was able to find protection with two women. However, this solace was short lived as she realised that in an attempt to distance herself from the implications of prostitution, she embedded herself in the assumption. Instead of physically shielding herself from speculation, she began to walk arm in arm with the working women; she had 'sought protection from insult, of those who were themselves most likely to offer it'.[74] Evelina must grapple between the fear of physical attack and her anxieties of the repercussions of a tarnished reputation. When Lord Orville encounters Evelina and the women, Evelina writes that if she had been 'sunk to the guilty state, which some companions might lead him to suspect, [she] could scarce have feelings more cruelly depressing'.[75] Evelina recognises that Orville's opinion of her is completely dependent upon external factors such as the company that she keeps or the fashion that she wears. Although Evelina's concern is for her own safety and security, these worries depend entirely on Orville being able to immediately differentiate between a woman walking and a nightwalker.

Listing the List: Inventories and Ledgers

Most of the initial bawdy pamphlets that preceded *Harris's List* adopted the aesthetic conventions of inventories. For example, the 1691 text *A Catalogue of Jilts* is more concise than *Harris's List*, covering a single sheet of paper that lists just twenty-two women.

[73] Burney, *Evelina,* 234.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid.

Different editions of *Harris's List* could include anywhere between 120 to 190 sex workers, and the more modern text is 'beautifully packaged by Ranger of Fleet Street in the modish style of the twelves'.[76] This pocket book style was in the duodecimo form where each leaf is one twelfth the size of the printing sheet. By including more women, and much more detailed descriptions of these women, *Harris's List* moves away from a simple list form and instead forms a literary structure through the extended descriptions. This is compounded by the inclusion of a preface in most of the editions, or otherwise embedding a grandiose philosophical diatribe in one of the opening entries to reflect the writer's opinions on love, women, and the sex trade. Establishing *Harris's List* as a text that needs an introduction differentiates it from the simplistic and practical conventions of these inventory style bawdy pamphlets. Although not all editions of *Harris's List* included a preface, it is evident that the text is attempting to establish itself as a fashionable codex. The anonymous authors of the text updated the writing annually, so that it continually reflected the most current attitudes and literary trends of the day. Both in its physical form and its literary qualities, *Harris's List* aimed to be a modern text that was defined by the current trends and attitudes of its audience. In the next chapter I will focus on the differences in language, as *Harris's List* moves between sentimental modes and the mock epic. In this chapter I am primarily interested in the ways that the list aims to discredit allegations that it is 'totally founded on fiction'.[77] Whether from the anonymous authors of its *Characters of the Present Most Celebrated Courtezans*, or scholars centuries later, throughout its existence, *Harris's List* has been subject to attacks on its authenticity.

[76] Raven, *Judging New Wealth*, 52.
[77] "Characters of the Present Most Celebrated Courtezans interspersed with a variety of secret anecdotes never before published" in *Whore Biographies, Volume 5* ed. Julie Peakman (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2006), 1-218, 18.

On the right side of the page of *A Catalogue of Jilts*, following the descriptions of each woman, there are a final three columns with the headings 'l, s, d'.[78] These headings and the clear column structure ensures that it is clear what each sex worker charges in pounds, shillings, and pence respectively. There is no illusion of sensibility or sense of discretion: it is explicitly clear that these women are sex workers, and that the prices are their rates. Prices for sexual services are listed as being as much as 20 pounds for 'MRS *Mary H—n*' who is described as 'a tall, graceful, comely Woman, indebted for two thirds of her beauty to Washes and the Patch-box'.[79] However, there is more flexibility if a customer sought the company of Mrs Dorothy E—ds whose price is listed as three zeros in the columns.[80] This does not mean that Dorothy is not charging for her sexual services but rather that 'her prizes are various, and therefore 'tis left to the kind Cully's discretion'.[81] The term 'cully' is industry slang to refer to a sex buyer. Through referring to the customer as a 'kind Cully' the bawdy pamphlet is encouraging generosity through the implication that it would be kind to pay a larger sum.[82] This same sense of care is not shown in *Harris's List*, despite its language of sentiment, and I will show in this chapter how the eighteenth century text encouraged sex buyers to underpay or haggle with the sex workers. *A Catalogue of Jilts,* however, is succinct and direct when providing the details of the workers included. The descriptions of the sex workers were still detailed despite being brief. These entries contain specifics such as 'Mrs Abigail T-y, a tall slender woman, a great frequenter of Covent-Garden Prayers who makes her Devotion a Bawd to her Lust, her price is 10 shillings'.[83] Through the inclusion of both Abigail's price and regular location, the practicality of this form of bawdy pamphlet is evident. Combining

[78] *A Catalogue of Jilts, Cracks, & Prostitutes, Nightwalkers, Whores, She-Friends, Kind Women and Other of the Linnen Lifting Tribe*, 1.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid.
[81] *A Catalogue of Jilts, Cracks, & Prostitutes, Nightwalkers, Whores, She-Friends, Kind Women and Other of the Linnen Lifting Tribe,* 2.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Ibid.

these entries with the functionality of the inventory form reveals the practical uses of *A Catalogue of Jilts*. Although we cannot know with any certainty how these texts were used, it is much clearer to see how a list of this nature could be used to navigate the night-time economies of London than with the more complex form of *Harris's List.* This obvious functionality is missing from *Harris's List.*

In the 1759 *Memoirs of the Celebrated Miss Fanny Murray*, Harris's pimp ledger is described as 'a whole skin of parchment'.[84] This is not the only image of flesh and skin used in relation to Harris and his infamous list. Across the years he continually referred to the skin of the women included in the pages of his list by pointing out the importance of Miss Harriet LL—d's 'skin fair as the swan's neck, and soft as its down' in 1788 and Sarah C—ll—n's 'fine firm piece of flesh' in 1773.[85] This immediately evokes connotations of the flesh market, a term referring to the sexual economy of London. Moreover, it is significant to note that the descriptions of flesh in *Harris's List* are to healthy women. This contrasts with the allusions that were made by both Jonathan Swift in his *A Modest Proposal* and Bernard Mandeville's *A Modest Defence of Publick Stews.* Pamela Cheek has identified a common connection between these two modest texts whereby both authors compare prostitutes with rotting flesh.[86] In continually emphasising the eroticised and healthy quality of the skin that Harris is selling in the pages that form his own flesh market, the author is able to distance himself from conservative eighteenth century anxieties that a sex worker's body is rotting. This notion of rotting bodies is not entirely founded upon moral panic, however, as many sex workers at this time suffered from venereal diseases. As the scholarly work of Noelle Gallagher shows, many sex workers were living with physical disfiguration after

[84] *Memoirs of the Celebrated Miss Fanny Murray*, 67.
[85] *HL 1788,* 82.
HL 1773, 103.
[86] Pamela Cheek, *Sexual Antipodes* (Stanford University Press: Stanford, California, 2003), 105.

encountering a venereal disease.[87] Conditions such as syphilis were obvious as they left physical scarring and deformities on the skin of the sufferer. It is not irrational when faced with a sex worker who has lost their nose or other extremities to sexually transmitted diseases to perceive a false correlation between selling a body for sex and having rotting flesh.

Commentators in the eighteenth century who opposed prostitution often used the language of disease and infection to refer to sex work in the capital. Saunders Welch describes sex workers as a plague that 'infest our streets' and 'swarm the streets of this metropolis'.[88] Verbs such as swarm and infest were commonly used in diatribes against prostitution. Viewing sex work as a disease that plagues an otherwise healthy body reflects the ways in which London itself was conceptualised in the eighteenth century. If the city was a body, this meant that the streets of London could be seen as the veins and arteries that kept urban life flowing steadily, and healthily. Streetwalking, loitering, vagrancy, and solicitation would have disrupted this expected circulation and began to corrupt the system. It is the visible prostitute who sells sex on the street, rather than the sex workers who operate out of brothels and bagnios such as the women of *Harris's List*, who are most vehemently derided and viewed as a physical embodiment of disease that would corrupt London.

Beyond skin and flesh, comparisons to animals reappear throughout *Harris's List*. This dehumanisation and act of transferring animal qualities upon the women of the list is compounded by the visual similarities between *Harris's List* and auction catalogues listing livestock and other items for sale from the eighteenth century. Comparing the 1781 text *A Catalogue of all the valuable Live and Dead Stock Farming Implements, corn, hay, straw, household furniture, and other valuable effects* to the various editions of the catalogue of sex

[87]Noelle Gallagher, *Itch, Clap, Pox: Venereal Disease in the Eighteenth-Century Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019).
[88] Saunders Welch, *A Proposal to Render Effectual a Plan, to Remove the Common Nuisance of Prostitutes from the Streets of the Metropolis,* 7.

workers compiled by Harris reveals some stylistic similarities.[89] Whilst the auction of Alexander Wynch's property does not have a poetic preface, unlike many of the editions of *Harris's List,* it does contain a prefatory list of the conditions of sale. Both the workers included by Harris and the items being auctioned off by the executors are organised by location and type. While *Harris's List* positions women alphabetically in the contents page and then seems to structure the *List* by whim and convenience, the auction catalogue is divided into sections such as 'No. III. Bed Chambers' and 'No. XI. Garden'.[90]

The similarities between the two texts are not unusual. As London grew exponentially across the eighteenth century, so did the city's sexual economy. Sophie Carter notes how 'frequently the rhetoric of the market creeps into descriptions of prostitution in the city'.[91] Carter uses the examples of marketplace analogies in *Nocturnal Revels*, in which a brothel is presented as a 'mart of beauty and prostitution'.[92] Later in the 1779 text, the sex workers that populate this brothel are referred to as 'fresh goods' and even 'the choicest goods that could be had at the market'.[93] This makes explicit the implied terms of referring to prostitution as a marketplace, whereby the bodies of sex workers become the objects that are for sale. This metaphor dehumanises sex workers and presents them as merely a commodity. According to James Caulfield's 1793 *Blackguardiana* the term 'commodity' was often used as slang to refer to 'the private parts of a modest woman, and the public parts of a prostitute'.[94] Both modest women and sex workers alike are viewed as an object or commodity available for

[89] *A Catalogue of all the valuable Live and Dead Stock Farming Implements, corn, hay, straw, household furniture, and other valuable effects.* British Library, C. 194 a.1193.
[90] Ibid., 4, 7.
[91] Carter, *Purchasing Power,* 54.
[92] *Nocturnal Revels; or, the History of the King's Place, and other Modern Nunneries Volume II,* (1779, London: M. Goadby) 18.
[93] Ibid., 75, 46.
[94] Caulfield, *Blackguardiana*, 65.

purchase or trade. This colloquial term is undoubtedly misogynistic, but it does present the marriage market as running parallel to the sex trade.

A Tour to London (1772) builds on the extended metaphor of the sexual economies of London as a marketplace. Sexual tourists are advised that in addition to 'the Women of the Town who ply the Streets' there are other ways for prospective customers to buy sex.[95] The text notes that:

> London has many substantial wholesale dealers, who keep warehouses, in which they are to be found compleat parcels. A warehouse for commodities of this sort goes by the name of a Bagnio; the prices there are fixed, and all passes with as much order and decency as can be expected in commerce of this nature.[96]

If this quote was removed from the context of discussing sex work, it seems as though it could be appropriately applied to any other commercial industry. This highlights the work aspect of sex work and deliberately presents the industry in an unerotic manner.

Whether or not *Harris's List* is seen as being functional or fictional, it existed as a result of viewing prostitution as a business transaction. It acted as a capitalist marketing tool which advertises different sex workers and the brothels or bagnios where they work. *Harris's List* fills the entire page instead of dividing each entry into columns like other bawdy pamphlets. Occasionally, in the main text of the women's descriptions it may include a reference to what a customer could expect to pay. Yet, information about the financial cost of the sexual services is only included in the entry if there is room for negotiation around the price. For example, the 1793 edition of the list identifies Mrs Ha-on as a sex worker whose

[95] M. Grosley, *A Tour to London; or, New Observations on England, and its Inhabitants Volume II,* (London: Lockyer Davis, 1772), 56.
[96] Ibid.

'price is one pound one, but, like many others of the fraternity, will not turn her back on a less sum, she will rather accept a half guinea, than her friend should return home with his burthen'.[97] The exploitation of these women through *Harris's List*'s active encouragement to the punters to underpay them reiterates the danger and precarity facing the women included in the publication who are selling survival sex. 'Survival sex' is a term that is used by sociologists and activists to refer to the acts that sex workers provide because of their extreme needs.[98] This includes exchanging sexual services for basic needs such as food or shelter, or because there is no other way for the individual to earn an income. *Harris's List* is written by at least one known customer of the sex trade. Recommending that other culls and sex buyers devalue the sex workers reflects the complete lack of respect that these educated and literate customers have for the women they interact with.

The practical functionality of the more traditional bawdy pamphlets such as the anonymous broadsheet *A Catalogue of Jilts* was replaced by the longer descriptions of *Harris's List* to give the text a more literary quality. There are precursors: *The Wandering Whore*, a bawdy pamphlet published in five instalments between 1660 and 1661, also incorporates prose and fiction as while it lists the sex workers of London, the conceit of the text is that the list is incorporated into a conversation. *The Wandering Whore* can be read as a part of a convention of 'generalizing satires'.[99] Janet Freeman has included comparisons with two Italian texts; *Tariffa delle puttane di Venegia* (1535) and *Catalogo di tutte le principali et piú gibirate cortigiane di Venezia* (1565). Like *The Wandering Whore,* these texts include real

[97] *HL 1793*, 42.
[98] Molly Smith and Juno Mac, *Revolting Prostitutes: The Fight for Sex worker's Rights* (London: Verso, 2018)
[99] Freeman, "Jack Harris and 'Honest Ranger': The Publication and Prosecution of 'Harris's List of Covent-Garden Ladies, 1760 -95", 424.

names - but these texts also satirise and ridicule the sex industry in a manner that *Harris's List* does not.

The anonymous edited preface to the 1977 collection of the five volumes of *The Wandering Whore* published between 1660 and 1661 notes that 'at least two of the women named were actually in the London trade'.[100] The fact that the workers listed in the columns of *The Wandering Whore* appeared in Samuel Pepys' diary as sex workers also substantiates the authenticity of the list.[101] *The Wandering Whore* is subtitled

> a dialogue between Magdalana, a crafty bawd, Julietta, an exquisite whore, Francion, a lascivious gallant, and Gusman a pimping hector. Discovering their diabolical practises at the Half-Crown Chuck-Office. With an additional list of the names of the crafty bawds, common whores, wanderers, pick-pockets, night-walkers, decoys, hectors, pimps and trappanners.[102]

The language that is used in setting up the conceit of *The Wandering Whore* is very specific. Listing sex workers alongside 'pick-pockets' and using derisive language to refer to prostitutes suggests that this text is not aiding sex workers but is instead actively shaming them. Magdalana is described as a 'crafty bawd', offering the stereotype of a conniving and manipulative brothel madam that the text reiterates.[103] Such stereotypes allow the text to perpetuate the notion that it is condemning sex work instead of promoting it. This is repeated throughout by the negative and offensive language that is used to describe sex workers. Despite establishing a fictional dialogue as the conceit for this list, the list itself acts as a

[100] *The Wandering Whore, numbers 1-5, 1660 -1661* (Exeter: The Rota, 1977), i.
[101] Samuel Pepys, *Diary vol. ix 1668* ed R. C. Latham and W. Matthews (London: Harper Collins, 1976), 132.
[102] *The Wandering Whore* (London: John Garfield, 1660), 1.
[103] Ibid.

bawdy pamphlet as it explicitly identifies and lists the sex workers who operate in certain areas of London. However, it is much more difficult to glean any real specifics from this text when compared to *A Catalogue of Jilts* and *Harris's List*. *The Wandering Whore* calls prostitutes 'poysonous vermaine'.[104] This vitriolic language continues throughout the pamphlet.

The text claims that it was 'Publisht to destroy' the prostitutes included in its pages.[105] Exposure is used as a tool of destruction through damage to their reputation while in *A Catalogue of Jilts* and *Harris's List* this same method of identification becomes a method of promotion for the services offered instead of condemning them. Despite this, *The Wandering Whore* has been described by Keyes Mudge as 'salacious proto-pornography'.[106] Although the text is built upon a misogynistic foundation of dehumanising and whorephobic language, there is an underlying obsession with the sex workers that is also voyeuristic. *The Wandering Whore* is less obviously practical than *A Catalogue of Jilts* as there is no description of the women; the women are only identified by their name and the category that they are grouped under. Without the specificity of details of those included in the list and their location, it seems entirely impractical but not impossible to use *The Wandering Whore* as a tool to navigate the sex industry. The listing of the names invites readers to become customers through initiating conversations with sex workers and sex buyers. Moreover, the existence of *The Wandering Whore* paves the way for texts such as *A Catalogue of Jilts* and later *Harris's List* to be published. Elizabeth Campbell Delinger believes that these lists were most likely published for readers to join in with 'shaming the persons listed' instead of being produced as

[104] *The Wandering Whore*, 1.
[105] Ibid.
[106] Bradford Keyes Mudge, *The Whore's Story: Women, Pornography, and the British Novel, 1684 – 1830,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 227.

an advertising tool.[107] However, she acknowledges that 'proof in any direction is probably not forthcoming'.[108] This question of purpose is one of the fundamental issues at the core of discussions around the genre of bawdy pamphlets. While the inventory form of *A Catalogue of Jilts* suggests a physical connection between the text and the sexual activity that can be seen *Every Night in the Cloysters in Smithfield, from the hours of eight to eleven, during the time of the FAIR,* I have been unable to locate any evidence that this was used as a practical guide. *The Wandering Whore* does not have the same clarity of purpose as *A Catalogue of Jilts*. It seems impractical for *The Wandering Whore* to be used as tool to advertise the sex workers and the bawds of London as it lacks any form of details beyond the category headings. Some of the specific categories such as 'Whippers' could exist as a way for sex buyers to identify women who offer sexual services that align with their personal interests.[109] However, without the specific location or even basic description of the workers, the text seems to distance itself from the physicality of the sex industry. If it was intended to be used as a practical tool to locate and interact with sex workers, it is not very effective or cohesive. If the purpose of the text was instead to publicly name and shame the women included, as Delinger has suggested, then the inclusion of people's full names without censorship under specific and vitriolic headings ensure that there is no doubt about who is included in the pamphlet.

Instead of actively promoting the sex industry, the title page of the first instalment of *The Wandering Whore* states that the sole aim of the text is to expose the sex workers who 'live upon the ruine and destruction of many Families'.[110] Outlining the destruction of the model of a nuclear family and consequentially disrupting traditional familial values as the

[107]Delinger, "The Garment and the Man: Masculine Desire in 'Harris's List of Covent-Garden Ladies' 1764 -1793", 370.
[108] Ibid.
[109] *The Wandering Whore,* 30.
[110] *The Wandering Whore*, 1.

main argument against prostitution was a popular concern within eighteenth century debates around prostitution. These concerns are not just part of a moral panic but belong to a wider conversation around the patriarchy, primogeniture, and legitimacy. However, this pamphlet's claim to have been written 'by a late Convert amongst them' suggests that the moralising fear of promiscuity is at the centre of this text.[111] The 'late Convert' refers to the titular whore who was previously either a sex worker or a brothel madam who had an intimate knowledge of the sex industry and has now been converted to Christian morality. As a result, she is aiming to destroy the sex workers because this industry threatens the nuclear family. Although each volume of this text begins with a dialogue, it quickly changes to reveal columns listing different types of sex workers. This 'perfect list' included a variety of different characters ranging from 'Crafty Bawds', to 'Night-walkers' and even 'Whippers'.[112] *The Wandering Whore* differs from *A Catalogue of Jilts* as it never includes information about what the workers charge. It is different from *Harris's List* as instead of giving any detail or description about the sex workers, the women of *The Wandering Whore* are just named. They are grouped based on their location, but no specific or personal descriptions or information is provided apart from their names. *Harris's List* prioritises the exact inverse as almost all the workers included have their names partially censored and each entry contains a long individual description. Both texts explicitly list sex workers and state their location, but that is where the physical similarities of the form end. However, both *The Wandering Whore* and *Harris's List* can be read for pornographic pleasure which problematises a simplistic reading of the claims of reform – texts by reformed sinners are notorious for offering readings of repentance but also detailed accounts of sin. This makes it difficult to categorise similar

[111] *The Wandering Whore*, 1.
[112] *The Wandering Whore,* 24, 54, 54, 30.

reform texts as being anti-prostitution when the content is created around the idea of telling detailed sexual narratives.

The Realities of the Sex Industry

The serialisation of *The Wandering Whore* set a precedent for the multiple editions of future bawdy pamphlets such as *Harris's List.* Many of the eighteenth century bawdy pamphlets that were competing with *Harris's List* were published as standalone texts rather than as part of a series. *Ranger's Impartial List of Ladies of Pleasure in Edinburgh* was published as a single edition despite announcing intentions to become serialised. It is obvious that there were meant to be additional editions of *Ranger's Impartial List* as the text ends by saying

> in a few Weeks will be published, An impartial list of all the private Ladies that pays sacrifices to Venus, […] to which will be added, some very curious songs, and a few sentimental.[113]

Although I have not been able to find any evidence that a second edition of *Ranger's Impartial List* was published, the intention to create a literary legacy that emulates *Harris's List* is made clear by these final words. If these bawdy pamphlets are to be used as a guide to navigate the sex industry, they are only as effective as they are accurate.

In having multiple volumes and editions, bawdy pamphlets could ensure that the lists of sex workers included in the publications were regularly updated to reflect the current sex industry in London. However, this industry developed a great deal, as in the century between

[113] *Ranger's Impartial List of the Ladies of Pleasure in Edinburgh*, (Edinburgh: Ranger, 1775), 48.

1650 and 1750, the population of London increased by 70%.[114] As a result of this urbanisation, there was an increase in sex workers that continued in cities, and particularly in London, throughout the eighteenth century. Saunders Welch, who was Justice of the Peace for Middlesex and Westminster, wrote *A Proposal to Render Effectual a Plan to Remove the Nuisance of Common Prostitutes from the Streets of the Metropolis* in 1753; it was later published in 1758. As part of his proposal, he discussed how many sex workers he believes were actively working in London during the mid-eighteenth century. This document was written seven years before the first edition of *Harris's List* was published and states that

> PROSTITUTES swarm in the streets of this metropolis to such a degree, and bawdy-houses are kept in such an open and public manner, to the great scandal of our civil polity, that a stranger would think that such practices, instead of being prohibited, had the sanction of the legislature, and that the whole town was one general stew.[115]

A 'stew' is another word for brothel that fell out of fashion at the time of Welch's writing and before *Harris's List* began to be published.[116] The use of unfashionable language indicates that Welch was an outdated writer. As justice of the peace, he epitomised the conservative side of the eighteenth century moral panic around sex work. The argument that the capital city has become overrun with vice is not just a sentiment that is repeated in fictional tropes but is a common rant that was shared amongst conservative commentors.

Viewing London as a city-wide brothel is an attitude that was repeated across texts that focused on the moral panic that came with what Faramerz Dabhoiwala has called the

[114] Maxine Berg, *The Age of Manufactures, 1700-1820: Industry, Innovation and Work in Britain* (London: Routledge, 1994), 94.
[115] Saunders Welch, *A proposal to render effectual a plan to remove the nuisance of common prostitutes from the streets of this metropolis, (London: C. Henderson, 1758), 7.*
[116] *OED Online,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) s.v. "Stew, n.2". accessed Dec 2, 2022, https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/7357122171.

'first sexual revolution'.[117] Dabhoiwala argues that this revolution was a consequence of the large amount of movement from the countryside to the city. Moving from rural landscapes to the urban metropolitan scape meant that there were more places, spaces, and chances for heterosexual couples to meet.[118] The increase in migration from rural to urban spaces also led to a greater level of competition for employment and this level of financial insecurity then further contributed to the increase in the amount of sex workers in cities. Hogarth's *A Harlot's Progress* (1732), a series of six etchings, is commonly used as an example of the typical sex worker's experience of the eighteenth century. It is impossible to reduce the diverse and unique individual experiences to one narrative. However, this does not stop eighteenth century conservative commentators from dividing the diverse and nuanced experiences of sex workers into two reductive camps. Hogarth's Moll Hackabout epitomises the sentimentalised narrative of an innocent young lady from the countryside who is immediately corrupted by the city's vice.

[117] Faramerz Dabhoiwala, *The Origins of Sex: A History of the First Sexual Revolution*, (London: Allen Lane, 2012)
[118] Ibid.

Figure 3: William Hogarth, "A Harlot's Progress, Plate 1". London, 1732. British Museum, Online. Licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

She is surrounded by criminality that is innate to London as scholars have concluded that the bawd Moll is speaking to is Elizabeth Needham and Colonel Francis Charteris is in the background.[119] The significance of these infamous figures is to establish London as a monstrous place for young women. Elizabeth Needham has appeared in a variety of different literary and print depictions including Alexander Pope's 1728 poem *The Dunciad.* She had a reputation as a notorious procuress who would deceive young virgins and put them into positions where they were vulnerable to rape and assault by upper class men such as Colonel Charteris. Charteris was a renowned rapist. In 1730, a biography was written about his life

[119] Fergus Linnane, *London – The Wicked City: A Thousand Years of Prostitution and Vice* (London: Robson, 2007), 110.

titled *Some Authentick Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Ch---s, Rape-Master-General of Great Britain, by an impartial hand.* In 1731, Needham was arrested for running a brothel and was sent to the pillory where she faced the public outrage and abuse. She died three days later.[120] Placing Moll in the context of these criminals increases the threat that she faced, whilst also comparing her natural virtue through a lack of corruption with London's vice. Laura Rosenthal discusses common innuendo and euphemism to argue that there was a direct link between the commercial economy of the metropolitan city when compared with the rural. Terms such as to 'go upon the town' and to be a 'woman of the town' conflate sex work with concepts of the urban.[121] Rosenthal argues that Hogarth's progress narrative 'links urbanization, mobile labour, and prostitution as part of the same movement, allegorized in *A Harlot's Progress* by the journey from country to city.'[122] As soon as Moll Hackabout arrives in the city, she is greeted by London's sexual industry. This instant corruption replaces the typical role of a male seducer who corrupted her innocence, as the city itself debauches and ruins Moll immediately upon her arrival.

Moll Hackabout was already synonymous with the sex industry at large because of her name. The name Moll became inextricable from the sex industry and sexual deviance from heteronormativity in the eighteenth century. The *Oxford English Dictionary* shows that the name Moll was used to refer to 'women; esp. a prostitute' from as early as 1604.[123] A series of infamous bawds and sex workers throughout the eighteenth century including Moll King (1696 - 1747), the proprietress of King's Coffee House in Covent Garden, and Defoe's fictional Moll Flanders (1722), cemented these implications. Rictor Norton has discussed

[120] Linnane, *London*, 110.
[121] Laura Rosenthal, *Infamous Commerce: Prostitution in Eighteenth-Century British Literature and Culture* (London: Cornell University Press, 2006), 12.
[122] Ibid.
[123] *OED Online,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) s.v. "moll, n.2". accessed Dec 2, 2022, https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/120896?rskey=1G7nXa&result=1&isAdvanced=false

how there are suggestions that homosexual safe spaces and communities became known as Molly Houses as a reference to kind brothel madams such as Moll King.[124] Hogarth chose the surname Hackabout in a reference to Kate Hackabout, who was the sister to the highway man Francis Hackabout and was arrested in a brothel raid. This surname provided further euphemism as hack was also slang for a sexually promiscuous woman as it referred to a hackney carriage which is available to hire.[125] Although Moll Hackabout arrived in London as a pious virgin, the construction of her name proves that she was always fated to progress into the sex industry.

Tony Henderson estimates that 60% of London's sex workers had emigrated to the capital from either Ireland or the countryside.[126] However, Henderson goes on to argue that these statistics do not comply with the established narrative of London's vice corrupting a young country woman as she migrates from the countryside to the capital. Instead, he concludes that these percentages are reflective of the increasingly diverse London population, particularly those who were considered part of the urban poor.[127] As sex work is a profession with very little barriers to employment and workers can be entirely self-employed, many of this diverse urban poor entered the oldest profession.

Saunders Welch claims that the number of women 'whose sole dependence is upon prostitution, be computed at only 3000, a number which, I am convinced, falls far short from the truth'.[128] While he admits that he believes that it is a conservative estimate, 3000 women selling survival sex still is a high number. However, in 1800, Patrick Colquhoun, a magistrate

[124] Rictor Norton, *Mother Clap's Molly House: The Gay Subculture in England, 1700-1830* (London: Gay Men's Press, 1992).
[125] Jenny Uglow, *Hogarth: A Life and a World* (London: Faber and Faber, 1997), 196.
[126] Henderson, *Disorderly Women in Eighteenth-Century London*, 42.
[127] Ibid.
[128] Welch, *A proposal to render effectual a plan to remove the nuisance of common prostitutes from the streets of this metropolis,* 13.

who was interested in regulating lifestyles that were seen as leading to crime,[129] estimated that around 50,000 women were involved in sex work and many 'seem to have no alternative, but to become the miserable instruments of promoting and practising that species of seduction and immorality, of which they themselves were the victims'.[130] Colquhoun's research in *A Treatise on the Police of the Metropolis* lists four different categories of sex workers and states the estimated amount of women who could be classified as these types.

1. Of the class of Well Educated women it is earnestly hoped the number does not exceed 2,000
2. Of the class composed of persons above the rank of Menial Servants perhaps 3,000
3. Of the class who may have employed as Menial Servants, or seduced in very early life, it is conjectured in all parts of the town, including Wapping, and the streets adjoining the River, there may not be less, who live wholly by Prostitution than 20,000
4. Of those indifferent ranks in Society, who live partly by Prostitution, including the multitudes of low females, who cohabit with labourers and others without matrimony, there may be in all, in the Metropolis, about 25,000.[131]

The women that Welch referenced in his 1753 survey would fall under category 3. Instead of the 25,000 women that Colquhoun estimates are selling survival sex in London, Bridget Hill

[129] Ruth Paley, "Colquhoun, Patrick (1745 – 1820), magistrate and a founder of the Thames police." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.* 23 September 2004; Accessed 20 December 2022.
[130] Patrick Colquhoun, *A Treatise on the Police of the Metropolis; containing a detail of the various crimes and misdemeanours by which public and private property and security are, at present, injured and endangered: and suggesting remedies for their prevention* (London: Joseph Mawman, 1800), 335.
[131] Ibid., 340.

estimates that by the end of the century there were over 10,000 sex workers just in London.[132] This is still an exceptionally large number but seems to be much more realistic than Colquhoun's hyperbolic statistics. Hill's realistic valuation puts Colquhoun's in perspective and reiterates that despite sex work being an extremely common career during the late eighteenth century in London, it was not the epidemic that certain conservative writers depict it as. No bawdy pamphlet would be able to successfully list every sex worker as the industry is constantly changing. Even by confining itself to the specific area of Covent-Garden, *Harris's List* is unable to include every sex worker; therefore, it became a series as the second edition included the women who complained at being excluded from the first.

Dabhoiwala argues that

> by the middle of the eighteenth century, as a by-product of the advance of sexual liberty for men, the scope and visibility of prostitution had increased significantly. The view that it should be tolerated had become widely accepted. So too had the idea that prostitutes were usually the victims of seduction and abandonment.[133]

This idea that the sex workers entered the industry because they were either seduced or abandoned fits entirely with the third category of Welch's survey. However, Welch's categories acknowledge that there was a nuanced understanding of what motivated sex workers to enter the industry. Across the eighteenth century the assumption that sex workers were objects of pity was still popular but was challenged by other understandings of the complexity of the industry. Moreover, as Dabhoiwala acknowledges, it was not simply the size of the sex industry that expanded over the eighteenth century, but also the visibility and

[132]Bridget Hill, *Women, Work and Sexual Politics in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 1993), 173.
[133] Dabhoiwala, *The Origins of Sex,* 255-256.

prominence of sex workers across London that increased. This reiterates the idea that the capital was becoming a city-wide brothel because of the decrease in discretion amongst both sex workers and sex buyers. Although Welch's reported estimate of 3000 was admittedly an under-estimate, it is still in stark comparison with the 20,000 women who less than fifty years later were living 'wholly by Prostitution'.[134] This 566% increase is extraordinary and reveals just how extreme the changes to the sex industry and the metropolis were across the eighteenth century.

In April 1760 the *London Magazine* stated that the prostitutes listed in the inaugural edition of *Harris's List* were 'frightful, and smell strongly of paints, pills, bolus's, and every venereal slop'.[135] This is not the most complimentary nor titillating description of female sex workers if the text was to be used either as a practical guide or read as erotica. This misogynistic and derogatory language reflects an attitude of disgust and revulsion that was commonly held during the mid eighteenth century. The sex industry was completely revolutionised over the course of the century between the first publication of *The Wandering Whore* in 1660 to the final edition of *Harris's List* in 1794. It therefore follows that *Harris's List* needs to be equally as mutable and modern to keep up with the changing scene in the sexual market and remain a successful text in its field. While *A Catalogue of Jilts* only included twenty-two women, *Harris's List* had a much larger pool of sex workers to include as it was not constrained by the spatial limitations of confining a comprehensive list of London's sex workers to a single page. By remaining adaptable to the changing attitudes of the public, specifically the literate and educated public, *Harris's List* ensured that the text matured annually with its readership. Moving away from the practicality of the inventory-

[134] Dabhoiwala, *The Origins of Sex,* 255-256.
[135] *London Magazine* (April 1760)

style bawdy pamphlets and the naming conventions of the earlier texts, *Harris's List* renovated the genre of bawdy pamphlets by incorporating a distinctly literary form.

'Mr. H-s, the celebrated negociator in women': *Harris's List* and Jack Harris's Pimp Ledger

Jack Harris was already infamous for his involvement in London's sex industry before the first edition of *Harris's List* was published. One of the earliest references to him is in the whore biography *Memoirs of the Celebrated Miss Fanny Murray. Interspersed with the Intrigues and Amours of Several Eminent Personages. Founded on Real Facts.* There are two different allusions to Jack Harris included in the account of Fanny's life. The first takes place when Miss Murray is an orphaned 12-year-old selling nosegays in Bath. This was where she was 'first taken notice of by the celebrated Jack – of libertine memory, and he soon found means to seduce that innocence'.[136] Harris re-appears in Fanny's life a few years later, yet instead of being the 'proverbial rake' that had seduced the young girl, Jack was now 'Mr. H-s, the celebrated negociator in women'.[137] *Memoirs of the Celebrated Miss Fanny Murray* was published in 1759. As mentioned in the introduction, there have been some claims by historians - including Hallie Rubenhold - that the serialisation started in 1757, but this has been contested by scholars such as Janet Ing Freeman in her article "Jack Harris and 'Honest Ranger': The Publication and Prosecution of Harris's List of Covent-Garden Ladies, 1760-95". The first mention of *Harris's List* to appear in *The Public Advertiser* is from 1760, so I am tracking *Harris's List* from 1760 until its final edition in 1794.

[136] *Memoirs of the Celebrated Miss Fanny Murray*, 13-14.
[137] Ibid., 67.

However, *Memoirs of the Celebrated Miss Fanny Murray* contained explicit and detailed reference to not only Jack Harris as a figure but also his list in 1759:

> [Jack Harris] applied to get her enrolled upon his parchment list, as a *new face;* though, properly speaking, she had now been upon the town near four years. […] However, the ceremony was performed with all the punctilios attending that great institution; a surgeon being present for a compleat examination of her person, and to report her well or ill, and a lawyer to engross her name &c. after having signed a written agreement to forfeit twenty pounds, if she gave the negociator a wrong information concerning the state of her health in every particular. Then her name was ingrossed upon a whole skin of parchment.[138]

I believe that this is not evidence of a version of *Harris's List* existing before 1760, but instead is a reference to Harris's personal pimp ledger. Fanny Murray was one of the most celebrated and renowned courtesans of her time. It has even been suggested that she served as inspiration for Cleland's *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure; or, Fanny Hill* which was published in 1749, at the very height of her infamy.[139] To suggest that she needed the help of a catalogue of sex workers to improve her celebrity would seem to be incongruous with her own life, and yet that is exactly what her memoir does.

The details in *Harris's List* not only unite the text with the glamour of one of the most recognised courtesans of the day, but also reassures sex buyers that the sex workers included in the list have been held to the highest standards in terms of sexual and physical health.

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[138] *Memoirs of the Celebrated Miss Fanny Murray*, 67.
[139] Lujo Bassermann, *The oldest profession: a history of prostitution*, (New York: Dorset Press, 1993), 148.

Harris's List offers an implied guarantee that the women included in the text are assessed by medical professionals through the inclusion of Harris's name in the title. This acts as an assurance that if sex buyers were to use *Harris's List* to seek recommendations for sex workers, then they would not be risking their health in doing so. It is an occupational hazard of prostitution that leaves sex workers more likely to incur a sexually transmitted disease. Noelle Gallagher has noted the eighteenth century phenomenon of depicting sex workers as suffering from venereal illness as the image of the 'poxy whore'.[140]

This trope of the physically deformed prostitute was commonplace in both literature and satirical prints at the same time as Harris was building his procuring empire.[141] Gallagher argues that 'when venereal disease enters the terms of insult, *only* the prostitute is targeted' placing the onus on the female sex workers to be honest about their sexual health.[142] As a consequence Fanny Murray's memoir contains an extended scene to reassure readers that the women who are recommended by Harris are in a state of good health. This challenges the preconceptions of prostitutes as being condemned by their profession to suffer from sexual disease but also, more importantly in the context of Harris's readership, it acts as a level of security for culls who want to buy sexual services as they are told about the level of scrutiny the women compiled by Harris experience. This passage may have been written to challenge the claims made by an anonymous poetical satire from 1757 titled *The Age of Dullness* which makes the claim that 'the man of gallantry bribes *Harris* high, // That with the pimp's pox'd strumpet he may lie'.[143] The notion that Harris was earning a profit through facilitating intimate meetings between sex buyers and prostitutes who were suffering with venereal disease would have damaged his credibility and reputation as a pimp. Therefore, this detailed

[140] Gallagher, *Itch, Clap, Pox*, 62.
[141] See Henry Fielding's *Amelia* (1752) and Thomas Rowlandson's *A Bawd on Her Last Legs* (1798) for examples.
[142] Gallagher, *Itch, Clap, Pox,* 66.
[143] *The Age of Dullness* (London, 1757), 18.

story of Harris'sinspection of Fanny Murray's health and cleanliness works as an anecdote which is presented as factual. Although there is some dubious behaviour as Murray is listed as 'a *new face*' despite being a well-established and recognised worker in the sex industry, this moment of due diligence rehabilitates the pimp's career.[144] The fear of sexually transmitted diseases haunts the pages of *Harris's List* across the various editions.

Julie Peakman has noted that personal hygiene standards were not always a priority for sex workers.[145] Therefore, when a woman is more conscientious about maintaining vaginal cleanliness the writers of the list tend to focus on it. Miss Harriette J-n-s is featured in the 1788 edition of *Harris's List* and is described as a 'more desirable bed-fellow' as a result of her 'motives of cleanliness'.[146] This focus on cleanliness is directly related to the descriptions of the women's skin. By the 1793 edition of the list the terminology centred on a woman's 'complexion' as this word appears twenty times in the text whilst 'skin' is found nine times.[147] In the 1786 edition the word 'skin' is only used three times, but 'complexion' is repeated an impressive forty-nine times.[148] By emphasising the women's complexion consistently throughout the editions the list is able to reassure readers and potential sex buyers that they will not be exposed to women with the visible markers of sexually transmitted diseases such as syphilis that were rife in the eighteenth century. This is an important practical consideration that highlights *Harris's List*'s functionality in its deft incorporation of eroticised descriptions of the sex workers with reassurance that the sex workers will not be exposing their customers to venereal diseases.

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[144] *Memoirs of the Celebrated Miss Fanny Murray*, 67.
[145] Julie Peakman, *Lascivious Bodies; A Sexual History of the Eighteenth Century* (London: Atlantic Books, 2005), 13.
[146] *HL 1788,* 35.
[147] *HL 1793.*
[148] *Harris's List of Covent-Garden Ladies; or, Man of Pleasure's Kalendar for the year 1786,* (London: H. Ranger, 1786).

Referring to Harris's ledger as a 'skin of parchment' is an interesting lexical choice as Harris is synonymous with the sex trade which means that he is involved in the skin trade.[149] The sensuality of skin combined with the use of the expensive parchment rather than cheaper options reiterates the fact that Fanny Murray is a courtesan rather than a street sex worker. It is important to note however, that although the class and status that defined much of the eighteenth century's social structures are also evident in sex work terminology of this period, prostitution still bore a powerful social stigma. Twenty-first century activists for sex worker's rights refer to the whorearchy of sex work.[150] This portmanteau of whore and hierarchy provides insight into how different types of sex work face various levels of threat and stigma. Julie Peakman states that 'unmarried women who had sex with their long-term partners, those who had casual sex with strangers, women 'kept' by richer men who were paid in gifts and rent, and professional sex workers who sold sex for money' were all seen as prostitutes by eighteenth century society.[151] It would be reductive and incorrect to argue that there was no whorearchy in the eighteenth century as kept women, courtesans, and those who sold survival sex all lived different lives. However, all these categories were viewed ubiquitously as prostitutes and as a result were excluded from and judged by certain parts of society. While she was undoubtedly a sex worker, as a woman in the public's eye Fanny Murray's memoir was one of the first texts in the emerging genre of whore biographies and part of the appeal of this text was to learn more about the titillating glamour and eroticism of life as a courtesan.

Aligning Murray with Harris and sensual luxuries reiterates that, although both characters are inextricable from London's night-time economy, they retain a sense of exclusivity around them. Making Murray demonstrate her physical health in front of a doctor

[149] *Memoirs of the Celebrated Miss Fanny Murray*, 67.
[150] Smith and Mac, *Revolting Prostitutes,* 32.
[151] Julie Peakman, *Amatory Pleasures: Explorations in Eighteenth-Century Sexual Culture* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016), 20.

offers a sense of security for the sex buyer based on his knowledge of the due diligence conducted by Harris in both his personal pimp ledger and his assumed continuation of this research in his list. However, it also highlights the power inequalities of this exchange as while Murray is the one selling her services, Harris is credited with discovering her despite being the one to debauch her years ago. This is reiterated by the fact that he includes her in his list as 'a new face'; even the memoir destabilises Harris's reputation here by challenging this declaration by noting that 'she had now been upon the town near four years'.[152] The hypocrisy here is stark as there is a lawyer present to ensure that Murray does not give any false information while Harris is able to freely include what he wants, even if that includes exaggerating Murray's inexperience while she was already an established courtesan on the circuit. Harris's intertextual relationship with Murray extended to the book itself, as the 1761 edition of *Harris's List* held by the National Library of Scotland includes an advertisement of 'new books sold by H. Ranger'.[153] Listed between two memoirs detailing the life and adventures of Kitty Fisher sits *Memoirs of the celebrated Miss Fanny M---y.* The two volumes would cost six shillings if the reader wanted the text bound, and five if it was just sewn.[154] According to the national archives currency converter, this would cost approximately two days of labour for a skilled tradesman.[155] Offering the text in both the bound and unbound form does not necessarily mean that the publisher was making a more affordable edition easily available for members of the lower economic classes but instead suggests that some consumers of whore biographies intend to add the text to their collection of books whilst others were content with having the memoir remain in it's original, unbound, and more

[152] *Memoirs of the Celebrated Miss Fanny Murray*, 67.
[153] *HL 1761*, 130.
[154] *HL 1761*, 130.
[155] The National Archives, "National Archives Currency Converter 1760," Currency converter (The National Archives, November 28, 2018), https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency-converter/#currency-result.

ephemeral format. Both *Harris's List* and Fanny Murray's memoir were sold together as texts of sexual adventure and would have shared a similar readership.

'Pimp-general to the People of England': Jack Harris, John Harrison, and Samuel Derrick

Despite his reputation for debauchery and procurement preceding him, Jack Harris did not really exist. A note accompanying *Nocturnal Revels* (1779) states that 'no such man as Harris (as he is called) a Pimp, now, or probably ever did exist'.[156] Hallie Rubenhold has argued that he is a fictionalised version of John Harrison, the head waiter at The Shakespear's Head Tavern.[157] In 1759, while Harrison was serving time in Newgate prison for procuring sex workers, a pamphlet was written by Dr John Hill titled *The Remonstrance of Harris, Pimp-general to the People of England.*[158] The subtitle of this publication established that this text was 'setting forth his many schemes in Town and Country, for the Service of the Public, and the Ungrateful Treatment he has met with'.[159] Establishing Harris as the Pimp-General of all England created the image of an omniscient and sympathetic pimp who was intimately associated with London's sex industry as it grew. Describing Harrison's imprisonment for procurement as 'ungrateful treatment' satirically implies that his 'service of the public' was a selfless act.[160] This fictional persona was monetised through enlisting writers, including Samuel Derrick, to create *Harris's List*.[161]

Although Freeman contests claims that Samuel Derrick was the author of the *List,* the arguments put forward by Rubenhold and other scholars make a compelling case for his

[156] *Nocturnal Revels; or, The History of King's-Place and other Modern Nunneries* (London, 1779), ii.
[157] Rubenhold, *The Covent Garden Ladies*, 24.
[158] J. Hill, *The Remonstrance of Harris, Pimp-General to the People of England* (London: J. Fleming, 1759).
[159] Ibid.
[160] Ibid.
[161] Rubenhold, *The Covent Garden Ladies,* 30.

authorship. Indeed, Norma Clark states that the fact that 'Derrick was thought at the time to be the author is not in doubt'.[162] In April 1769, *Town and Country Magazine* explained in an article on Derrick's life that he had 'produced the first edition of Harris's List' in order to avoid the debtors prison.[163] Cuthbert Shaw had then recently published *The Race* (1766), a poem which described various writers of the eighteenth century competing for celebrity and renown through running. Samuel Derrick was well regarded enough to be included in this text. His character begins by describing his position as a master of the ceremonies in Bath before asserting:

> Nay, let me urge a more important claim,
> Twas I first gave the strumpets' list to fame,
> Their age, size, qualities, if brown or fair,
> Whose breath was the sweetest, whose the brightest hair,
> Displayed each various dimple, smile and frown,
> Pimp-generalissimo to all the town!
> From this what vast advantages accrue!
> Thus each may chuse the maid of partial hue;
> Know to whose bed he has the best pretensions,
> And buy the Venus of his own *dimensions.*[164]

The reference to 'the famed strumpet's list' is clearly a direct reference to *Harris's List* and Derrick's involvement in establishing the franchise. The poem asserts that his role in the creation and publication of the *List* was more significant than his responsibilities as a master

[162] Norma Clark, *Brothers of the Quill: Oliver Goldsmith in Grub Street,* (Cambridge: Havard University Press, 2016), 365, number 13.
[163] "Life of a Deceased Monarch: Anecdotes of the Life of Samuel Derrick, Esq; late Master of the Ceremonies at Bath", *Town and Country Magazine,* 1 April 1769, 177 – 180, 179.
[164] Cuthbert Shaw, *The Race. By Mercurius Spur, Esq; with notes. By Faustinus Scriblerus,* (London: W. Flexney, 1766), 34 – 35.

of ceremonies in Bath. These lines of poetry align Samuel Derrick with Jack Harrison by referring to the former as 'Pimp-generalissimo to all the town'.[165] This establishes Derrick as a microcosm of Harrison who was known indiscriminately as 'Pimp-general to the People of England'.[166] This backhanded compliment praises Derrick for his work on the *List* but also limits his celebrated wit and literary legacy to London. Meanwhile, the figure whose name is inextricable from the text is known as being a pimp for all of England. Derrick's political significance is discredited through praising the *List* above his ceremonial responsibilities, and then he is snubbed by Shaw again as his sphere of influence is restricted to 'all the town'.[167] This stanza advertises *Harris's List* and the sex workers of London more than it focuses on Derrick. Prostitutes are once again reduced to commodities that are available to suit any preference of potential sex buyers. The line that states that customers could 'buy the Venus of his own *dimensions*' encapsulates the practical uses of the *List*.[168] While Shaw does use cruder language such as 'strumpet', he embodies Derrick through referring to sex workers as 'Venus' or a 'maid'. *Harris's List* increasingly repackages sex work in the language of gentility. As Shaw notes, Derrick is not just acting as a writer in the construction of the *List* but is selling personalised erotic fantasies. The sex worker is not available to be literally bought, but her time and sexual services are.

Derrick was known for his debauchery, and was a sexual mentor to James Boswell. It is thought to have been Derrick that arranged Boswell's 'sexual initiation'.[169] Boswell's legacy and character are commonly associated with his overt sexuality and his notoriously hedonistic behaviour, so Derrick's mentoring reflects his importance in London's sexual

[165] Shaw, *The Race*, 35.
[166] J. Hill, *The Remonstrance of Harris, Pimp-General to the People of England* (London: J. Fleming, 1759).
[167] Shaw, *The Race,* 35.
[168] Ibid.
[169] Frederick A. Pottle, *Boswell's London Journal, 1762 – 1763* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950), 18.

economies. In 1763, Boswell referred to Derrick as a 'little blackguard pimping dog'.[170] Derrick was born in Dublin but migrated to London to attempt to pursue an acting career.[171] Although his career on the stage was unsuccessful, he sustained a relationship with the theatre community through his writing career and his relationship with the married actress Jane Lessinham.[172] Theatre and sex work was deeply interconnected in the eighteenth century and the apex of both was Covent Garden and the surrounding areas. This will be explored in detail in the next chapter.

Despite Derrick's own infamy, it was the legacy of the name Harris that gave the text a sense of authenticity and legitimacy, and the earliest editions of the text in 1760 and 1761 all contained a printed signature. As the list developed over the years the figures of Harrison and Harris remained separate individuals. Harrison is thought to have died in December 1793, which meant that only one edition of the list was printed outside of his lifetime. The final 1794 edition coincided with legal trials of the booksellers who tried to sell it (this will be discussed more in the next chapter). The combination of both Harrison's death and the increasing challenges of avoiding charges of obscenity and libel meant that the list meant a logical and cohesive end point.

Rubenhold has argued that John Harrison would have received a cursory payment from Samuel Derrick for the use of his name and reputation as an iconic pimp in the lists.[173] As he did not receive any financial renumeration from the series, Harrison wrote a rival publication to compete with *Harris's List* in 1766. Harrison's *Kitty's Attalantis* emulated the form of *Harris's List* and the women included ranged from 'elite courtesans down to the

[170] Pottle, *Boswell's London Journal, 1762 – 1763*, 20.
[171] R. D. E. Eagles, "Derrick, Samuel (1724 – 1769), author." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography,* 23 September 2004, accessed 2 March 2021.
[172] Ibid.
[173] Rubenhold, *The Covent Garden Ladies,* 125

common streetwalkers.' [174] While the form and intention was similar between the texts, *Kitty's Attalantis* lacked the creative and literary flare of *Harris's List*; it was not commercially successful and did not have a second print run. Titling the rival bawdy list *Kitty's Attalantis* draws upon *Harris's List*'s original subtitle of the *New Atalantis* and alludes to the many renowned courtesans and sex workers named Kitty. None were more famous, however, than Kitty Fisher. The infamous incident when Fisher fell off of her horse in St. James's Park is described in her whore memoir, *The Uncommon Adventures of Miss Kitty F****r* (1759). This fall provided anyone walking in the park a 'favourable opportunity of viewing those charms which decency dictates should be hidden'.[175] This description could also be applied to both *Harris's List* and *Kitty's Attalantis* as both texts provide readers with an ability to view the sex industry and the workers that operate in this field in a new manner.

The title of *Harris's List* uses the possessive to present the list as belonging to Harris himself, recalling Rubenhold's argument that *Harris's List* is based on John Harrison's own personal pimp ledger. However, she also recognises that over the course of the text's publication history the book had 'evolved over the decades from his prototype and Derrick's prose would appear virtually unrecognisable […] as he [Harrison] opened its slim leather cover, he could see within an instant how far the publication had strayed from his own bulging ledger of women'.[176] Creating *Harris's List* from Harrison's pimp ledger has allowed the literary stylings of journalists such as Derrick to embellish the entries that Harris had acquired. When he inducts Fanny Murray into the list, the only information that is mentioned as being inscribed into the ledger is her name. Perhaps Harris's original pimp ledger would

[174] Julie Peakman, "*Kitty's Attalantis* (1766)" In *Whore Biographies*, Vol.4, ed. Julie Peakman, 391-450, (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2006): 391.
[175] *The Uncommon Adventures of Miss Kitty F****r Part II,* (London, 1757), 19.
[176] Rubenhold, *The Covent Garden Ladies*, 294.

have replicated the format of *A Catalogue of Jilts* before it was transformed by poets and other writers into the text that survives today.

Honest Ranger: *Harris's List of Covent-Garden Ladies* and *Ranger's Impartial List of Ladies of Pleasure in Edinburgh*

In 1775 *Ranger's Impartial List of Ladies of Pleasure in Edinburgh* was published. This publication was stylistically based on *Harris's List* and the title of *Ranger's Impartial List* immediately aligns the text with the London catalogue, as the former was published for Honest Ranger of Fleet Street. The fact that it had adopted the moniker of Ranger acknowledges Harris's influence over the sex industry across Britain. To borrow a modern term, Harris becomes a type of franchise. Although the two lists are undeniably linked, the legacy of Ranger pre-dates the connection with Jack Harris, as the word 'ranger' had become associated with rakish behaviour. The Oxford English Dictionary defines ranger as 'a rover, a wanderer; †a rake'.[177] This definition links male seduction with walking, which reflects the purpose of the list itself as *Ranger's Impartial List* was designed with the practicality of walking around Edinburgh in mind.

As Janet Ing Freeman has shown, Ranger has a theatrical connection as Benjamin Hoadley's *The Suspicious Husband* (1747) featured a character who calls himself 'Honest Ranger'.[178] Freeman notes that this name was used in bookselling before *Harris's List*, as the pseudonym of 'Honest Ranger of Bedford-Row' was given to the author of *Ranger's Progress: Consisting of a Variety of Poetical Essays, Moral, Serious, Comic, and Satyrical* (1759), two years before the first edition of the *List* was published. Its poetical essays cover a

[177] *OED Online,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) s.v. "Ranger, n.1". accessed Sept 1, 2021, https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/7311005675.
[178] Freeman "Jack Harris and 'Honest Ranger': The Publication and Prosecution of Harris's List of Covent-Garden Ladies, 1760–95*",* 435.

variety of topics and, while sex work is not explicitly discussed, Ranger's obsession with women and sexuality is an omnipresent theme. The first essay in the collection is titled "RANGER's *early Affection* for the *Fair Sex*" and begins with the opening stanza:

> SINCE first I drew my Mother's Breast,
> Upon my honour I protest,
> Women have me delighted.
> For I had scarce been born an Hour,
> But was, by some peculiar Pow'r,
> To love the Fair incited.[179]

This is the first introduction to the figure of Honest Ranger who would become synonymous with *Harris's List*. The anonymous author establishes on the very first page that Honest Ranger is infatuated with women and sex and has been since infancy.

Ranger's Impartial List did not exactly replicate the formula favoured and popularised by Harris, although the same sentimental language was used. Whilst the London text focuses on the individual sex workers, *Ranger's Impartial List* discusses these women in the grouped context of the brothels and other establishments where purveyors of the sex industry could find them. The most distinct difference between the two is that there is never a poetic couplet used as a subtitle for the Edinburgh workers whilst this is commonplace for their London peers. Removing the poetic elements of the entries distances *Ranger's Impartial List* from the central criticism of *Harris's List* as functionality is prioritised over readability. *Ranger's Impartial List* is much more direct and typical of the bawdy pamphlets of the Restoration Period discussed earlier. In the 1980 facsimile reproductions compiled by Paul Harris, there is a map detailing the Edinburgh of the eighteenth century. The pencilled marginalia on the

[179] *Ranger's Progress: Consisting of a Variety of Poetical Essays, Moral, Serious, Comic, and Satyrical,* (London: H. Ranger, 1759), 1.

flyleaf copy of *Ranger's Impartial List of the Ladies of Pleasure in Edinburgh* held by the National Library of Scotland asserts that James Tytler was the author.[180] Due to Tytler's enthusiasm for ballooning he was often referred to as Balloon Tytler.[181] Before his first flight, however, he became the editor of the second edition of *Encyclopaedia Britannica* where the collection expanded from three volumes to ten – and the majority of the new entries were written by Tytler himself. This encyclopaedic experience may have helped with the compilation of sex workers to form *Ranger's Impartial List*. While *Harris's List* is defending itself against claims of fictionality, *Ranger's Impartial List* challenges arguments that it is a biased representation of Edinburgh's night-time industries.

The 1761 edition of *Harris's List* insists on the authors' neutrality in the decision surrounding who is included in the text, and the 1773 publication reiterates in the entry of Miss Graston that the writers have 'more than once mentioned our impartiality'.[182] Indeed,

> Affection or interest shall have no sway or bias with us. The task we have undertaken oblige us to be impartial, and the public may be satisfied that thro' the whole of this performance we shall strictly adhere to truth as far as we can get to the knowledge of it; and that we shall entirely follow our own opinion in the characters we give: if they may not tally with those of our readers, we hope they will do us the justice to believe that we write divested of all prejudice either for or against the parties.[183]

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[180] *Ranger's Impartial List of the Ladies of Pleasure in Edinburgh, With a Preface by a Celebrated Wit,* (Edinburgh: Printed for the author, 1775) shelfmark Ry.II.g.23
[181] Meg Russell, "Tytler, James [called Balloon Tytler] (1745 – 1804), balloonist and radical", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.* 23 Sep 2004. Accessed 21 Mar. 2023 https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-27967.
[182] *HL 1773,* 2.
[183] *HL 1773*, 2-3.

This entry acts as a preface for this year's edition and the primary concern is the authenticity, reliability, and impartiality of the text. References to affection and interest imply that there are doubts about the objectivity of a publication that deals with sex workers as some of the more positive and flattering entries may be given to women who have had relationships, sexual or not, with the compilers of the text. *Ranger's Impartial List* establishes itself using the conventions of *Harris's List* but also recognises some of the pitfalls of the more popular London editions as it emphasises its own impartiality and objectivity in the main title.

The preface of *Ranger's Impartial List* borrows a regularly repeated introduction to *Harris's List* that first appeared in 1760. In addition to *Ranger's Impartial List,* this preface is seen in 1761, 1767, 1771, 1775, 1787, 1789, and 1790 editions.[184] This introduction is dramatic and spans over nine pages. In 1761, the *List* begins by justifying the inclusion of this 'remarkable introduction prefixed to our first part' as it was 'universally admired'.[185] The later editions of *Harris's List* begin with an addendum saying:

> As a treat to the fair Votary of Love, and a Spur to the wanton Youths, that revell in their soft Embraces, we have taken the Liberty of inserting the following Introduction, which tho' it has once before made its Appearance, must, from its date, be almost forgotten; its genuine merit we flatter ourselves, will serve as an apology for its insertion, and the just remarks which it contains, will gain the approbation of all the Cyprian Choir.[186]

[184] Parsons and Dale, "Harris's List of Covent-Garden Ladies (1760 – 1794): New Copies and New Evidence regarding its History", 475.
[185] *HL 1761,* viii.
[186] *Harris's List of Covent-Garden Ladies; or, Man of Pleasure's Kalender, for the Year, 1787* (London: H. Ranger, 1787), 22.

The introduction to *Ranger's Impartial List* was emphasised by the text's subtitle which advertised the bawdy pamphlet as containing 'a preface by a celebrated wit'.[187] A decade later and the writers responsible for *Harris's List* maintained that the introduction was well written. The celebrated wit remains anonymous but, as we have seen, many contemporaries would have assumed that it was written by Samuel Derrick. While he was known for his sense of humour while he was alive, the posthumous publication of texts such as *Derrick's Jests; or, the Wits Chronicle* (1769) elevated his wit to a position of infamy.[188] The premise of the introduction is centred around the claim that 'to attempt a suppression of this almighty impulse [sexual desire] in the human species would be a task as rash and idle as to bid the hills touch Heaven'.[189] It highlights the wide reach of Harris as the introduction does not focus on sex work or buying sexual services. Instead, Harris and Ranger are both associated with erotic sentiment and feeling more generally.

[187] *Ranger's Impartial List of the Ladies of Pleasure in Edinburgh, with a preface by a celebrated wit,* ed. Paul Harris, (Edinburgh: Paul Harris Publishing, 1978).
[188] Samuel Derrick, *Derrick's Jests; or, the Wits Chronicle. Containing a pleasing variety of repartees, puns, bon-mots, and other species of wit and humour, which passed between Samuel Derrick, Esq; Late Master of the Ceremonies at Bath, and other persons Distinguished for their Wit and Humour,* (London: I. Fell, 1769)
[189] *Ranger's Impartial List of the Ladies of Pleasure in Edinburgh,* i-xi.

Chapter 2 'Totally Founded on Fiction': The literary tropes of *Harris's List of Covent-Garden Ladies*.

The anonymous author of *Characters of the Present Most Celebrated Courtezans* (1780) dismisses *Harris's List* by claiming that it was 'totally founded on fiction'.[190] However, while this was a barbed insult aimed to mock *Harris's List,* this fictionality is not necessarily a negative. Across the text's long publication history, *Harris's List of Covent-Garden Ladies* develops parallel to the creation and evolution of the novel form. As I have previously noted, Bradford Keyes Mudge set forth the argument that pornography and the novel were created and developed in tandem with one another.[191] Building upon this argument, *Harris's List* and prostitute narratives more broadly connect these two developing forms. I have structured this chapter around this argument to show the various ways that *Harris's List* reflects the development of the novel form. Beginning with the prostitute voices in the writings of Daniel Defoe, this chapter will examine the literary tropes that these texts share with *Harris's List* before moving on to discuss how the rising popularity of the sentimental mode impacts the *List.* Following on from this, I will compare *Harris's List* with the distinctly eighteenth century genre of whore biographies and the emergence of literary pornography. This chapter will conclude by examining the theatricality and poetical influences of the eighteenth century over *Harris's List.*

As the first chapter of the thesis has assessed the practicality of the list, in this chapter I am going to focus on the extent to which the content is fictionalised and eroticised. Elizabeth Campbell Delinger has argued that *Harris's List* has a 'double structure' serving

[190] "Characters of the Present Most Celebrated Courtezans interspersed with a variety of secret anecdotes never before published" in *Whore Biographies, Volume 5* ed. Julie Peakman (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2006), 1-218, 18.
[191] Ibid.

two purposes: 'names, address, and prices all point to their practical use, while the lush descriptions of women also function as soft-core pornography'.[192] As the text developed over the years, *Harris's List* moved away from the practical uses that were the purpose of its creation to present itself as a text with increased fictional qualities that emphasise the pornographic elements of the descriptions. This chapter is going to explore the different genres that the list uses that emphasise the literary qualities of the text. I argue that the literary dimensions challenge and eventually take priority over the functional elements discussed in the previous chapter.

The Novelty of the Novel: Prostitute Voices in the writings of Daniel Defoe

A review of the first edition of *Harris's List* in the *Monthly Review* from 1760 states that the text

> Pretends to give some account of the most noted Girls of the Town; but it has all the air of a lying Catch-penny Jobb, the work of some literary Pandar: of which class to the disgrace of Letters there are but too many in this metropolis, ever ready to scribble in the service of debauchery; or, in any service where they have a prospect of being paid for their pimping.[193]

Referring to the author of the text as a literary Pandar emphasises that many contemporaries to the *List* viewed it as a work of fiction. While the real Harrison was regularly called a pimp or a pandar, the Harris of the *List* is identified and consequentially restricted by the adjective 'literary'. This insult is emphasised and consolidated through the lexical references to

[192] Delinger, "The Garment and the Man: Masculine Desire in 'Harris's List of Covent-Garden Ladies' 1764 -1793", 380.
[193] *Monthly Review.* June 1760, 523.

literature and writing. Describing the authors of *Harris's List* as being 'ever ready to scribble' implies that the entries of the *List* are incoherent works of fiction that were written carelessly in haste whenever inspiration struck.[194] Yet, this scathing review does not refer to the writers as authors. Instead, they are depicted as liars who are unscrupulous in their quest for a quick profit. The authors of the *List* are not taken seriously as either pimps or writers. *The Monthly Review* disagrees with the central conceit of *Harris's List* being a non-fiction guide to London's sex industry, but it also does not present the *List* as a work of literature. Instead of being described as fictional it is established as a pretence. Introducing the text as a scribbled 'lying Catch-penny Jobb' demonstrates the fact that *Harris's List* was thought to be written cheaply and hastily purely to earn a profit. [195] Conceptually, the notion of writing for a profit was intertwined with eighteenth century developments of consumer culture. To benefit financially from the publication of a text, people need to buy it. For over three decades, *Harris's List* consistently proved that there was demand and interest among a dedicated audience.

Ros Ballaster notes how 'the attempt to give birth of a genre, the novel, has occupied literary theorists and critics from the late eighteenth century to the present day'.[196] She argues that

> The novel is read and reread for the marks of its ancestry, variously located in the epic, the fable, the romance, the ballad, the discourse of journalism, the rise of the middle class, the decline of the aristocracy,

[194] *Monthly Review.* June 1760, 523.
[195] Ibid.
[196] Ros Ballaster, *Seductive Forms: Women's Amatory Fiction from 1684 to 1740*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 6.

> the emergence of a female reading public, and the development of a commercial book trade.[197]

As Ballaster points out, there are multitudes of reasons for why and how the novel form is created. Although it would be incorrect to refer to *Harris's List* as a novel, most of the explanations Ballaster has given for the birth of the novel in the eighteenth century can be applied to this distinctly unique text. Later in this chapter, I will aim to discuss the influence that the epic, the creation of the middle class, and the popularity of female readers had over the development of *Harris's List.* It may seem counterintuitive to consider a bawdy pamphlet that belongs to a long history of listing sex workers in terms of the creation of the novel form and new literary traditions. However, *Harris's List* was novel in the way that it connects sex workers with readers. Although the entries are brief in comparison to full length novels revealing narratives around the prostitute experience, they are extended and literary when compared to the invoices that preceded the *List.*

Debates around the creation of the novel form tend to agree that the eighteenth century bore witness to the birth of the genre. Hunter notes that 'ever since the serious study of English literary history began, the early eighteenth century has seemed the time when a distinct new form of prose fiction emerged'.[198] One of the pioneering writers who is often credited with being leading the development of the novel is Daniel Defoe. Defoe has written about sex workers across a variety of genres. His novels *The Fortunes and Misfortunes of Moll Flanders* (1722) and *Roxana: The Fortunate Mistress* (1724) layered erotic content with narrative structure to create what Julie Peakman has referred to as a 'new literary sub-genre of whore mini-biographies'.[199] This description seems to aptly apply to *Harris's List.* Other

[197] Ballaster, *Seductive Forms*, 6.
[198] Hunter, *Before Novels,* 6.
[199] Peakman, *Amatory Pleasures,* 62

early examples of the novel form also incorporated prostitute voices; including John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* (1728), Anodyne Tanner's *The Life of the Late Celebrated Mrs. Elizabeth Wisebourn* (1721), Charles Walker's *Authentick Memoirs of the Life, Intrigues, and Adventures of the Celebrated Sally Salisbury* (1723), and George Lillo's *The London Merchant* (1731). While these narratives precede *Harris's List,* they are examples of authors giving a voice to the sex worker experience of the eighteenth century.

In *Moll Flanders*, Moll's first sister-in-law says that it does not matter if a 'young woman has beauty, birth, breeding, wit, sense, manners, modesty' because 'if she has not money, she's no body'.[200] This becomes a dogma for Moll as across the novel she prioritises her own economic situation above any other ethical code. Juliet McMaster argues that Defoe is 'exposing a world view where financial considerations have taken the place of sexual, moral, and spiritual ones'.[201] This is seen throughout the novel and is extremely radical as it displaces personal ethical failing with individual financial need when viewing why a woman would sell sexual services. Defoe's presentation of the economy and accounting in *Moll Flanders* has received a lot of critical attention.[202] This focus on accounting does not remove the erotic from Moll's own narrative, but it does mute it in a way that his 1724 novel *Roxana: The Fortunate Mistress* rebels against. While sex work for Moll is a method of income, for Roxana it moves from selling survival sex to creating an infamous reputation and a luxurious lifestyle. Sex work is intricately intwined with finance and morality in Defoe's writing and the writing of his peers. However, the figure of the sex worker is used as a cautionary tale. For Defoe, the sex worker is connected to ideas of female agency and commerce whereas in

[200] Daniel Defoe, *Moll Flanders* ed. G. A. Starr (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 20.
[201] Juliet McMaster, "The Equation of Love and Money in 'Moll Flanders'" *Studies in the Novel* 2, no. 2 (1970): 132
[202] See Sandra Sherman, *Finance and Fictionality in the Early Eighteenth Century: Accounting for Defoe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005)

Harris's List the prostitute figures literally only exist in the text for the pleasure of the presumably male reader.

Fiction was not the only route for Defoe to present his attitudes towards sex work. In 1726 he published a pamphlet titled *Some Considerations on Streetwalkers* which was constructed from two letters addressed to a Member of Parliament with Defoe's 'proposal for Lessening the Present Number' of sex workers. [203] In the first letter he complains that he has suffered the 'full Encounter of an audacious Harlot' and has experienced 'Twitches on the Sleeve, lewd and ogling Salutations and not infrequently by the more profligate Impudence of some Jades, who boldly dare to seize a Man by the Elbow, and make insolent Demands of Wine and Treats before they let him go'.[204] This aggressive approach to female sexual solicitation and seduction acts to use the sex worker's supposed hypersexuality to demonise her which implies both moral looseness and violent tendencies. Defoe goes on to describe these sex workers as being 'past Redemption'.[205] However, the second letter that makes up this formative pamphlet takes the form of a fictionalised autobiographical letter from one of the street sex workers that Defoe had condemned just the page before. On the frontispiece of this pamphlet, the sex worker is described as 'One of those unhappy Persons, when in *Newgate*, and who was afterwards executed, for picking a Gentleman's Pocket'.[206] It is important to note that the second text is positioned immediately after the masculine and moralising rhetoric of the first letter and so readers are aware that the character of the sex worker they are hearing from has already been executed for criminal activity. This authorial execution of the sex worker establishes a precedent that will be discussed in the next section on sentimental literature. Vivien Jones argues that this prostitute was 'the victim of upper-

[203] *Some Considerations upon Street-walkers* (London, 1726), p.2.
[204] Ibid.
[205] Ibid., 2.
[206] Ibid., 1.

class masculinity' and that this account 'evokes pity rather than utilitarian indignation: imaginative sympathy becomes the mechanism which invites reform, and which draws the prostitute back into the social body'.[207] Establishing that the sex worker has been executed as a consequence of her actions before introducing her narrative ensures that she cannot continue to sell sex. This renders all discussions of redemption, rehabilitation, and reformation as purely hypothetical. The image of the sex worker in *Harris's List* is still actively engaging in prostitution. As the authors of *Harris's List* view prostitution as a positive trade, at least for the sex buyers, there is no expectation that the women included will need to exit the trade or to morally repent.

'The celebrated Fielding': Sentimentalism and *Harris's List of Covent-Garden Ladies*

There are certain phrases that are repeated across editions and are allocated to different women. Both Miss Sm—th (1783) and Miss D—v—np—rt (1788) share a description.

> Her eyes are of that colour which the celebrated Fielding has given the heroine of his most admirable work, and which dart a lustre peculiar to themselves. From such an eye each look has the power to raise "the loosest wishes in the chastest heart".[208]

The entry goes on to describe identical stories of a loss of virginity. Sharing this description and duplicating entries between two different women immediately discredits any credibility or authority that the *List* has. It could be argued that perhaps Miss Sm—th assumed a new

[207] Vivien Jones, "Placing Jemima: Women Writers of the 1790s and the Eighteenth-century Prostitution Narrative." *Women's Writing: The Elizabethan to Victorian Period* 4, no. 2 (1997): 204
[208] *HL 1783,* 20
HL 1788, 38 - 39.

name during the five years between 1783 and 1788. However, as she is listed as being available at Berwick-Street while Miss D—v—np—rt could be found in Leicester-fields, this seems unlikely. Significantly, both women are described as being a 'young charmer […] not yet past the bloom of eighteen'.[209] Any claim that could be made for a change of name and relocation is unable to challenge the fact that Miss Sm—th would have had to have aged. The entry has been reallocated to a new sex worker. While entries are frequently repeated across years, they are rarely shared between different women. Therefore, this description was important enough to bare repeating even when the original character it was assigned to was no longer included in the *List.* I believe that it was the reference to Sophia Western's black eyes, from Fielding's 1749 novel *The History of Tom Jones,* that the authors of the *List* wanted to emphasise.[210]

Henry Fielding wrote a satirical parody of Samuel Richardson's *Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded* (1740). His 1741 text *An Apology for the Life of Mrs. Shamela Andrews* is a direct response to sentimental novels. His *Shamela* exposes the moral hypocrisy of sentimental literature. The fact that Fielding is the author that *Harris's List* earnestly engages with reveals the way that the authors of the *List* think about the rise of feeling and sentimental novels. Sentimentalism as a literary mode features extreme amounts of feeling. Novels such as Oliver Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766), Laurence Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy* (1768), and Henry Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling* (1771) are examples of sentimental texts that forged the genre. *Harris's List* was published in the wake of these texts and the subsequent impact that sentimentalism had on the way that prostitution and sex workers were viewed by readers.

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[209] *HL 1783,* 19
HL 1788, 38.
[210] Henry Fielding, *Tom Jones,* ed. John Bender and Simon Stern, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

Simon Dickie notes the ways that the popularisation of sentimentalism encouraged authors and readers to reconsider the ways they viewed figures such as prostitutes.

> Then sentimental authors started asking readers to care about socially inferior characters and their everyday sufferings. […] Former comic settings – hedgerows, cheap lodgings, street corners, even brothels and madhouses – now became the sites of sentimental encounters.[211]

Understanding situations such as prostitution as an everyday suffering that the sex workers were forced to endure, rather than viewing sex work as a plague that infected the metropolitan urban space, meant that prostitutes were viewed as sympathetic victims rather than morally corrupt. *Harris's List* has a complex relationship with notions of victimhood with the women it describes. There is the unsettling awareness that many of the workers named would not be sex workers if life had afforded them other choices or opportunities and *Harris's List* rarely acknowledges this openly. Instead, it embraces the sentimental concept of debauchery. The authors of the *List* did not want to present sex work as criminal or depraved, rather they present the trade as illicit and rebellious. Participation in the sex industry is encouraged, but betraying a woman with false promises of marriage is strongly warned against.

In the later versions of the text, there is more of an emphasis placed on the reasoning that caused a woman's entrance into the sex industry. The 1787 entry for Miss C-rb-t in *Harris's List* begins by acknowledging the complex marriage laws of the time. Harris states that 'some girls have been debauched by delusive arts, and under promises of marriage, others have commenced harlots through want'.[212] This is the only entry that discusses why a

[211] Simon Dickie, *Cruelty and Laughter: Forgotten Comic Literature and the Unsentimental Eighteenth Century,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 111.
[212] *HL 1787,* 280.

woman became a sex worker in this edition and it does so to highlight the prostitute's lustful and lascivious nature. Harris goes onto say that 'neither of these motives actuated this lady's principles; it was mere lewdness'.[213] He only describes the motives of a woman to become a sex worker to emphasise the prostitute's sexual appetite to appeal to an audience who are being gratified by the act of reading the text. The entry establishes a level of expectation for female sex workers to have been victims of betrayal, seduction, or assault. In doing so, the attitude that female sexual desire is more shocking than female suffering is made abundantly clear. This is the only example of the term 'debauched' being used in 1787; six years later in 1793, the word 'debauched' is used five times and there are numerous other references to women being seduced or ruined by men.

The sentimental influence over *Harris's List* is evidenced by the narrative qualities of many of the entries. This goes beyond the 'flowery and diffusive language of Harris'sand is shown in the structure of the entries themselves. [214] While other bawdy pamphlets were factual lists, *Harris's List* acts almost like a collection of incredibly short stories. These narratives are simultaneously eroticised and sentimentalised and the emphasis upon the dangers of London's society highlights this balance. There are numerous entries within *Harris's List* that explicitly discuss sexual violence and debauchery. The narrative voice of the *List* oversees these everyday sufferings but is not overcome with emotion in the same manner that could be expected of a protagonist of a sentimental novel. *Harris's List* does not weep over the pitiable fortunes of the sex workers. However, contrary to what I first expected when engaging with such a bizarre text, sympathy is created for the women who are forced to enter the sex industry as a result of unfortunate circumstances.

[213] *HL 1787,* 280.
[214] "Characters of the Present Most Celebrated Courtezans", 14.

The dramatic increase in descriptions of debauchery within *Harris's List* occurs in tandem with an increase in prostitute narratives of the 1790s that were written by women. There are many texts such as Mary Wollstonecraft's *Maria; or, the Wrongs of Women* (1798), *The Farmer of Inglewood Forest* (1796) by Elizabeth Helme, and Mary Hays' *The Victim of Prejudice* (1799) which include embedded sex worker narratives. These prostitute narratives of the final decade of the eighteenth century are distinct from the earlier whore biographies that preceded them. Instead of being a vehicle to pedal salacious gossip about celebrity courtesans, female authors used the archetype of the female sex worker as a way of conveying radical proto-feminist politics. Wollstonecraft's *Maria* inverts the title of her famous *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), which is a direct reference to Thomas Paine's 1791 treatise *Rights of Man.* When Wollstonecraft turns to fiction to convey the difficulties facing eighteenth century women, she employs the voice of an incarcerated sex worker. Sharon Smith argues that embedded prostitute narratives 'perform other kinds of cultural work, underscoring the scandalous nature of female authorship […] or serving as the antithesis of the emerging ideal of domestic feminine virtue'.[215] Although *Harris's List* is not thought to have been written by a woman, the mere existence of the *List* places the spotlight on women whose occupation and existence challenge notions of domestic feminine virtue. Sex work not only moves women from the domesticated interior private sphere into public spaces, but it also makes intimacy performative and public. Although prostitution was common and visible in eighteenth century London, it was still undeniably scandalous.

Katherine Binhammer argues that

[215]Sharon Smith, "Defoe's The Complete English Tradesman and the Prostitute Narrative: Minding the Shop in Mrs. Elizabeth Wisebourn, Sally Salisbury, and Roxana," *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 15, no. 2 (2015): 29.

> the French Revolution and the subsequent wars with France provided the discursive ground for a panic around sexuality and that this panic facilitated the redefinition of female sexuality required by late eighteenth century domestic ideology.[216]

This sex panic has been cited by Binhammer and other academics as the reason for the increase in prostitute narratives, particularly sex worker stories that were written by women. However, this panic impacted the *List* in a different manner as this redefinition of female sexuality was reflected by a sentimentalised description of the cause for the sex workers entering the industry. Anxieties around the violence of the French revolution and the threat of war permeated *Harris's List* and resulted in this new attitude towards female sexuality to carry with it the undercurrent of violence.

The final editions of *Harris's List* in the 1790s discuss sexual violence and rape with increasing regularity as a way of explaining and justifying the reason why the women identified are working as prostitutes. Some entries of the 1793 edition of *Harris's List* contain references to the assault or debauchery that was the catalyst for the woman's movement into prostitution and others depict the threat of rape that faced sex workers while they worked. *Harris's List* describes multiple women who have moved from the countryside to the city and in doing so have faced corruption because of physical assault or betrayal by London's fashionable circles. One such woman is Miss We-ls of No. 35 Newman Street in the 1793 edition of *Harris's List.*

> This lady is said to be the daughter of a farmer in Wales, who sent her to London very young, to be under the care of an aunt with whom she had not long resided before a young gentleman ingratiated him so far

[216] Katherine Binhammer, "The Sex Panic of the 1790s", *Journal of the History of Sexuality,* 6, no.3 (1996): 410.

into her graces as to gain her consent to make him happy by her ruin, under a promise of marriage.[217]

While this entry states that Miss We-ls did consent to sex with her partner, there are multiple causes for concern in this brief description. Primarily, she agreed to sex with a verbal agreement that the pair would get married, and the breaking of this promise eradicates the consent given. Also, it is worth noting that *Harris's List* specifies that she was very young. In the late eighteenth century, it was legal for girls as young as twelve to get married and the age of sexual discretion was even younger at just ten years old.[218] The 1793 edition of the *List* contains a deeply unsettling entry where they do not list the name of the girl at all. She is simply referred to as 'Miss --, No. 44, Newman-street, Oxford Street'.[219] The quatrain of poetry that introduces her concludes by saying that 'her lovely form would tempt a saint to sin'.[220] The prose description begins by saying that 'this *petite* belle has not yet attained her sixteenth year; and to make amends for her deficiency of height, she is elegantly formed'.[221] This is a stark reminder that some of the sex workers listed in *Harris's List* may very well have been children.

Sex work and London have a symbiotic relationship whereby prostitution is seen simultaneously as a disease that is damaging the city and an inevitability that corrupts women. Hannah More's 1796 religious tract *The Story of Sinful Sally, Told By Herself,* which belonged to the collection *Cheap Repository for Moral and Religious Tracts*, is a poetic

[217] *HL 1793,* 42.
[218] For more information about the age of consent please see Antony E. Simpson, "Vulnerability and the age of female consent", in *Sexual underworlds of the Enlightenment* edited by G S Rousseau and Roy Porter (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), 181–205.
[219] *HL 1793,* 78.
[220] *HL 1793*, 78.
[221] *HL 1793*, 78.

example of a very popular narrative trope.[222] This ballad follows the rural living Sally of the Green as she moves to London and falls into a life of prostitution, drunkenness, and general debauchery before inevitably dying. This echoes the fate of other fictional characters such as Hogarth's Moll Hackabout. London is seen as a corrupting force, in part because of the visibility and prevalence of sex work on its streets. This narrative phenomenon has received a lot of scholarly attention. Brad Kent summarises the pattern whereby the changes to rural economies encouraged women to migrate to the city to seek an improved quality of life and improved prospects for the future.[223] However, these women were 'often lacking social networks and a level of sophistication and cynicism' which allowed them to be 'preyed upon by bawds'.[224] There is not an example across the editions of *Harris's List* that I have been fortunate enough to view of the text presenting a brothel keeper as being responsible for a woman's entrance into the sex industry. Sometimes a bawd may approach one of the women of the *List* and entice her into prostitution, but this interaction is only described if the woman had already been seduced or assaulted by a man.

In the previous chapter I discussed *Harris's List* taking an active role in encouraging assault against women such as Mrs Ha-on who would accept a reduced sum than her advertised one pound to ensure that she gets trade.[225] Through encouraging purposely underpaying for the sexual services provided, the pocket guide is encouraging sex buyers to devalue the sex worker. This disrupts consent as it identifies specific sex workers who are vulnerable to financial exploitation and are consequentially unable to determine their own

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[222] Hannah More, *The Story of Sinful Sally, Told by Herself: Shewing How from Being Sally of the Green She Was First Led to Become Sinful Sally, and Afterwards Drunken Sal, and How at Last She Came to a Most Melancholy and Almost Hopeless End; Being Therein a Warning to All Young Women Both in Town and Country,* (London: J. Evans, 1794)
[223] Brad Kent "Eighteenth-Century Literary Precursors of *Mrs Warren's Profession*." *University of Toronto Quarterly* 81, no. 2 (2012): 187-207. https://doi.org/10.1353/utq.2012.0021., 189.
[224] Ibid.
[225] *HL 1793,* 31

wage. This enables the purveyors of the sex industry to decide upon a value for her services. Sharing the methods by which fellow sex customers are able to demand reduced rates from desperate prostitutes may superficially point to the ways that the *List* can be practically used. However, this proposed exploitation invites the reader to share the fantasy of debauching and consequentially ruining the sex worker. Readers are told that Mrs Ha-on was 'debauched by a Scotch gentleman in the army; but finding an opportunity to marry, he left her'.[226] She was promised 'great things' once her suitor had inherited his wife's wealth, however, this 'proved only a pretence to get rid of her'.[227] Seeing as she had been debauched and was now left destitute, she was 'obliged to shift for herself and make the most of her person'.[228] This descriptive narrative of her journey into the sex industry is entirely unnecessary to the reality of soliciting her services. The blunt way in which both her lover and *Harris's List* devalue her is crude and establishes Mrs Ha—on as a victim. Instead of writing from the perspective of a sentimental protagonist or a person of exuberant feeling, the prose of this entry assumes that sex buyers would have more in common with the debaucher. Through stating that joining the sex industry was the way she could make the 'most of her person', this entry reduces her identity and personhood to nothing more than a body.[229] Explaining that she is completely reliant on the income from selling her sexual services before encouraging sex buyers to avoid paying her full rate reiterates the inequality in the sex industry that is reflective of the gender inequalities of society in general. The epigraph that preludes her entry warns 'be cautions, ye fair, of the man you trust'.[230] This sentiment that her circumstances were because of her lack of caution instead of her being betrayed places both the responsibility for and the

[226] *HL 1793,* 31.
[227] *HL 1793,* 31.
[228] *HL 1793,* 31.
[229] *HL 1793,* 31.
[230] *HL 1793,* 31.

repercussions of the couple's actions solely on the woman. These inequalities are exacerbated by the obscurities and difficulties of marriage promises.

However, through addressing the warning to 'be cautious' to 'ye fair', the writers of *Harris's List* are directly addressing women in the poetic dedication at the beginning of the entry.[231] Mrs Ha-on's life story has become a cautionary tale which acts to warn young attractive women of the dangers of seduction. She is the pitiable victim for whom sentimental readers can weep. The poetic warning also throws up questions about the assumed readership of the texts. In addressing 'ye fair' it suggests that *Harris's List* is speaking directly to a female audience. Either the authors of *Harris's List* are aware that their audience has expanded beyond heterosexual male sex buyers to include a more diverse readership, or they are using tropes of sentimental prostitute narratives to reflect the novels of the day. Simon Dickie asserts that 'British women were themselves shockingly indelicate' and that 'women read everything […] all the lowest farces, jestbooks, and rascally "male" novels'.[232] While scholars such as Carter and Sangster have asserted that *Harris's List* is created by men for a male audience, there are small asides that hint that the authors are aware that their *List* is being read by women as well.

Using the opening poem to discuss the difficulties facing women is also seen in the entry for Miss Les-r from Upper Newman Street.

> Under how hard a fate are women born;
>
> Prais'd to their ruin, or exposed to scorn!
>
> If they want beauty, they of love despair,

[231] *HL 1793,* 31.
[232] Dickie, *Cruelty and Laughter,* 3, 6.

> And are besieg'd like frontier towns if fair.[233]

Deciding to open the entry with a humorous poem that mocks the very real threats that face women is in particularly poor taste as the passage goes on to discuss the fact that Miss Les-r was the victim of a violent crime. This assault took place while she was a servant in a family home near Holborn in London. Her rapist is identified in *Harris's List* as a 'certain gentleman of the law' who coerced her to serve him tea in his chambers. [234] Harris goes on to say that

> The sequel it were needless to relate: she was debauched, and soon after deserted by her betrayer. The consequence of which was, having lost her place and being destitute of a character, she was obliged to have recourse to her beauty for a subsistence.[235]

As a direct consequence of her rape, she lost her job and was forced into selling survival sex. The dismissiveness of the embedded clause 'it were needless to relate' demonstrates how common it was for rape to be the catalyst for a young woman leaving domestic service for prostitution. [236] Presenting the assault of Miss Les-r in such a callous way creates the idea that this rape that left her destitute was inevitable. The idea that women are passive to their own assault is reiterated by the opening quatrain where it is noted that women are 'besieg'd like frontier towns if fair'.[237] While the physical violence of rape is given militarised associations such as 'besieg'd', the perpetrators of the crime are not depicted as violent criminals. Describing a rapist as 'her betrayer' distances the influential gentleman from the crime that he committed. The reference to frontier towns has connotations of the American Revolutionary War from 1775 to 1783. This allusion is unsettling as frontier towns were just

[233] *HL 1793,* 26.
[234] *HL 1793,* 26.
[235] *HL 1793,* 26.
[236] *HL 1793,* 26.
[237] *HL 1793,* 26.

beginning to be developed on a larger scale in 1790s America, but they were still small and had a limited population. The comparison between virgins and frontier towns is built upon the fact that Harris considers both to be unexplored and unpopulated territory. Comparing women to landmasses and in military terms is not uncommon, however, the implication that besieging women is patriotic has disturbing undertones. Not only is Harris aligning rapists with British soldiers fighting in America, but he is also suggesting that rape can be used as a violent tactic to quell rebellion in women.

Comparisons between seduction and war occurs elsewhere in *Harris's List.* The entry that discusses Mrs G-ge states that

> This lady has not been in business long: she surrendered her citadel to a captain of the navy, who in his attack upon her, united the seaman with the lover […] but terrified with the strength of her fortifications, he had concluded to make more regular approaches, to attack her at farther distance, and try what a bombardment of letters would do.[238]

This woman is new to the sex industry as she was debauched under a false expectation of marriage. This entry embodies most of the tropes that are seen in *Harris's List* with the double entendre of seaman. Also, the narrative of the passage is structured in a way that places culpability with the woman rather than with the naval captain who seduced her. In establishing that she 'surrendered' within the first line, there is the suggestion that she was passive to her own seduction. Jessica Steinberg argues that sex workers are rarely viewed as 'pitiable victims' as narrative conventions establish them as 'being partly responsible for becoming an object of violence'.[239] This is seen as the entry then goes on to undermine the

[238] *HL 1793,* 45.
[239] Jessica Steinberg, "She was a 'common night walker abusing him and being of ill behaviour': Violence and Prostitution in Eighteenth-Century London", *Canadian Journal of History*, 50, no. 2 (2015): 247.

concept that the Mrs G-ge had passively surrendered as it discusses the 'strength of her fortifications', the frequency of her lover's advances, and the fact that he wrote her a 'bombardment of letters'.[240] Not only did she establish clear boundaries with the man who was courting her, she also received written confirmation of his affection and intent, but she was betrayed and was subsequently forced into prostitution. By beginning her narrative with her seduction and placing her as the subject rather than the seducer, *Harris's List* reflects the misogynistic and incorrect attitude that a woman is, at least in part, responsible for being seduced, debauched, or assaulted.

Building on this sentimental notion that women in the later editions of the *List* were innocent and virginal before a moment of betrayal caused them to enter the so-called oldest profession, more emphasis is placed on defining the women in terms of their position in society. Across the eighteenth century, sex work was often a temporary economic solution rather than a permanent identity. From the 1770s to the *List*'s final editions, there is a noticeable increase in references to the family members of the women included. The sex workers become defined less by their skills and appearances but more by their relationships to gentlemen and their fathers' professions. Rubenhold argues that for a 'daughter of a country parson, the attraction was much greater'.[241] This is reflective of the change of perception of fallen women that was occurring across the eighteenth century. Tim Hitchcock notes that

> beginning life either as an innocent servant […] or else as the impoverished, but middle-class, daughter of a half-pay officer or clergyman, the prostitute of the mid-century and beyond was

[240] *HL 1793,* 45.
[241] Hallie Rubenhold, *The Covent Garden Ladies; Pimp General Jack & the Extraordinary Story of Harris's List,* (Stroud: Tempus, 2006), 137.

> inevitably the victim of the honeyed words of a young rake who seduced and then abandoned the now ruined object of his attentions.[242]

This is seen both in prostitute narratives and *Harris's List.* The debauched woman in Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa; or, The History of a Young Lady* (1748) and Matthew Gregory Lewis's *The Monk: A Romance* (1796) has to die immediately to avoid living as a ruined woman. Yet, all the women in *Harris's List* are assumed to be alive. Instead of escaping a life of ruin, these women are presented as pitiable victims who have turned to sex work due to harrowing and unavoidable circumstances.

Death was not the only sentimental ending that was offered to sex workers of the eighteenth century. The relationship between prostitution and confinement within an asylum is not exclusively fictional nor is it confined to the experience of individuals. Establishments such as Bridewell Palace and the Magdalen Hospital for the Reception of Penitent Prostitutes aimed to punish and rehabilitate fallen women and sex workers respectively. In 1555, Bridewell Palace was repurposed to offer housing for homeless children and the first House of Correction aimed to punish disorderly women.[243] Four years later the Bridewell Governors also took responsibility for the Bethlem Royal Hospital.[244] The report of the Bridewell Hospital from 1793 is addressed to 'the Right Worshipful the PRESIDENT, TREASURER, and GOVERNORS of Bridewell and Bethlem Hospitals' which shows that these two infamous London institutions of imprisonment maintained a collaborative management well

[242] Tim Hitchcock, *English Sexualities, 1700 – 1800,* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), 100.
[243]John, Cannon and Robert Crowcroft. "Bridewell." *A Dictionary of British History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), n.p.
[244]Patricia Allderidge, "Management and Mismanagement at Bedlam, 1547-1633", in Charles Webster, *Health, Medicine and Mortality in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 141–164, 149.

into the late eighteenth century.[245] The Magdalen Hospital also had a working relationship with the Bethlem mental asylum, as of the 2998 women who were admitted into the hospital between 10th August 1758 and 1st January 1795, 98 were discharged to Bethlem because they were 'Lunatic, troubled with Fits or incurable Disorders'.[246] The Magdalen Hospital adopted the principles of the Bridewell as the women who were taken in by the hospital were 'instructed in the principles of Christian Religion, in reading, and in several kinds of work, and the various branches of household employment'.[247] Bridewell became so increasingly infamous that the Oxford English Dictionary defines the term as a 'prison, a jail; esp. a house of correction in which inmates are put to work'.[248] From 1733 the word 'bridewell' was even used as a verb to describe imprisoning someone.[249]

Mary Peace argues that the Hospital in 'its original incarnation, between 1758 and 1769, when the institution was known as the Magdalen House, it is most properly read as a supreme embodiment of sentimental ideals'.[250] The sentimental values that are central to the Magdalen Hospital can be separated into two strands; to rehabilitate prostitutes through penitentiary labour, and to prevent vulnerable women from entering the oldest profession. One of the aspirations of the Magdalen Hospital was to rehabilitate sex workers, with the goal that they would become 'icons of reformed virtue'.[251] Jennie Batchelor has described the ways that the 1760 anonymous memoir *The Histories of Some of the Penitents in the Magdalen House* embraces sentimental writing and reading. She notes how the 'overlaying of

[245] Bridewell Royal Hospital Prison Committee. *Report of the Prison Committee of Bridewell Hospital, to be considered at the next general court. ...* (London, 1793), 1.
[246] *Magdalen Hospital 1795 Review. (*London, 1795), 3.
[247] *A Short Account of the Magdalen Hospital*. (London, 1803).
[248] *OED Online*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021) s.v. "bridewell, n.". accessed May 6 2023. https://doi.org/10.1023/OED/7357322181.
[249] *OED Online.* (Oxford University Press, 2023) "bridewell, v.". accessed May 9 2023.
[250] Mary Peace, *Changing Sentiments and the Magdalen Hospital: Luxury, Virtue and the Senses in Eighteenth-Century Culture,* (London, Routledge Taylor and Francis, 2019), 1.
[251] Ibid., 39.

the penitent's biography with the story of Mary Magdalen would have been familiar to readers of sentimentalized prostitution narratives'.[252] The sentimentalised figure of the prostitute is beginning to be given space in the book trade to have her voice heard through the emergence of direct biographies and memoirs such as *The Histories of Some of the Penitents in the Magdalen House.*

'Most Impudent and Obscene Productions': Whore Biographies and *Harris's List*

The developing genre of whore biographies was pivotal for the development of *Harris's List* as these texts began to reconfigure attitudes towards sex workers across the eighteenth century. This is a shifting genre which moves between autobiography and biography and fiction and nonfiction. The similarities between *Harris's List* and this genre of whore biographies goes beyond stylistic and syntactical choices as the *List* shares a publisher with a large variety of published memoirs and biographies from sex workers and courtesans. Conventional whore biographies adopt the third person which recreates the experience of gossiping. Conceptually, the idea that the readers are being given exclusive information and secrets is often reiterated by the subtitles of these biographies. For example, the 1780 text *Characters of the Present Most Celebrated Courtezans* has the subtitle '*Interspersed with a Variety of Secret Anecdotes Never Before Published'.* This emphasis on secrecy and new information reiterates the scandalous information that the text prints. Indeed, a review in *The Westminster Magazine* said that 'we will not shock the ear of Modesty by criticizing one of the most impudent and obscene productions that has come under our cognizance since the first institution of the Westminster Magazine'.[253] However, it is not just the impudent and obscene scandal that makes *Characters of the Present Most Celebrated Courtezans* such a

[252] Jennie Batchelor, "Mothers and Others: Sexuality and Maternity in *The Histories of Some of The Penitents in the Magdalen House* (1760)" in *Prostitution and Eighteenth-Century* Culture, (Abingdon, Routledge: 2016) 157 – 170, 159.
[253] "Characters of the Present Celebrated Courtezans, Interspersed with a Variety of Secret Anecdotes, Never before Published." *The Westminster Magazine* (June 1780): 327.

compelling text: it is the intimacy. This text is aware of the celebrity of these courtesans, and it profits from revealing secrets and the truth to the readership. Julie Peakman included *Characters of the Present Most Celebrated Courtezans* in the 5th Volume of her collection *Whore Biographies, 1700-1825.* Although *Characters* covers multiple women in a similar manner to *Harris's List,* it goes into deep narrative detail of these courtesans' lives and invites the readership into the inner circles. Comparing the multiple pages allowed to each woman in *Characters* to the meagre paragraphs of *Harris's List,* it is clear that the *List* fails to create a similar illusion of intimacy; the depiction of each woman is relatively short and shallow when compared to the extended biographies that it was competing with. Readers are not encouraged to connect with the stories of the sex workers but instead build a rapport with the author and the mysterious figure of Harris himself. This relationship is built through the extended prologues and is necessary to the function of the text as the audience needs to trust the opinions of the narrator and accept those opinions as facts.

Entries are repeated across the various editions with no changes made to account for the passage of time. As Nicola Parsons and Amelia Dale have identified, the 'first 208 entries of the 1766 edition repeat those that appeared in the previous year, and of those 207 [sic] recycled entries, 178 also appeared in the 1764 edition'.[254] These entries are reordered but otherwise left entirely unchanged. This not only neglects updating information about the women but also suggests that the use of the *List*, and therefore its purpose, remains unchanged. As *Harris's List* was inaccurate in these details, it could also be incorrect with other details such as the addresses of the sex workers. This hypothetically renders the list

[254] Nicola Parsons and Amelia Dale, "Harris's List of Covent-Garden Ladies (1760-1794): New Copies and New Evidence regarding its History." *The Library: The Transactions of the Bibliographical Society* 23, no. 4 (2022): 458 -488, 471.
NOTE: the typo of 208/ 207 entries is included in Parsons and Dale's article. Unfortunately, due to the ongoing cyber-attack of the British Library which began in 2023, I have been unable to revisit the text to see which statistic is correct.

entirely unusable as a practical tool if the information it contains is out of date by several years. However, if these entries are viewed as a form of whore biography, then the repeated entries reflect who the sex workers were in terms of the larger story of the sexualised experience of Covent-Garden. The sex workers named become fictionally exaggerated figures that embody narratives of sexual adventure. Emphasising experiences of sex work above the realities of the sex worker allows for the short narratives of the *List* to supersede the accuracy of the prostitute's information. It does not need to be technically accurate to be engaging and immersive.

Peakman has researched this new genre of whore biographies at length. She posits that:

> the image of the libertine whore has reverberated throughout literature and the prostitute is an ideal instrument for detecting changes not just in erotica, but in society at large. In the autobiographies of courtesans, the image of libertine women was not merely a figment of the imagination of the male libertine or pornographer, but was part of a wider image created by the female libertine herself. [255]

This creation of the female libertine is fundamental to understandings of certain women in *Harris's List* who are defined by their lustful nature. Certain women are depicted as being female libertines. This is evident in entries such as the 1793 description for Miss Fra—r who is described as a sex worker who 'enjoys the sport with all the vigorous ardour'.[256] In the same year there is also Miss Ric—son whose description in the list acts as a challenge to potential sex buyers. It is said that:

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[255] Julie Peakman, "Memoirs of Women of Pleasure: the whore biography", *Women's Writing,* 11, 2, 2004, 163 – 184, 163.
[256] *HL 1793,* 18.

> Her mother, by endeavouring to control her, raised the fire of desire in her breast, and she soon became a convert to love and libertinism – She is fond of the sport to excess, and, by her own account, has never yet been bless'd with a *satisfying meal of manhood.*[257]

Her sexual appetite is exaggerated and eroticised almost to the point of farce. Yet, the text claims that she has not been satisfied by her previous encounters. This encourages readers to indulge in fantasies that inflate their own masculine egos and imagine that they would be the sexual encounter that would provide such an enthusiastic worker with satisfaction. The *List* also plays into misogynistic binary views of women in this entry. The mother embodies the virginal by attempting to control and supress her daughter's sexuality, meanwhile even as a sex worker Miss Ric—son is admired by the writers of the text for having such an extremely active libido. However, the authors of *Harris's List* do not elevate her to a paragon of sexual desire as they go on to say that despite having 'good clothes', she 'dresses in a style peculiar to herself'.[258] Comments like this are much more prevalent in the final editions of the text, it appears as though *Harris's List* was facing questions around the author's neutrality and so every entry that is flattering and approving of a sex worker, beyond objectively describing their features, is counter balanced by a negative comment in some format.

Unlike the courtesans who Peakman argues can self-fashion themselves as female libertines beyond the writings of their biographers, all the lascivious figures in *Harris's List* are created entirely by the authors. As previously discussed, the *List* repeats entries over different years and allocates the descriptions to different women. While there may have been workers operating in the sexual industries of London under these names, this repetition

[257] *HL 1793,* 19.
[258] *HL 1793*, 19.

proves that some of the characters were fictionalised. These descriptions are the creations of the authors rather than reflections of individual prostitute experiences.

Matthew Sangster states that *Harris's List*'s

> nature as a book written (presumably) by men for male use means that its accounts of prostitution fail to provide much space for the voices of the women upon whom it gazes.[259]

The spatial limitations of the *List* restrict the sex worker's experience to brief paragraphs. This not as a consequence of printing confinements or physical limitations but rather reflects the priorities of the authors. Whore biographies tend to convey a detailed account of the life of a prostitute or courtesan who is publicly recognised as living a life that disrupts conventional societal expectations. Meanwhile, *Harris's List* provides diverse narratives and descriptions of a variety of different circumstances and experiences of female sex workers. Although the short entries do not allow for detailed memoirs of each of the sex workers in the same manner that can be expected of whore biographies, there is still space for biographical information. The highlights of Miss Char—ton's life are quickly told as she is described as having been born to:

> Reputable parents, bred delicately, and her education far superior to the vulgar; yet the address of a designing villain, too soon found means to ruin her; forsaken by her friends, pursed by shame and necessity; she had no other alternative, than to turn --, let the reader guess what – [260]

[259] Matthew Sangster, "Coherence and Inclusion in the Life Writing of Romantic-period London", *Life Writing,* 14:2, 141-153, 143.
[260] *HL 1793,* 29.

Harris's List provides an account of her life prior to becoming a sex worker without giving any specifics or identifying information at all. This description does take the concept of a prostitute's biography and simplifies it to the briefest elements possible. Miss Char—ton's whole life prior to her debauchery is reduced to the social standing of her parents and the quality of her education.

Moreover, Sangster's assertion that the *List* was intended for male use highlights the question of purpose once again. The capacity for *Harris's List* to be considered as a work of pornography is dependent on the intention of the readers. Roger Thompson defines pornography as 'writing or representation intended to arouse lust, create sexual fantasies or feed auto-erotic desires'.[261] Initially, given this criteria, it would seem that *Harris's List* could be viewed as pornographic. However, Thompson goes on to use the example of Samuel Pepys reading *The School of Venus* as an example of someone interacting with literary pornography.[262] This lays the foundation for his argument that for a work of literature to count as pornography, it must go beyond arousal and be able to induce an orgasm.[263] Sarah Toulalan acknowledges that Thompson's interpretation of pornography restricts it to 'the province of men only' as it is defined by the moment of ejaculation.[264] Kathleen Lubey notes that ejaculation is not exclusive to men.[265] While Thompson's limiting definition of pornography has been updated by other scholars of erotica and sexuality, there are still elements of bias that confine pornography as an inherently male art form. When discussing whore biographies Peakman argues that this genre was radical as:

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[261] Roger Thompson, *Unfit for Modest Ears: A Study of Pornographic, Obscene and Bawdy Works Written or Published in England in the Second Half of the Seventeenth-Century* (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 1979), 1.
[262] Ibid.
[263] Ibid.
[264] Sarah Toulalan, *Imagining Sex: Pornography and Bodies in Seventeenth Century England,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 5.
[265] Kathleen Lubey, *What Pornography Knows: Sex and Social Protest since the Eighteenth Century,* (California: Stanford University Press, 2022), 2.

> In a world biased towards men, they wrote about the right of women to pursue their own sexual pleasure and to have control over their sexual behaviour. They used sexuality to create their own social and economic space, writing up narratives which provided a separate niche for themselves. Within these texts they explored their own identities, questioned society's attitudes and formed their own conclusions as to their own conclusions as to their own femininity and sexuality.[266]

However, as the authors of *Harris's List* are assumed to be male, it seems that they have coopted the emerging genre of radical ownership of female expressions of sexuality. This male usurpation of feminine authorial ownership over their sexual experience does also occur in whore biographies. It is an important distinction to note that these texts are biographies rather than necessarily autobiographies. Memoirs like *The Histories of Some of the Penitents in the Magdalen-House* (1759) are written by others – Rosenthal has suggested either Sarah Fielding or Sarah Scott – but are established as firsthand accounts.[267] While sex work haunts early eighteenth century novels because of its prevalence and visibility in London, the civilian author becomes the palimpsest in the whore memoir as their writing underscores the prostitute experience.

As the sex industry in eighteenth century London was entirely unregulated and constantly expanding, it is impossible that the women of the list would be completely immune to changes during this time. Parsons and Dale have made the claim that the list was 'cheaply and often hastily produced'.[268] The fact that entries are repeated across the new

[266] Peakman, "Memoirs of Women of Pleasure: The Whore Biography", 163.
[267] Rosenthal, *Nightwalkers: Prostitute Narratives From The Eighteenth Century,* xxxi.
[268] Ibid., 462.

editions which were printed annually gives additional weight to this argument as no time is taken in updating the text to reflect any changes that would have occurred. This repetition across the years weakens the argument that the list was created for practical use, as it makes the serialisation and yearly updates redundant for any reason other than profit. On 6th February 1775, the *Public Advertiser* announces that the latest edition of *Harris's List* is available and copies of 'Harris's List for 1771, 1772, 1773, and 1774' can also be purchased from 'H. Ranger, Temple Exchange Passage, Fleet-Street'.[269] The existence of a consumer market that is interested in buying the back catalogue of *Harris's List* reveals that at least a portion of the text's readership was using the text as a piece of literature to be read, rather than a tool to be used. Although it was written as a local text and distributed in the same area, Parsons and Dale have identified that the *List* appealed to 'collectors across Western Europe' they go onto state that this is 'also affirmed by the presence of copies of *Harris's List,* previously owned by eighteenth and nineteenth century collectors, in European public collections'.[270] These collectors are absolutely not using the text as a tool to navigate the sexual economy of London.

Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure and *Harris's List*

The use of sex workers to establish an eroticised setting is particularly significant when considering the obscenity laws of the eighteenth century.[271] Cleland's *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* (1748), popularly referred to by its subtitle *Fanny Hill*, is the first example of a pornographic novel.[272] The title emulates the emerging genre of whore

[269] *Public Advertiser,* 6 Feb, 1775.
[270] Parsons and Dale, "Harris's List of Covent-Garden Ladies (1760 – 1794), 462.
[271] See Hal Gladfelder, "Obscenity, Censorship, and the Eighteenth Century Novel: The Case of John Cleland," *The Wordsworth Circle* 35, no. 3 (2004): 134-41.
[272] David Foxon, *Libertine Literature in England, 1660-1745* (London: Book Collector, 1964), 45.

biographies discussed earlier. Laura Rosenthal's authoritative list of whore biographies includes *Genuine Memoirs of the Celebrated Miss Maria Brown. Exhibiting the Life of a Courtezan in the Most Fashionable Scenes of Dissipation. Published by the Author of a W** of P**** (1766) which has been attributed to John Cleland.[273] This is significant as it shows that Cleland was aware of the conventions and practices of whore biographies. Like Fanny's son at the end of the novel, Cleland is seen as being 'familiarized with all those scenes of debauchery'.[274] Establishing Cleland as an author with knowledge of non-fictional sex workers legitimises his eroticised account of the sex industry.

If *Harris's List* was read largely as pornography, then it is not unreasonable to suggest that it could have shared a similar readership with *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure.* This shared audience is evidenced in the 1773 satirical print "Macaronies Drawn After the Life" by Matthias Darly.

[273] Laura Rosenthal, *Nightwalkers: Prostitute Narratives from the Eighteenth Century* (Plymouth: Broadview Press, 2008) 225.
[274] John Cleland. *Fanny Hill, Or, Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* (London: Penguin Books, 1985), 224.

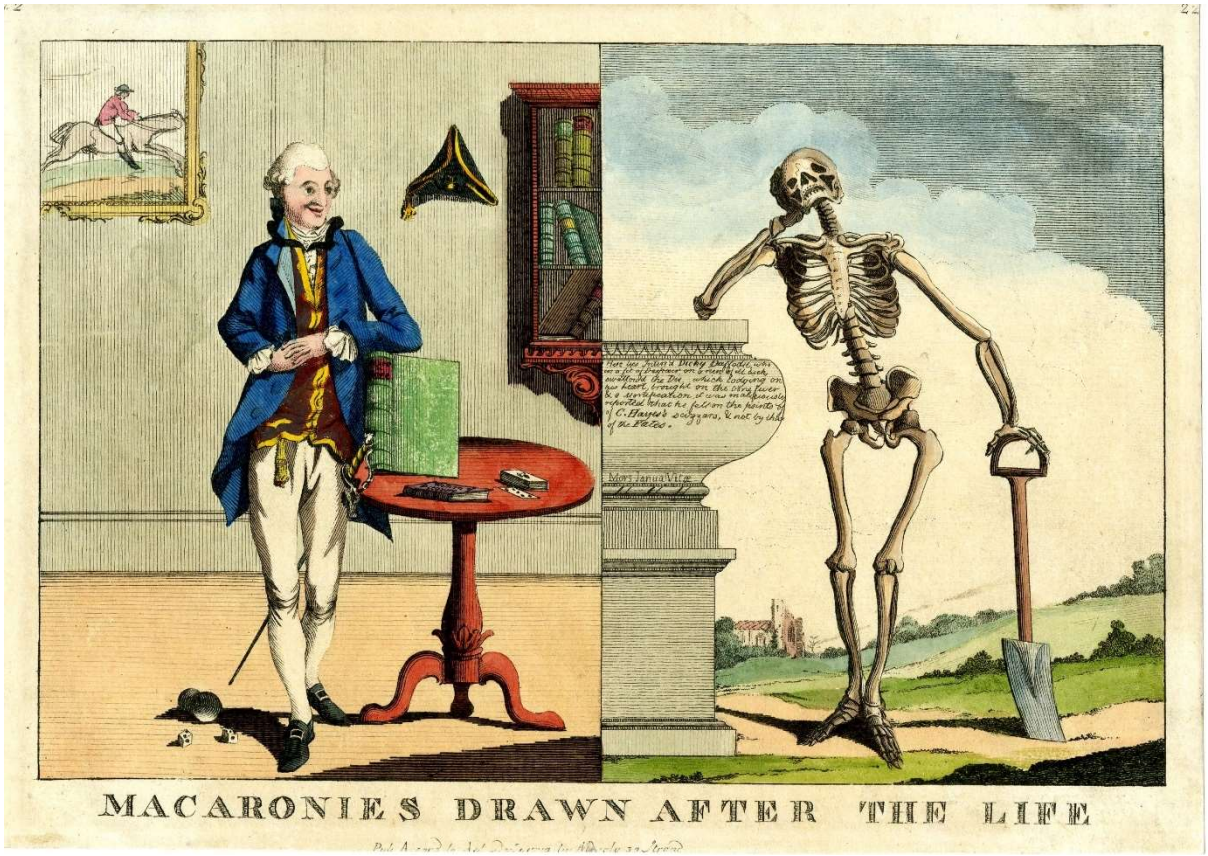

Figure 4: Matthias Darly., "Macaronies Drawn After The Life". London, 1773. British Museum, Online. Licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

This print shows both *Harris's List* and *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* in the collection of the flamboyant macaroni. The etching displays a side-by-side comparison of a Macaroni in his finery and foppery and a skeleton. Through the manner that both the living and deceased are shown to be leaning jauntily upon a table and the tomb respectively, it is made evident that these figures are the same character. As both are leaning towards the centre of the print, they function as a mirror reflection of the other. The tomb with its obvious connotations of death is reflected in the living moment by the table and the items by which the macaroni is identified. The anonymous artist has included a book which is labelled "Weber & Hoyle", a copy of *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*, and a pack of playing cards. Meanwhile, a bound book labelled *Harris's List* is on the top shelf of the sparse bookshelf in the background. The Weber & Hoyle text is a reference to the works by Edmond Hoyle who wrote rules for card

games.[275] Weber is one of the aliases used by Hoyle's publishers of the text *A Short Treatise on the Game of Whist* (1742).[276] The copy of the *List* owned by the macaroni is simply identified as *Harris's List.* Darly did not deem it necessary to include a specific year or a full library collection of editions. Just the abbreviated title of *Harris's List* is instantly recognisable as a symbol of debauchery and sexual promiscuity.

Freya Gowrley refers to graphic satirical prints of macaronis as being defined by 'oversized wigs, teetering heels, giant buttons, and spindly legs'.[277] While these are all undeniably present in Darly's print, it appears that the props that he associates with the subculture of macaronis imply immorality through gambling and their lustful desires which will lead to their untimely deaths. Questions around the sexual orientations of the macaroni have been at the heart of many different scholarly debates. A 1773 pamphlet, *The Vauxhall Affray*, describes macaronis with this quatrain:

> But *Macaronies* are a sex
> Which do philosophers perplex;
> Tho' all the priests of Venus's rites
> Agree they are *Hermaphrodites*.[278]

This understanding of the macaroni being gender neutral and androgynous is a common theme throughout satirical prints and other comic material of the eighteenth century. As a result of the effeminate fashions that maracronis are easily identified by, they assume both stereotypically male and stereotypically female characteristics. This confuses hetero and cis-normative understandings of society. This can also be seen in the shortening the title *Harris's*

[275] David Levy, "Pirates, Autographs and a Bankruptcy: *A Short Treatise on the Game of Whist* by Edmond Hoyle, Gentleman", *Script and Print,* 34, no. 3, (2010), 136 - 161.
[276] Ibid.
[277] Freya Gowrley, "Representing Camp: Constructing Macaroni Masculinity in Eighteenth-Century Visual Satire", *ABO: Interactive Journal for Women in the Arts, 1640 – 1830,* 9, no. 1, 1.
[278] *The Vauxhall Affray; or, the Macaronis Defeated,* (London: J. Williams, 1773), 59.

List of Covent-Garden Ladies; or, Man of Pleasure's Kalendar to simply *Harris's List.* In making the text identifiable, Darly removes references to both ladies and the figure of the man of pleasure. Shearer West argues that 'the ubiquity of macaronis could thus be seen as a metaphor for the collapse of moral and social values'.[279] In Darly's print, *Harris's List* and *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* are the tools with which this destruction of values will be enacted. The androgyny and bisexuality of the macaroni allows for different interpretations of reading both texts as pornography. Readers can use the *List* for erotic titillation from the perspective of the sex buyer but also by imagining the experience of the sex worker. This duality can be seen in Miss Sally N—wt—n's 1783 entry.

> Her hands, which were before employed as guards to that enticing spot, are now busy in making a *member* fit to *stand* in the *House of Commons*. Her swelling breasts, now wilfully exposed to sight with amorous pressure are inclined to your's; nor is the free egress of hands to any part denied. Her smothering lips employ their fullest force, and with unremitting ardor press their magic power.[280]

Juxtaposing the repeated pronoun her with the possessive pronoun your directly inserts the reader into this voyeuristic fantasy encounter.

Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure moves away from the whore biography form using the first person as it is an epistolary text. The use of letters gives the sex worker a voice and allows readers to participate as voyeurs in the moments of the text. Andrea Haslanger

[279] Shearer West, "The Darly Macaroni Prints and the Politics of 'Private Man'", *Eighteenth Century Life*, 25, no. 2, 2001, 170 – 182, 177.
[280] *HL 1783,* 37.

discusses the 'stark limitations of the confessional "I" in a setting of sex work'.[281] She argues that the

> homogeneity of the confessional voices that populate *Fanny Hill* – Fanny's as well as her fellow prostitutes' – shows that the "I" is not a sign of selfhood so much as a vehicle through which women express their adherence to a normative model of sexual function, in which any sort of sex, regardless of its specifics, is pleasurable.[282]

Narrative structures enable the erotic as Cleland presents his readers with a first-person perspective of these sexual encounters. The pleasure that the women receive is shared with the reader. Instead of being a voyeuristic passive witness to the sexual activities, these scenes begin to include the audience. Bonnie Blackwell has argued that *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* is 'narrated by an enthusiastic vagina'.[283] Using this framework, I would posit that *Harris's List* is compiled by an enthusiastic penis. The authors of the text, who are assumed to be heterosexual males, are not themselves present at any point in the *List.* Yet, the conceit of the text only exists under the premise that the writers are customers of the women included. The first-person mode is not regularly used in *Harris's List* and it is typically not employed in other whore biographies. However, the author of the *List* permeates every entry with their personal opinions being presented as facts. When opinions are given, the anonymous author of *Harris's List* does occasionally use the plural form of the first-person. The 1793 entry for Miss Sc—tt opens by saying 'we cannot call this lady a beauty of the first

[281]Andrea Haslanger, "What Happens When Pornography Ends in Marriage: The Uniformity of Pleasure in 'Fanny Hill'" *ELH* 78, no. 1 (2011): 163.
[282] Ibid., 163-164.
[283] Bonnie Blackwell, "Corkscrews and Courtesans: Sex and Death in Circulation Novels", in Mark Blackwell (ed.), *The Secret Life of things: Animals, Objects, and It-Narratives in Eighteenth-Century England,* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2007), 265 – 291, 289.

rate'.[284] This nosism presents the writer as an omniscient spokesperson for the community of eighteenth century sex buyers and even more broadly heterosexual men in general.

When Cleland was a 'sadder and wiser man' he rewrote *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* from the perspective of his male protagonist, William Delamore.[285] This text *Memoirs of a Coxcomb* (1751) does include references to his sexual activity, however, Mudge argues that:

> The descriptions of his experiences are mild enough for Sarah Scott or Jane Austen. Gone is the unbridled licentiousness; gone is the passionate storytelling; gone is the desire to arouse the reader. This newfound modesty, accompanied as it is by weak writing and unremarkable characterizations, has led numerous commentators to bemoan Cleland's sudden loss of talent.[286]

Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure in the contemporary zeitgeist is inextricable from its licentiousness. Removing the unrestrained sexuality from the narrative meant that Cleland's writing suffered. The comparative inadequacies of *Memoirs of a Coxcomb* were as a result of 'fear of prosecution, the burdens of poverty, and writing under deadline all conspired to produce mediocrity'.[287] The authors of *Harris's List* did not appear to fear prosecution to the same extent as Cleland prior to the trials of the booksellers Aitkin and Roach in 1794.

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[284] *HL 1793,* 15.
[285] Bradford Keyes Mudge, *The Whore's Story: Women, Pornography, and the British Novel, 1684 – 1830,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 223.
[286] Ibid., 224.
[287] Ibid.

Obscenity, Pornography, and the end of *Harris's List*

The connection between *Harris's List of Covent-Garden Ladies* and *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* extends beyond the fact that both texts are primarily concerned with sex and the erotic. In 1816 the bookseller Edward Rich was accused of obscenity. The lawyer, Joseph Chitty, wrote and published Rich's indictment where it was said that the bookseller

> did unlawfully, wickedly, and impiously publish, and cause and procure to be published, a certain wicked, nasty, filthy, bawdy, and obscene libel, entitled […] "Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure," in which said last-mentioned libel are contained amongst other things, divers wicked, false, feigned, lewd, impious, impure, bawdy, and obscene prints.[288]

When texts such as *Harris's List* and *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* are brought against charges of libel, the main charge is the fact that they contain vulgar and obscene content instead of modern understandings of libel. Fanny Hill herself seems to predict her author's fate as the novel opens by admitting that her narrative will be seen as 'violating those laws of decency, that were never made for such unreserved intimacies as ours'.[289] However, Simon Stern has argued that in the eighteenth century the laws of decency that concern Fanny and that Cleland and the sellers of *Harris's List* are seen to have broken were 'in a state of flux'.[290]

This accusation follows the form of the charges that were brought against the booksellers John Aitken and James Roach in 1794. The written indictments of these two men

[288] Joseph Chitty, *A Practical Treatise on the Criminal Law,* vol. 2. (London: A. J. Valpy, 1816), 42-44
[289] Cleland, *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure,* 1.
[290] Simon Stern, "*Fanny Hill* and the "Laws of Decency": Investigating Obscenity in the Mid-Eighteenth Century", *Eighteenth-Century Life* 43, no. 2 (2019): 162-187, 165

were almost identical and the cited extracts from *Harris's List* are the same. Descriptions such as 'whiteness of a bosom' and 'ruby portals of Cupid's Grotto' are amongst the passages that were discussed in court.[291] The accusation was that both men 'did lawfully wickedly and impiously publish and cause to be published a certain wicked, nasty, filthy, bawdy, and obscene libel'.[292] Despite this impressive list of synonyms for sexually explicit language, nowhere in *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* nor *Harris's List* are there direct references to the correct anatomical language for sexual anatomy or the act of fornication. However, Cleland's use of phrases such as 'nether mouth' and *Harris's List*'s 'mouth of the devil' reflect the ways in which obscene metaphors began to create a new language.[293] Literary published pornography developed in the shadows of respectability in order to escape censorship and legal troubles. Janet Ing Freeman has written an article that goes into fascinating detail about the results of the trial. In this she notes how Roach attempted to use the long publication history of *Harris's List* as his defence; the bookseller claimed that the directory had been published annually for over three decades, and nobody had been prosecuted for it before.[294] However, these cases reflect the ways that the sex panic of the 1790s began to impact literature beyond just the narratives told.

The majority of pornographic material in eighteenth century England was imported from Italy and France.[295] Peakman has found that this European erotica was popular with an English audience and it began to encourage 'reprints, translations and emulations' which retained the themes of 'defloration, bodily fluids, anti-Catholicism and flagellation'.[296] These

[291] National Archives KB 28/ 370, roll 5, 3.
[292] National Archives, Kings Bench 1794 KB 28/370/ roll 5, 1.
National Archives, Kings Bench 1794 KB 28/371/ roll 23, 1.
[293] Cleland, *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure,* 78.
HL 1793, 48.
[294] Freeman, "Jack Harris and 'Honest Ranger': The Publication and Prosecution of *Harris's List of Covent-Garden Ladies,* 1760 – 95", 446.
[295] Peakman, *Mighty Lewd Books*, 15.
[296] Ibid.

themes regularly appear in *Harris's List* with women such as Mrs Mac—tney who specialises in creating 'a feast of amorous delight' with the 'magic of a birch rod'.[297] However, by far the most prevalent recurring image across *Harris's List* is that of defloration. The fantasy of being involved in a woman's first sexual experience is made complicated, if not impossible, by engaging the services of a sex worker. This is where the lush descriptions of *Harris's List* fill this gap as the writers create a voyeuristic imagining of the loss of virginity which allows readers to participate in this act. Miss Hannah P—tt's record in the 1783 *List* contains a prurient retelling of her and her sister's defloration.

> Flushed with all the fire of youth, impetuous, burning with every desire the young hand of lust could create, and still strangers, except in idea, to the grand *subduer* of their fires, they sought this expanded field of delight, nor sought in vain: their youth and beauty soon attracted the eyes of two male veterans in our band, and their rustic innocence and simplicity were soon overpowered; and e'er they had been in town twice twenty-four hours, their virgin flowers were pluck'd.[298]

While the two women were virgins before this encounter, the men that they were intimate with were not. Although it is implied at the start of this passage that Hannah and her sister wanted to lose their virginities to subdue their fiery libidos, they are still described in terms of being 'overpowered'.[299] This violent language of conquest undercuts most descriptions of defloration and goes back to my earlier arguments about the prevalence of debauchery.

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[297] *HL 1793,* 82.
[298] *HL 1783,* 131 – 132.
[299] *HL 1783,* 131 - 132.

Female virginity is seen by the writers of the *List* as something to be taken, not given willingly.

A medical handbook published for midwives in 1711 describes the hymen in similar semantic terms as *Harris's List* uses to allude to virginity. The text identifies the hymen as 'thin and sinewy Skin or Membrane' which resembles 'a kind of Rose-bud half blown'.[300] Floral allusions become a regular substitute for references to female genitalia across *Harris's List.* This acts to infantilise women as they are reduced to being purely decorative and vulnerable. Men are described as pollinating and plucking the floral virginity of women, sometimes children, without any repercussions. The hymen's status as being half-blown stresses the temporality of the structure as it has already begun to disintegrate. Conflictingly, this structure can only be used as evidence of virginity when it has been destroyed.

Virginity in the *List* is presented as the most desirable quality in a potential sexual partner and yet is impossible to find in a sex worker. The 1793 edition refers to Miss L—w—s' first penetrative sexual experience by saying that 'her rose' was 'plucked'.[301] The verb 'plucked' appears consistently in *Harris's List* and is a euphemism for a coarser word that it rhymes with. The entry goes on to say that 'an artist of some celebrity is said to be the fortunate seducer of her treasure'.[302] Describing her first sexual partner as fortunate and using language such as treasure emphasises the ways that virginity is valued and defloration is seen by the *List* as the most coveted sexual act. Detailing her recent loss of her virginity also reveals an attitude amongst the readership of the text as it is implied that the recency of her first sexual experience means that she is more desirable. Sexual intercourse is presented as

[300] *Aristotle's Compleat and Experience'd Midwife: in Two Parts,* (London: Printed, and sold by the Booksellers, 1711) 11.
[301] Ibid., 79.
[302] Ibid., 79.

being innately corrupting if it is premarital. This is as a result of mid-eighteenth century ideals. Corrinne Harol surmises that female virginity:

> matters to men because it guarantees patrilinear legitimacy and therefore the legitimacy of patrimony: the virgin girl will seamlessly transition into the chaste wife and bear her husband's legitimate heirs.[303]

However, the sex worker's path has diverged from this pipeline from virgin to wife and yet virginity is still fetishised by the writers of *Harris's List.* This importance imposed upon virginity could be a way for the customers of sex workers to attempt to limit their exposure to sexually transmitted diseases. Peakman states that 'personal hygiene and vaginal cleanliness were not the norm, but were well appreciated when found'.[304] Mrs. Will—ms' entry in the 1793 text describes the impossibility of having her virginity restored to her. It is said that she has

> just returned from Brighton, [where she] has been in dock to have her bottom cleaned and fresh coppered, where she has washed away all impurities of prostitution, and risen almost immaculate, like Venus, from the waves.[305]

The nautical imagery here describing how this woman was cured of her venereal disease is satirical and mocking. *Harris's List* frequently reduces women to objects and even the comparison to a ship is not uncommon. This specific example of objectification reiterates the link between cleanliness, virginity, and health. No information of how she has received

[303] Corrinne Harol, *Enlightened Virginity in Eighteenth-Century Literature,* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 1.
[304] Peakman, *Lascivious Bodies,* 14.
[305] *HL 1793,* 37- 38.

medical treatment for her illness in Brighton is revealed in the *List*. Yet, the imagery of her having 'her bottom cleaned' evokes associations with an improved level of personal hygiene, even when it is clearly embedded within a nautical metaphor.[306] Describing the 'impurities of prostitution' as being 'washed away' evokes Biblical associations of washing away one's sins with Holy Water.[307] Ezekiel 36: 25 in the King James Bible's Old Testament states 'then I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness'.[308] Yet, despite the purification ritual that Mrs. Will—ms has undergone, she does not return to the London sex scene as a born-again virgin. The *List* makes sure to emphasise that she is 'almost immaculate'.[309] Using the adjective immaculate builds on the suggestions of Biblical allegory throughout this entry and becomes a placeholder for the term virginal. However, the authors of the *List* pull the text back from the religious and redirect it towards the classical allusion of Venus. Regardless of her trip to Brighton and her improved standards of cleanliness, she is unable to reach the pinnacle of sexual purity which is immaculate virginity.

Reducing the significance of female virginity to solely male worries about their health would be minimising the patriarchal sexual fantasy that men can physically transform women through sex. The term Fallen Woman is more of a nineteenth century theory and term.[310] Yet, conceptually the idea of penetrative sex as destroying a woman's social standing and even her sense of morality is seen continually across *Harris's List* through the repetition of the verb 'ruin' and the adjective 'ruined'. In every edition that I have been able to view, the word 'ruin' appeared a minimum of two times in every edition. 1788 is the year where 'ruin' only

[306] *HL 1793,* 37- 38.
[307] *HL 1793,* 37- 38.
[308] Ezekiel 36: 25 *Authorized King James Version (Oxford World's Classics),* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)
[309] *HL 1793,* 38.
[310] See Amanda Anderson, *Tainted Souls and Painted Faces: The Rhetoric of Fallenness in Victorian Culture,* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1993)

appears twice.[311] Across the decades language changes but the concept of sex and ruin remain central to the authors of *List*'s ideology.

In 1773, fourteen-year-old Polly Jenkinson is identified as being capable of feigning her virginity.

> She has passed for a maidenhead since that period twenty times, and is paid accordingly; and being under the direction of a very good lady, who directs her to play her part to admiration, she is in a fair way of getting money.[312]

Saying that she was paid accordingly implies that sex buyers were willing to pay more for the experience of taking a counterfeited virginity. The text does not include any details about how she is able to recreate her virginity multiple times so as not to spoil the illusion for prospective customers. Her performance must be based upon popular and medical understandings of the hymen. *Aristotle's Compleat and Experience'd Midwife* refers to the hymen as 'the only certain Mark of Virginity'.[313] This symbol 'manifests most commonly – as blood – only upon its demise'.[314] Harol states that bleeding after sex is 'unlike the hymen [as blood is] highly visibile'.[315] Jenkinson would have used the illusion of blood after intercourse to recreate the imagined experience of her defloration at the hands of her customer. She repeats this charade over twenty times. This is described as 'a fair way of getting money' which emphasises that this performance is a sexually appealing one that is valued as more expensive than less performative intercourse.[316] In *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* Cleland writes a comical scene where Fanny Hill and Mrs. Cole attempt to convince

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[311] *HL 1788*, 84, 85.
[312] *HL 1773,* 84.
[313] *Aristotle's Compleat and Experience'd Midwife: in Two Parts,* 11.
[314] Harol, *Enlightened Virginity in Eighteenth-Century Literature,* 69.
[315] Ibid.
[316] *HL 1773,* 84.

Mr. Norbert that Fanny is a virgin. Rosenthal argues that 'sex becomes a theatrical performance, complete with props (the bloody sponge) but no less pleasing to the client for its simulation'.[317] Although Mr Norbert was not aware that he was being defrauded, while Jenkinson's customers were suspending their disbelief, all the men seem sexually and psychologically satisfied with the presence of blood to represent the fresh loss of virginity.

Furthermore, the relationship between the author and the text's readerships is strengthened when the text focuses more on the imagined fantasies of sex than the physical reality. Mrs. B—nn—r's entry in the 1787 edition describes:

> involuntary sighs of excess of pleasure, solicit the endearing clasp of manly pleasure, whilst the titillation of nature in her favourite *spot below, feelingly* call for the *Priapian weapon* to receive it in her *sheath* at its most powerful thrust up to the hilt.[318]

This pleasure is shared ubiquitously between Mrs. B—nn—r and her imagined partner. Indeed, the only reference to the male body is through metaphors alluding to the penis. This allows for any man to be able to insert himself into the role of powerful lover. Denlinger argues that the 'women's sexual hunger and the men's ability to satisfy it on the level imagined by the writers of the lists can only exist within the precincts of pornotopia'.[319] The term pornotopia was coined by Stephen Marcus in 1966 to describe the space that pornographic works and erotica exist in without being confined by the realities of social conventions and physical restrictions.[320] The erotic assurance that the women included upon

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[317] Laura J. Rosenthal, *Infamous Commerce: Prostitution in Eighteenth-Century British Literature and Culture,* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2006), 125.
[318] *HL* 1787, 19.
[319] Elizabeth Campbell Denlinger, "The Garment and the Man: Masculine Desire in *Harris's List of Covent-Garden Ladies*, 1764-1793", *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 11, No. 3, (2002): 360.
[320] Steven Marcus, *The Other Victorians: A Study of Sexuality and Pornography in Mid-Nineteenth-Century England,* (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2008)

the pages of the lists are voracious lovers who engage in sex work purely as a result of their 'love for the sport' allows readers to distance themselves from the real and become fully immersed within pornotopia.[321] Yet, while the lists prioritise sexual pleasure and fantasies, they also contain repeated references and warnings towards women. While it seems that men can use *Harris's List* as a pathway to reach pornotopia, it is a step too far to imagine a space where women of the eighteenth century are not confined by societal standards.

Harris's List clouds descriptions of male and female genitalia in allusion and imagery. To a certain extent, this language may be employed to try to escape censorship and libel. Although the *List* does end in the 1790s as a direct result of the indictment of the booksellers who sold it, it did have an extremely long and popular print run through various decades. There is a three-year gap between 1768 and 1770 where there is no evidence of advertisements for new editions of the *List* or surviving editions. However, this is the only interruption to the scheduled production that occurs between 1760 and 1794. For a text containing such salacious material, it somehow managed to escape censorship. Over the long publication history, the level of obscenity fluctuates. Of the surviving editions, the texts that were published in the 1780s appear to be the most explicit. In 1787, it is said that Miss Phoebe B—rn 'never fails to make the member stand'.[322] Comparatively, six years, later Miss D--vis 'never fails to please'.[323] Euphemistically replacing the direct reference to an erection by the concept of pleasure does effectively convey that the women share the same skill. However, the latter rewording of this description dilutes the obscenity and hides the pornographic imagery in literary metaphors. The similarities between the entries describing the young women are not an instance of a repeated entry. On a literal level both sex workers are brunettes with full figures, but this is the end of the similarities. The earlier edition of the

[321] *HL 1787*, 13.
[322] *HL 1787,* 114.
[323] *HL 1793*, 9.

List not only includes Miss B—rn's given name, but it does not censor any of the vowels. By the 1793 edition, there was an increase in anxieties among the authors of *Harris's List.* In 1793 and 1794, there are no Christian names listed in *Harris's List* at all, whereas in previous decades they were included without being subjected to the same amount of vowel censoring of the sex worker's surnames.

'Who does not love the divine Virgil?': Mock Epic and Comedy in *Harris's List*

Characters of the Present Most Celebrated Courtezans begins by acknowledging the influence that the figure of Harris has over the literature of the sex industry. The anonymous author states that 'the erudite and philosophical Mr. Harris, is the only writer I have ever encountered on this no less interesting than extensive subject'.[324] The preface is excessive in its hyperbolic flattery of Harris, but it does offer an interesting insight into the popularity of the text as the author states that Harris's 'annual productions have long met the public approbation of his numberless Readers'.[325] Yet, it is made obvious that this author does not consider the numberless readers of *Harris's List* to be using it as a practical guide to Covent Garden's sex-workers. First by identifying them as readers it suggests that *Harris's List* is regularly read fully as a literary text, rather than used as an accessory to the sex industry. This emphasis establishes the customers who buy the text as readers instead of consumers or purveyors of the sex industry.

The author of *Characters of the Present Most Celebrated Courtezans* highlights the writing style of Harris.

[324] "Characters of the Present Most Celebrated Courtezans", 13.
[325] Ibid., 14.

> The accuracy of his orthography, the flowing elegance of his periods, the aptitude of his remarks, and the astonishing variety of his descriptions, must place him as far beyond the power of malice, as of imitation, and transmit his name and writings with unrivalled honour to posterity.[326]

This excessive and farcical flattery is continued as the text goes on to make grand and extravagant claims about the literary skills of Harris.

> Slander, malevolent abuse, and detraction are the infallible consequences of envy; but they are never uttered by the vulgar against superlative excellence. Who has slandered Homer? – who has maligned Milton? – who does not love the divine Virgil? – and who shall ever read the heroic, the sublime, the elegant Harris, but with a lively recollection of the universal beauties of this matchless triumvirate. If it should be objected to me, that I have chosen unapt and improper objects of comparison for my favourite author, in as much as they are poets of the most exalted reputation; I reply, that so is Harris.[327]

The connection between this unlikely group is that their work is 'totally founded on fiction'.[328] This claim that the *List* is fictional from as early as 1780 emphasises that the debates around the purpose of the text concerned contemporary audiences as much as it continues to divide modern scholarship.

[326] "Characters of the Present Most Celebrated Courtezans", 16.
[327] Ibid., 17-18.
[328] Ibid., 18.

Stating that fiction is the only similarity between Milton, Homer, Virgil, and Harris is a double-edged sword because not only does it discredit the practical uses of the *List* by challenging the authenticity and authority of the text, but it also insults the writing style. While the classical authors wrote Epics, the entries of *Harris's List* are short. Very rarely does any individual description continue beyond a paragraph or two. Through juxtaposing the lengths of these Epics with the *List*, the figure of the poet-pimp Harris is emasculated as his text comes up short. Given the content of the *List,* this goes beyond a literary criticism and instead becomes an inferred comment on his impotence. *Harris's List* makes constant appeals to the classics in which Harris attempts to give the text some legitimacy through establishing himself as well-educated. Rubenhold states that

> In the eighteenth century, the calling card of any man who considered himself to be a gentleman was a classical education. Those who could quote from Virgil and Pliny, who could debate the worth of Socrates and hurl insults in Latin, found that they could more easily acquire access to the drawing rooms of their superiors.[329]

However, the epigraph on the title page of *Characters of the Present Most Celebrated Courtezans* includes a quote from Virgil's *Aeneid* in Latin 'Quaeque ipse miserrima vidi,// Et quorum pars magna fui'.[330] This couplet translates to 'all the horrors I have seen, // and in which I played a great part'.[331] This direct insertion of the author into the active role of playing a part in the aforementioned terrible things reiterates the claims made by the preface that *Harris's List* is not as legitimate as *Characters*. While *Harris's List* is only able to make vague and generalised allusions to classical literature such as repetition of the word nymph,

[329] Rubenhold, *The Covent Garden Ladies,* 35.
[330] "Characters of the Present Most Celebrated Courtezans", 1.
[331] Virgil, *The Aeneid,* trans. David West (London: Penguin, 2003), 25.

Characters of the Present Most Celebrated Courtezans cements itself as a member of the elite society within which *Harris's List* wants to be involved through exact quotation of Virgil's Latin. This quote appears at the beginning of the second book of *The Aeneid* which tells the iconic story of the Trojan horse and the sack of Troy.[332] Simplistically and reductively, it could be argued that the Trojan War is a battle fought between men because of the beauty of women. This is not unlike the battle between the authors of various courtesan catalogues and bawdy pamphlets as male writers used female celebrity and allure to earn a profit.

Characters of the Present Most Celebrated Courtezans argues that the narrative qualities and the poetic prose of *Harris's List* are more significant than the practical uses of a typical bawdy pamphlet. The anonymous author of *Characters of the Present Most Celebrated Courtezans* has a vested interest in discrediting the validity of *Harris's List* as, through this attack on the list, they implicitly align themselves with ideas of truth. In response to the criticisms brought up by *Characters of the Present Most Celebrated Courtezans* by the 1790s the average length of each entry of the list was made considerably shorter, and Harris seems to make a conscious effort in limiting his use of classical language; the word 'nymph' appears sixteen times in the 1787 edition and only six times in 1793. However, Rubenhold argues that across the course of the text's publication 'randy roysters who had lusted after lewd women were now genteelly known as the sons of Bacchus, and the objects of their affection as the daughters of Venus'.[333] She goes on to say

> even the delightfully base act of fornication was now ruined by these latest authors of the *Harris's List,* who described the lifting of a whore's skirts in terms of fountains and temples, conjuring all the

[332] Virgil, *The Aeneid,* 25.
[333] Rubenhold, *The Covent Garden Ladies,* 295.

> pastoral splendour of Arcadia. Society was becoming damnably prudish.[334]

While the shift in descriptions away from the coarse descriptions in the earliest editions of *Harris's List* towards appeals to classical authors and texts are not a reflection of the increasing prudishness of society. Instead, it reflects the aspirations of the list to be read by an elite and educated audience. Peter Wagner argued that it was 'common practice' for London's elite gentlemen to have mistresses.[335] Arranging for a woman to become a kept mistress or a courtesan was an expensive business but the pornography publishing industry flattened the playing field through producing erotic material that 'varied from penny sheets and sixpenny books to expensive, leather-bound books costing up to six guineas'.[336] *Harris's List* sits in an intermediary position in terms of economic status as it is at once a text that is readily available to members of the middling classes but it appeals to Epic traditions of Greco-Roman classical literature. This meant that *Harris's List* could fulfil fantasies of social mobility through letting readers feel as if they were part of London's metropolitan and educated elite as they are able to align themselves with those who read Virgil and keep mistresses.

As Maxine Berg asserts, 'social and cultural historians, literary scholars, and even social scientists regard the eighteenth century as the turning point in the rise of consumer society'.[337] The development of consumerism ran parallel to the formation of the emergence of the middle class in the eighteenth century. Berg writes that this new class ranged from 'professionals, merchants, and industrialists to ordinary trades people and artisans [who]

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[334] Rubenhold, *The Covent Garden Ladies,* 295.
[335] Peter Wagner, "The pornographer in the courtroom: trial reports about cases of sexual crimes and delinquencies as a genre of eighteenth-century erotica" In *Sexuality in eighteenth-century Britain*, ed. Paul-Gabriel Boucé, 120-141, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1982), 134-135.
[336] Peakman, *Mighty Lewd Books*, 14.
[337] Maxine Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth-Century Britain,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 12.

embraced these new consumer goods with the modernity, politeness, respectability, and independence they conveyed'.[338] This new professional and mercantile group of consumers may not have prioritised politeness as much as Berg implies. We know that *Harris's List* was commercially successful, and it seems to have found a dedicated audience among the middling sort of individuals.

Reading *Harris's List* seriously and earnestly is a difficult task as the text is often farcical and humorous. It has been argued that the text can be read as 'more an example of comic erotica rather than active advertisement'.[339] Finding the funny side of the *List* does not immediately discredit either the erotic or the practical elements of the text. Ultimately, it is a text that is designed to provide entertainment. Thomas Hobbe's *Leviathan* (1651) presents a theory of comedy and laughter where vicious mocking creates 'grimaces called laughter' as a result of 'the apprehension of some deformed thing in another, by comparison whereof they suddenly applaud themselves' over a century before the first publication of *Harris's List*.[340] Comedy is frequently created at the expense of the sex workers included in the *List* through describing the women as being unattractive, and repulsive at times. From the superficial insults of appearance such as when Mrs Bi—d is described as having 'a dead eye and a flattish nose' in 1793,[341] to more crude language such as when Lucy P—terson was described 'in a homely phrase, a vile bitch' in 1761.[342] Identifying and focussing on these disagreeable traits in a worker whose entire livelihood is dependent on being attractive is incongruous in exactly the manner Hobbes identified in the seventeenth century. This once again imbues the reader with a sense of superiority. The text creates a space for members of the newly

[338] Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, 15.
[339] Jane Moore and John Strachan, *Key Concepts in Romantic Literature,* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 108.
[340] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan; or, the Matter, Forme, & Power of a Common-wealth Ecclesiasticall and Civill,* (London: Andrew Crooke at the Green Dragon in St. Paul's Churchyard, 1651), 16.
[341] *HL 1793,* 13.
[342] *HL 1761,* 12.

developing middle class to aspire to elite connections through its use of Classical allusions and by cementing their position as above the working classes and sex workers.

When discussing comic chapbooks, Simon Dickie explains how cruelty and comedy is often intertwined in the eighteenth century.

> The blatant bawdiness of traditional popular humour is often elaborated into a complex double entendre. Sneers at physical deformities frequently appear as instances of verbal wit. Arguably, then, such jokes were acceptable in polite society only because of their verbal framing […] made it possible to discuss base or repugnant things without violating linguistic decorum.[343]

Harris's List adheres to these conventions of linguistic decorum to disguise its cruelty against the sex workers as humour. The edition of *Ranger's Impartial List of the Ladies of Pleasure in Edinburgh* which is held in the National Library of Scotland contains an 1840 written inscription on the flyleaf from the text's previous owner, C.K. Sharpe. Sharpe bought the book from a bookseller on George's Street and he gives his exact reasoning for doing so.

> On account of a Mrs, or Lady, Agnew, recorded p.35 – my mother's grand aunt, Lady Mary Montgomerie, married in to the Lochnaw family; so I wished to possess this precious memorial of one of my female cousins—but my mother, who knew two generations of the Agnews intimately, assured me that this statement is entirely false.[344]

[343] Dickie, *Cruelty and Laughter,* 40.
[344] *Ranger's Impartial List of the Ladies of Pleasure in Edinburgh* (shelfmark: Ry.II.g.23)

Regardless of the truth about his relationship with Lady Agnew, referring to this particular entry as a precious memory is absolutely a lie. The entry describing Sharpe's great-grand aunt is brutal and unrelentless in its comedic cruelty.

> THIS drunken bundle of iniquity is about 50 years of age, lusty and tall, and she has followed the old trade since she was about 13. […] Being a disgrace to her relations, who are some of the best in Scotland, they sent her to the north, where she continued her business for a long time. She regards neither decency nor decorum, and would as willingly lie with a chimney-sweep as with a Lord. Her desires are so immoderate, that she would think nothing of a company of Grenadiers at one time. Take her all in all, she is an abandoned Piece.[345]

This description is a relentless character assassination rather than an eroticised advert for an experienced sex worker. The only vaguely positive comment that the author can think of praising Lady Agnew with is by saying that her father was a 'brave General', which bears no reflection on her own personality, and even this is immediately rejected by the fact that she is referred to as a disgrace to her relations.[346] Classism permeates this entry as the fact that Lady Agnew would willingly accept clients of various social standing is presented as a direct result of the fact that the author of *Ranger's Impartial List* believes that she lacks both decency and decorum.

In 2020 the British Library acquired a copy of a 1793 parody to *Harris's List.*[347] The full title of the rival publication is *Harris's List of Covent-Garden Ladies; or, Man of*

[345] *Ranger's Impartial List of the Ladies of Pleasure in Edinburgh,* 35.
[346] Ibid.
[347] *Harris's List of Covent-Garden Ladies; or, Man of Pleasure's Kalender for the Year 1793,* (London: John Sudbury, 1793)

Pleasure's Kalender, for the Year 1793. (Newly revived and carefully Corrected) Containing the Histories and some Curious Anecdotes of the most celebrated Ladies now on the Town, or in Keeping, and also many of their Keepers. This is identical to the title of the real 1793 edition. The imitator even copied the spelling of Kalender, which is used from 1791 onwards, replacing the earlier spelling of Kalendar. Replacing the H. Ranger with the bookseller John Sudbury is the only remarkable difference when comparing the two title pages.

All the surviving editions of *Harris's List* from the 1760s use the subtitle *New Atalantis* rather than *Man of Pleasure's Kalendar* which appears from 1771 onwards. I believe that this is a direct reference to Delarivier Manley's *Secret Memoirs and Manners of Several Persons of Quality, of both Sexes, From The New Atalantis an Island in the Mediteranean* which was first published in 1709.[348] Manley's satire begins with a goddess named Astrea returning to Earth to 'see if Humankind were still as defective, as when she in a Disgust forsook it'.[349] She immediately encounters her mother, Virtue, who has been neglected and is dressed in '*obsolete* and *torn*' clothing.[350] Depicting virtue as being abandoned, irrelevant, and destroyed foreshadows the debauchery that the two goddesses encounter. Astrea notes early on that the only Deities that humans revere are '*Bacchus* and *Venus* (in their most criminal Rites)'.[351] The criminality and sexuality of humanity is shown explicitly to Astrea and Virtue and Manley's readers through various depictions of crime, defloration, rape, and group sex. This is made to be erotic through extended passages describing luxuries.

[348] Delarivier Manley, *Secret Memoirs and Manners of Several Persons of Quality, of both Sexes, From The New Atalantis, an Island in the Mediteranean,* 2nd ed. (London: John Morphew, 1709)
[349] Ibid., 1.
[350] Ibid., 2.
[351] Ibid., 15.

Theatricality, Amatory Fiction, and *Harris's List*

In the introduction to *Prostitution and Eighteenth Century Culture,* Markman Ellis and Ann Lewis refer to the fact that 'the event of prostitution in the eighteenth century was an extended performance, not simply confined to the act of fornication itself'.[352] The act of self-promotion and the ways that the women are described in the *List* is a continuation of this performance. As the text focuses on building narratives and telling stories, the work of the sex worker goes beyond offering physical satisfaction in person. The prostitute figure in the *List* offers erotic titillation, creates a sentimentalised experience of sympathy, is a comedic character, and more. The emphasis moves away from the realities and difficulties that face sex workers in order to create a fictionalised layer of eroticism and to exaggerate the pornographic aspects of the prostitute narratives.

Mudge states that

> By the early eighteenth century, the debate over the masquerade solidified the connections between prostitution and fiction to such a degree that the two were melded together, each a constitutive metaphor for the other. These connections were aided by the long-established relations between the theatre and prostitution.[353]

Fantomina; or, Love in a Maze (1725) is one of Eliza Haywood's most iconic pieces of amatory fiction and it explicitly highlights the relationship between masquerade, the stage, and sex work that Mudge is discussing. In the novella, an unnamed heroine of 'distinguished Birth, Beauty, Wit, and Spirit' attends the theatre where she finds herself in contempt of the elite aristocratic men who are behaving in a brusque way to get the attention of a sex worker

[352] Markman Ellis and Ann Lewis, "Introduction: Venal Bodies" in *Prostitutes and Eighteenth-Century Culture,* (Abingdon, Routledge: 2016),1 – 16, 3.
[353]Mudge, *The Whore's Story: Women, Pornography, and the British Novel, 1684 – 1830*, 227

who is sitting in the audience. [354] As this protagonist is new to the city and had no close family who were 'oblig'd to be accountable for her Actions', she decided to see if she could impersonate a sex worker.[355] She dressed in the 'Fashion of those Women who make sale of their Favours' and returns to the theatre the next night where she was approached by various men. Her disguise is effective but retains similarities to her real identity. Indeed, one of the prospective customers remarks that she 'is mighty like my fine Lady Such-a-one, - naming her own Name'.[356] Through embodying a prostitute, both the heroine and her love interest, Beauplaisir, were able to interact in a 'free and unrestrain'd Manner' as the interactions between sex workers and buyers are not integrated within the norms and expectations of typical society.[357] However, the heroine is new to sex work and so a few days later when she loses her virginity to Beauplaisir she repeats that she is now 'undone'.[358] This notion of undone reflects *Harris's List*'s repetition of 'ruin'. She repeats this sentiment throughout the novella each time she successfully seduces Beauplaisir in each of her different disguises, until she ultimately gives birth to his child and is sent to a monastery in France. Even though Beauplaisir initially believes her to be a sex worker, before they have intercourse for the first time, she declares that she is a virgin who has disguised herself as a prostitute. He offers her his estate in exchange for her sexual services which parodies and critiques the marriage market. The heroine's own personhood and sense of self and identity are usurped by her performance to the extent that the novel is named after one of her fictionalised aliases. Her performances as a sex worker are the moments when she appears to be most herself as she is not acting out the role that society has carved out for her.

[354]Eliza Haywood, *Fantomina: And Other Works*, (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2008), 15.
[355] Ibid.
[356] Ibid.
[357] Ibid.
[358] Ibid.

Although Haywood moves away from writing eroticised amatory fiction later in her career, the radical relationship between the protagonist and prostitute permeates her writing style. Katherine Sobba Green describes how by the age of fifty-one, Haywood reacted to changing social and literary tropes and 'returned to topics she had already attempted in *The Female Spectator*, restyling her novels to suit new audience demands for moral heroine-centred tales'.[359] This is parodied in the ways that the authors of *Harris's List* decided to centre the women included in the *List* and their narrative qualities through the literary descriptions. Although women of *Harris's List* are very rarely paragons of morality and virtue, but the later editions of the *List* prioritise constructing narratives that centre the women. Some of these texts are moralising. Haywood's 1751 novel *Betsy Thoughtless* typifies this new moralising heroine but still positions the literary sex worker as being essential to the plot and narrative development. Moreover, as David Oakleaf has argued, *Betsy Thoughtless* is deeply significant as 'no other important novel of the mid eighteenth century, certainly none written by a woman, associates its heroine as closely with whores'.[360] Haywood does not just use narratives of literary and fictional sex workers and adulterers in the novel, but also the title of the text reflects a historical prostitute which further aligns the role of the author with sex work. Betsy Careless died just one year after the first publication of *Betsy Thoughtless* and was herself a notorious actress before she became a sex worker and a bawd.[361] In 1791 John Ireland was the first to explicitly make this connection while critiquing Hogarth's *Marriage a la Mode* (1743) when he wrote that 'Mrs Haywood's Betsy

[359] Katherine Sobba Green, *The Courtship Novel, 1740-1820: A Feminized Genre*, (Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1991), 25.
[360] David Oakleaf, "Circulating the Name of a Whore: Eliza Haywood's Betsy Thoughtless, Betsy Careless and the Duplicities of the Double Standard" *Women's Writing: The Elizabethan to Victorian Period* 15, no. 1 (2008): 107.
[361] Ibid.

Thoughtless was in MS. Entitled Betsy Careless'.[362] Through Hogarth's art and Haywood's writing, Betsy Careless became an infamous prostitute protagonist in her own right.

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to fully discuss the history of the relationship between sex work and the stage. Yet, as *Harris's List* refers to sex workers as *Covent Garden Ladies* it is clear that this deep relationship influences the *List.* As I have discussed earlier in the previous chapter, Covent Garden was identified by the prevalence of the theatres in this area. It was the theatre district, and as such it became an area of fashion and, consequently, debauchery. Peakman and other scholars of prostitution and sexuality have regularly put forth the argument that actresses and other women who were visible in the public eye were regarded as sex workers.[363] The 1793 entry for Miss W-l—n, a black woman of Jamaican heritage, states that 'she is a girl of considerable taste and fashion; *Covent Garden Theatre* is her constant evening lounge, at which place she is known by many of the gentlemen actors'.[364] This entry is interesting as it builds on understandings that the theatre is an inherently fashionable space, which was an attitude shared by Eliza Haywood. However, Miss W-l—n is known, presumably in the Biblical sense of the word, by male actors of the stage. She is noted for her talents and fashion sense but despite being associated with the theatricality of Covent-Garden, Miss W-l—n is not described as an actress. Indeed, if there are any professional actresses included in the surviving editions of *Harris's List* there is no reference to their skills and presence on the stage.

[362] John Ireland, *Hogarth Illustrated*, vol. 1 (London: J. and J. Boydell, 1791) 226.
[363] Peakman, *Amatory Pleasures: Explorations in Eighteenth-Century Sexual Culture,* 20.
[364] *HL 1793,* 68.

'When my folds of bliss unfold, Joys too mighty to be told': Poetry in *Harris's List*

The 1770 edition of *Harris's List* marks the most obvious changes in the *List*'s form over its long publication history. Changing the alternative title from *New Atalantis* to *Man of Pleasure's Kalendar* distances *Harris's List* from connotations of Delarivier Manley's 1709 text *Secret Memoirs and Manners of Several Persons of Quality, of both Sexes, From The New Atalantis an Island in the Mediteranean*. Changing the title reflects the change within context and the form of the text itself, and the move from *New Atalantis* to *Man of Pleasure's Kalendar* reflects how *Harris's List* is moving away from the cutting satirical prose of the early editions. The text is now aiming to be read by a more elite readership. The *Man of Pleasure* is the target audience for the *List* and so there are updates to incorporate this allusion of sophistication into what was previously regarded as a base and vulgar text. This change in the subtitle is not the only modification that 1770 introduced, as this was the year that poetic clauses were incorporated at the beginning of most descriptions of the sex workers. Lines of poetry such as 'when my folds of bliss unfold, // Joys too mighty to be told' are embedded in *Harris's List* after the names of the sex workers and before their prose introductions.[365] I believe that this change in style reflects a change in authorship. Scholars have accepted that at some point as the text grew in popularity Samuel Derrick no longer was the sole author behind the text and it began to be produced by an anonymous collective of writers. 1770 is the distinct changing point in both the text's title and form. As lines of poetry appear in the later editions, the preface - which promoted Derrick's infamous and celebrated wit - was less commonly included.

The 1783 edition talks about Miss N—wt—n

When my folds of bliss unfold

[365] *HL 1783,* 39.

Joys too mighty to be told,

Taste what extasies they give,

Dying raptures taste, and live;//

In my ---, disdaining measure,

Come and pour in all thy treasure;

Soft desires that sweetly languish,

Fierce delights that rife to anguish.[366]

This poem appears again in 1787 to describe Miss Br—ce Mack—z—e.[367] There is a lot of similarities in the two descriptions of the women with Miss N—wt—n being a 'lovely little brunette' and her 1787 counterpart being referred to as a 'lovely brunette'.[368] Yet, the poem does not reveal much, if anything, about the sex worker. Instead of describing the prostitute, this poem creates an erotic fantasy told from her perspective and promising the prospective customer ecstasy.

This particular poem resembles some lines of poetry from Edward Moore's *Fables for the Female Sex* which was first published in 1744.

'Hither, fairest, hither haste,

Brightest beauty, come and taste

What the pow'rs of bliss unfold;

Joys too mighty to be told;

Taste what ecstasies they give,

Dying raptures taste, and live.[369]

[366] *HL 1783,* 39 – 40.
[367] *HL 1787,* 125.
[368] *HL 1787,* 125.
[369] Edward Moore, *Fables for the Female Sex,* (London: R. Francklin, 1744), 100.

This stanza appears in the fifteenth fable of the text titled "The Female Seducers" and is sung by an unnamed 'siren'.[370] In addition to his fables, Edward Moore was also a dramatist and playwright. Despite dying in 1757, four years before the first edition of *Harris's List* was sold to the public, his moralising sentiments are transformed and divorced from the original context that the fabulist wrote them.[371] Changing the line from 'the pow'rs of bliss unfold'[372] to 'my folds of bliss unfold'[373] ensures that Moore's implied innuendo becomes explicit and impossible to misinterpret. Moreover, it literally removes the power of the siren and sex worker by reducing her simply to her labial folds. Whereas Moore's fable warns against ruin and destitution in the pursuit of pleasure, the female seducer of the *List* has already been reduced to a state that lies outside of conventional societal morality by the fact that she sells sex. It is only through the lines of poetry that the figure of the sex worker is permitted to speak throughout *Harris's List.* Even then, this switch in narrative voice occurs rarely. When the writers do use the poetic introductions to give the prostitute's perspective it is often farcical in its overt eroticism and sexuality. This is demonstrated in the aforementioned poem where Miss N—wt—n and Miss Br—ce Mack—z—e invite perspective sex buyers to fantasise about them.

Almost every entry in *Harris's List* from 1770 on begins with a short couplet or more of poetry. These epitaphs function as introductions to the sex worker being recorded. Often, they provide context or summarise the contents of the entry itself. Rival whore biographies, courtesan memoirs, and bawdy pamphlets rarely replicate this regular use of poetry. Beginning each entry with a prefatory poem makes the *List* unique. In entries that are

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[370] Moore, *Fables for the Female Sex*, 98.
[371] Patricia Demers, "Moore, Edward (1712 – 1757), playwright and writer.", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.* 23 Sep. 2004; Accessed 6 Mar. 2023. https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-19104.
[372] Moore, *Fables for the Female Sex,* 100.
[373] *HL 1783,* 39.

repeated in multiple editions of *Harris's List,* the poetry associated with the specific woman remains the same. As I have argued earlier, this reflects the speed and lack of care that was given to reproduction of the *List*. However, it also demonstrates that the poetic introductions form an essential part of the descriptions. The short lines of poetry are popular in the *List* but are not necessarily always present. There does not seem to be any rhyme or reason as to why certain prostitutes are given these poetical accolades and others are not.

Conclusion

Harris's List existed as an intriguing text that could be read in a variety of different ways. Defining pornography as material intended to stimulate erotic feelings allows us to view *Harris's List* through this lens. It can stimulate interests both through the practical knowledge that through the *List* sex buyers can find a sex worker whose description they are attracted to and through the sexualised descriptions that create fantasies through reading. The text has its salacious and titillating moments. It also has instances of sentimentalising and comic descriptions that disrupt a pornographic fantasy. *Harris's List* resists genre categorisation. As a consequence, it had a broad and wide-reaching readership, and it is ultimately impossible to retrospectively assert how this text was read, used, and understood.

Harris's List belongs to a longstanding tradition of listing sex workers and ephemeral bawdy pamphlets. It builds upon genres and forms of writing such as the pimp ledger that have often evaded critical study. However, it couples these established tropes with literary language and extended narrative structure. Through its interaction with sentimental texts, whore memoirs, and the mock epic, *Harris's List* elevates the basic bawdy pamphlet to create a distinctly literary feel. It's incorporation of poetry and classical allusions allow the text to hide its vulgarity under a veneer of respectability to better appeal to a new type of consumer audience. The fact that the text was published annually between 1760 and 1794 means that it develops in tandem with the emergence of the middle class in the form of professionals and merchants who were migrating to London for employment. For a seemingly niche and specific text, *Harris's List* truly has something for everyone. From erotic titillation, to sentimentalised sympathetic characters, to sensationalised gossipy accounts of sexual adventures. Regardless of the authorial intent behind the initial iteration of the very first edition of *Harris's List,* the various texts can be read in a multitude of different complex and intriguing ways.

It is impossible to evaluate the extent to which *Harris's List* is a work of fiction. However, in the first chapter of this thesis, I argued that the practical function of the text should not be discredited. While the repeated entries show that the directory was not up to date every time that it was published, images such as Newton's *Harris's List; or, Cupid's Directory* demonstrate that the *List* could be used as a guidebook that directs customers to their chosen sex worker. *Harris's List* uses poetry and classical allusions to attempt to integrate itself in the context of a developing polite middle class. At the same time, prostitution in eighteenth century London was an exponentially expanding industry that was a visible part of the urban space. The *List* can be read in the context of other texts that discuss the prostitute experience. Whore memoirs, amatory novels, sentimental fiction, and other literary genres are concerned with sex work and were popular at the same as *Harris's List*. Across these texts, the figure of the sex worker embodied debates around morality, obscenity, urbanisation, and even wider anxieties about political instability. *Harris's List* reflects these debates and discussions in the body of its prose.

Overall, *Harris's List of Covent-Garden Ladies* is a fascinating series of texts. As the editions develop over the years, they reflect the changing attitudes towards sex work and prostitution. The concept is inherently misogynistic in the manner that it objectifies women and presents them as a menu for sex buyers. However, *Harris's List* does discuss a wide variety of unique female experiences of sex work. Women from a huge variety of backgrounds, classes, and cultures are indiscriminately included in the text. The prostitutes in the text include black sex workers like Miss W-l—n, French migrants such as Madamoiselle Du Par, overweight and corpulent women like Miss H—ll—nd, women who offered whippings such as Mrs Mac—tney, and the perpetual virgin Polly Jenkinson.[374] *Harris's List*

[374] *HL 1793,* 68., *HL 1788,* 144., *HL 1788,* 18., *HL 1793,* 82., *HL 1773,* 84.

reflects the diversity of eighteenth century London and the sheer prevalence of sex work in the city.

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