Baudelaire's complicated dealings with femininity are a key component of the human drama of the 'Tableaux parisiens': from desire to wariness, his female protagonists evoke a sense of wonder, set against a backdrop of imbalanced gender relations enshrined in the bias of divorce laws towards the interests of men during the Second Empire. Objectified by the masculine gaze, the female protagonist of 'À une mendiantene rousse' silently suffers the injustices to which she is subjected by men of higher social standing. From a prosodic perspective, the rhymes of this poem can be interpreted as a sensitive gauge of the stakes of urban existence for female identity, since there are no rhymes containing a feminising *e caduc*: a sense of the subjugation of femininity to masculinity emerges from this prosodic differentiation, chiming with Sarah Buckingham-Hatfield's suggestion in *Gender and Environment* that 'environment is experienced differently by men and women as a consequence of the daily "worlds" in which they operate'. As a corollary of this gendered demarcation of experience, the conspicuous female/male binary in 'À une mendiantene rousse' evokes a hierarchy of spheres of urban existence. It is thus important to consider the extent to which a different concept of the cityscape arises in relation to femininity, in order to determine the particularities of the sociocultural relationship between the beggar-girl and her environment.

In the 1861 edition of *Les Fleurs du mal*, 'À une mendiantene rousse' was recast as the third poem in the new section of eighteen poems comprising the 'Tableaux parisiens', implying an altered status from its incarnation in 1857 as the sixty-fifth poem of 'Spleen et idéal': newly immersed in an urban atmosphere highlighting the voyeuristic play of the male crowd around the female protagonist, the sense of objectifying androcentrism in the poem is emphasised in a manner that chimes with the exclusivity of masculine rhymes. Following Gretchen Schultz's claim in *The Gendered Lyric* that Baudelaire's treatment of female figures 'conformed to conventional gender biases exhibited by Parnassian poetry, [yet] in a much less tangible fashion he moved beyond the inalterable opposition of masculine and feminine', the following analysis seeks to determine the ways in which a gynocentric perspective on 'À une mendiantene rousse' can provide a new framework for interpreting the prosodic mechanisms and narrative content of the poem, proceeding on the basis of a close reading in order to highlight the ways in which the degradation of the precociously-sexualised girl, valued according to the interest of rich men in her body, is intertwined with the poverty of her surroundings. By way of an examination of the contrast between extravagant *rimes riches* related to male desires and poorer *rimes suffisantes* related to the beggar-girl's circumstances, a dichotomy of male rapaciousness and female vulnerability will be highlighted, leading to the conclusion that this work subsumes femininity to masculinity, even though the poem is inspired by a female presence.

Androcentrism is a key concern in 'À une mendiantene rousse': in a piece exclusively composed of masculine *rimes plates*, the female protagonist is objectified by her male pursuers, hinting at the darker side of unrequited male love as an inspiration for grand poetry. In his discussion of Baudelaire's landscapes, Patrick Labarthe states that 'ce véritable "lieu commun" du paysage baudelairien [...] est le corps féminin, dont la puissance métaphorique s'étend aux éléments du cosmos comme l'automne ou le soleil sur la mer ou à ces instances allégorisées que sont la Mort ou la Ville'. Enmeshed in the poverty of her urban surroundings, the beggar-girl is an emblem of the marginalised residents of Baudelaire's Paris, as well as of nineteenth-century commodity culture. Incorporating the interplay of three heptasyllabic *vers impairs* followed by a tetrasyllabic *vers pair*, the fourteen stanzas of the ballad evoke an unbalanced atmosphere, visually augmented by the indentation of the fourth line in every quatrain. From a gynocentric perspective, the second rhyming couplet, a *rime suffisante* between 'pauvreté' (3) and 'beauté' (4), foregrounds not only the straitened circumstances of the starveling beggar-girl, but also the contrast between prosodic richness and austerity that suffuses the masculine rhymes of the piece. Clive Scott's proposal in *French Verse-Art* that the exclusive use of rhymes lacking an *e caduc* reflects an interest in 'isolating moods and exploring their extensions into obsession and neurosis' is corroborated by the excessive desire of the male admirers for the young woman, such that the escalating richness of the rhymes in the piece can...
be envisioned as mirroring the increasing obsession of the men, since most of the *rimes riches* (eight of fifteen) and *léonines* (three of four) appear in the latter half of the poem.

The implication of the narrator-poet in the vicissitudes of the female protagonist is made explicit in the fifth line by the inclusion of the first-person-singular direct object (‘Pour moi, poète chétif’ (5)), enhancing the importance of the contrast between the beggar-girl and her male admirers: the higher status of the masculine figures in the poem is juxtaposed with the social inferiority of the beggar-girl, victimised on account of the allure of her youthful body. The human tragedy of the poem is further focalised in the third quatrain:

Tu portes plus galamment
Qu'une reine de roman
Ses cothurnes de velours
Tes sabots lourds. (9-12)

The first occurrence of the second-person-singular subject pronoun in the poem establishes a rapport between the lowly narrator-poet and the beggar-girl that augments the ironic presentation of her as a regal figure, while the disturbing humour of the incongruous comparison in footwear encapsulated in the *rime riche* between 'velours' (11) and 'lourds' (12) evokes the excesses of high society and the imposing luxuriousness of sophisticated life, emphasised by the position of the adjective at the end of the quatrain after four lines of enjambement. The hyperseparation of the beggar-girl from her male admirers places the female protagonist at the bottom of a hierarchy of urban life, in keeping with William Sharpe's foregrounding in *Unreal Cities* of 'the oppositions that urban life and writing render most intense: self and Other, male and female, the known and the unknown, order and chaos, individual and crowd'. Set in opposition to her male pursuers, the red-haired beggar girl is compelled to eke out an existence at the interstices of civilisation in the manner of a feral animal, as is highlighted by the *rime riche* between 'longs' (15) and 'talons' (16), augmented by the lengthening effect of enjambement over three lines in the fourth stanza, such that her status as an outlandish object of fascination is cemented, as if she were a spectacle at the circus.

The inequality in status between the male figures and the beggar-girl is accentuated in the fifth stanza by the concluding *rime suffisante* between 'or' (19) and 'encor' (20) that highlights the importance of currency exchange for the encounter, in an association that is notable not only because it is the poorest rhyme in the seven couplets surrounding the metaphor, but also because of the contrast with the sumptuous *rime léonine* between 'troués' (17) and 'roués' (18) that precedes it. The reification of the female body as an object of sexual spectacle continues in the sixth quatrain, as the *rime suffisante* between 'radieux' (23) and 'yeux' (24) evokes the greedy male gaze of the 'galants' (31) that determine the worth of the female protagonist, seeking to tempt her for their own ends. Peter Broome's assertion in *Baudelaire's Poetic Patterns* that 'the urban context gives a sharper sense of incompatibility and exile' is corroborated by the impression of Baudelaire exploring the implications of the beggar-girl's existence for feminine identity in nineteenth-century Paris: unsure of her surroundings and confronted by dubious male figures, the female protagonist attempts to negotiate the logistics of survival in the cityscape, yet is hampered by her poverty and the disconcerting advances of her rapacious fellow residents. The concluding quatrains of the poem accentuate disquiet over the relationship between the beggar-girl and other human beings, as she is unrealistically idealised by the voyeuristic pursuit of her male admirers in the second couplet of the ninth stanza, highlighted by the *rime riche*: 'contemplant ton soulier/Sous l'escalier' (35-36).

The turn towards the melancholic practicalities of urban existence in the twelfth stanza is highlighted by the dash at the beginning of the quatrain:

- Cependant tu vas gueusant
  Quelque vieux débris gisant
Au seuil de quelque Véfour
De carrefour. (45-48)

The narrator-poet isolates the core of the beggar-girl's tragedy: a quasi-exile in the cityscape, she is disdained by the majority of society, such that she is forced to inhabit the inhumane 'seuil' (47) of civilisation. The way in which the female protagonist must beg for meagre scraps is reminiscent of a feral scavenger, in a manner that is emphasised by the *rime suffisante* between the pair of visually-alliterative present particibles: 'gueusant' (45), 'gisant' (46). A sense of the beggar-girl's unembellished existence as a closed loop of experience that imprisons her in a world suffused with poverty ('Va donc, sans autre ornement' (53)) is evoked by the phonetic pattern of the rhymes at the end of the poem, as they are almost identical to those at the beginning: the *rime suffisante* between 'dessus' (49) and 'sous' (50) in the penultimate quatrain recalls the *rime suffisante* between 'roux' (1) and 'trous' (2); the concluding *rime suffisante* between 'nudité' (55) and 'beauté' (56) almost replicates the *rime suffisante* between 'pauvreté' (3) and 'beauté' (4). Evoked in both form and content, the assertion of masculine hegemony leaves the beggar-girl languishing in the depths of a hierarchy of existence, as her worth is determined by the male gaze.

In conclusion, the problematic interplay of masculinity and femininity in 'À une mendiante rousse' illuminates the complex relationship between male and female values in Baudelaire's poetry. The manner in which Baudelaire relates the enmeshment of the red-haired beggar-girl in the gendered dynamics of the cityscape suggests that a different frame of reference applies to femininity in his work, in terms of both prosody and content: as part of a shifting balance between *andros* and *gynos*, the *e caduc* that defines feminine rhyme gains in significance by its outsider status in 'À une mendiante rousse', such that masculinity is in the ascendancy. As a figure of alterity in an androcentric world, the beggar-girl holds a privileged position on the margins of society that encapsulates Baudelaire's ethos in *Les Fleurs du mal*: offering a new perspective on society by existing outside it, the female protagonist corroborates Deborah Parsons' assertion in *Streetwalking the Metropolis* that 'degraded, marginalised, or alienated as they may be, all the women common to Baudelaire's work are observers, and through them it is possible to question the assumption of the masculinity of public space'.

Living on the margin between feral and civilised existence that nineteenth-century Paris encapsulates, the female protagonist of 'À une mendiante rousse' garners significance as a mediatory figure at the dawn of the modern era, sparking a debate about the effects of an increasingly reifying ethos on human existence and relationships. The red-haired beggar-girl promotes reflection on the ways in which the body is treated as an object of spectacle and commerce in an urban setting, evoking problems of diminished identity for the objectified parties in a society concerned with the value of appearances. The concerns over gender difference raised in Baudelaire's poem ultimately signal the shifting sands of the dynamics of masculinity and femininity in nineteenth-century poetry and society, defined by an increasingly materialist culture.

Les Fleurs du mal
LXXXVIII
'À une mendiate rousse'

Blanche fille aux cheveux roux,
Dont la robe par ses trous
Laisse voir la pauvreté
Et la beauté,

Pour moi, poète chétif,
Ton jeune corps maladif,
Plein de taches de rousseur,
A sa douceur.

Tu portes plus gaiment
Qu'une reine de roman
Ses cothurnes de velours
Tes sabots lourds.

Au lieu d'un haillon trop court,
Qu'un superbe habit de cour
Traîne à plis bruyants et longs
Sur tes talons;

En place de bas troués
Que pour les yeux des roués
Sur ta jambe un poignard d'or
Reluise encor;

Que des nœuds mal attachés
Dévoilent pour nos pêchés
Tes deux beaux seins, radieux
Comme des yeux;

Que pour te déshabiller
Tes bras se fassent prier
Et chassent à coups mutins
Les doigts lutins,

Perles de la plus belle eau,
Sonnets de maître Belleau
Par tes galants mis aux fers
Sans cesse offerts,

Valetaille de rimeurs
Te dédiant leurs primeurs
Et contemplant ton soulier
Sous l'escalier,

Maint page épris du hasard,
Maint seigneur et maint Ronsard
Épieraient pour le déduit
Ton frais réduit!

Tu compterais dans tes lits
Plus de baisers que de lis
Et rangerais sous tes lois
Plus d'un Valois!

Cependant tu vas gueusant
Quelque vieux débris gisant
Au seuil de quelque Véfour
De carrefour;

Tu vas lorgnant en dessous
Des bijoux de vingt-neuf sous
Dont je ne puis, oh! Pardon!
Te faire don.

Va donc, sans autre ornement,
Parfum, perles, diamant,
Que ta maigre nudité,
O ma beauté!