



Mapping the Metropolis through Streetwalking in Parker's *The Young Ladies of London*

Sophie Raine

Abstract

Lieutenant Parker's penny dreadful *The Young Ladies of London, or, The Mysteries of Midnight* (1864) considers the mobility and agency of the sex worker in the city. Mimicking the style of popular night guides aimed at men-about-town, Parker gives increased authority and credibility to the sex workers who are able to navigate the city with purpose and pragmatism, and can traverse into exclusive urban haunts. While the presence of a nineteenth-century female flâneur or flâneuse has been contested by scholars, the sex workers in Parker's text bear the traits of Baudelaire's flâneur: they are often on the fringes of society and are part of the social milieu whilst paradoxically being isolated from city life due to their alleged deviant profession. In enacting the role of the guide, the women achieve increased mobility and freedom, whilst, conversely, their male clients become stagnant, unable to move in a city which has gradually become alienating and unfamiliar. Ultimately, I explore how these women are empowered through their knowledge of the city which enables them to evade the surveillance of their oppressors and carve out a new space for themselves in the metropolis.

Key words

Penny dreadful; periodical; popular fiction; prostitution/sex work; flâneur; flâneuse; Baudelaire; guide.

Date of Acceptance: 23 December 2019

Date of Publication: 31 December 2019

Double Blind Peer Reviewed

Recommended Citation:

Raine, Sophie. 2019. "Mapping the Metropolis through Streetwalking in Parker's *The Young Ladies of London*." *Victorian Popular Fictions*, 1.2: 91-99. ISSN: 2632-4253. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.46911/GJXCX2467>



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Mapping the Metropolis through Streetwalking in Parker's *The Young Ladies of London*

Sophie Raine

The urban spectator was a prominent figure who permeated Victorian literature and non-fiction throughout the nineteenth century. Early portrayals of the duality of the city and those who observe it can be seen in Pierce Egan's *Life in London* (1821) and in fictional works such as Edgar Allan Poe's "The Man of the Crowd" (1840). The presentation of the urban wanderer was also prevalent in the social journalism of Henry Mayhew in *London Labour and the London Poor* (1851), a series of documented observations originally serialised in the *Morning Chronicle* in 1849–50, and in W. T. Stead's child prostitution exposé "The Maiden Tribute to Modern Babylon" (*Pall Mall Gazette*, 1885). This body of literature questioned what it meant to be an urban spectator in the ever-changing metropolis. The figure of the intrepid urban explorer who traversed the city and crossed boundaries into the supposedly dangerous parts of London's East End allowed readers to experience vicariously a supposedly more dangerous or scandalous side of London.

However, studies of urban spectators in literature often overlook mass-produced popular fiction, in particular the genre of the penny dreadful, which, like Mayhew and his peers, tended to focus on presentations of "high" and "low" life. "Penny bloods," cheaply produced, illustrated serial fictions published in weekly penny parts and targeted at working-class adult readers, had first appeared in the 1830s; by the 1860s, they had evolved into "penny dreadfuls" targeted at working-class boys (see Crone 2012; Springhall 1999). These often sensational and controversial stories were made accessible to the increasingly literate public due to new printing technology, which produced these texts at very little expense. It is estimated that there were around one hundred publishers of penny fiction between 1830 and 1850. The best-known of these early publishers of penny fiction was Edward Lloyd (1815–90), whose publishing empire brought out some of the most successful penny bloods of the 1840s such as *The String of Pearls* (1846–7) and *Varney, the Vampyre* (1845–7) and who, according to Rosalind Crone, was "keen to publish material which appealed to the more economically marginal" (Crone 2012: 171). The accessibility of these texts to the urban working-class reader meant that they were an ideal conduit for disseminating news and topical social and political debates. In the 1840s, Crone estimates, Lloyd was selling in excess of half a million weekly penny parts to an audience that "must be expressed in the millions" (Crone 2012: 171). Although these texts did indulge in melodramatic narratives and sensational violence for sales purposes, many also attempted to involve their readership in important discourses around social inequality, injustice and marginalisation in ways for which they are seldom credited.

With urban juvenile literacy on the rise, the penny blood evolved by the 1860s into the penny dreadful, whose primary target audience consisted of juvenile working-class male readers (Springhall 1999: 38–70). The most successful publisher of penny dreadfuls was Edwin J. Brett (1828–95), whose Newsagents' Publishing Company issued low-life penny weeklies such as the *Boys of England* (1866–99), marketed towards a juvenile, mainly male, readership. According to John Springhall, the dreadfuls provided "exciting" and escapist reading that nonetheless "reinforce[d] rather than subvert[ed] existing social and political structures" (Springhall 1990: 224–5). However, like the earlier bloods, many dreadfuls also

used the figure of the urban spectator as a narrator or character in order to reveal the causes of social injustice rather than solely for salacious or voyeuristic purposes.

Lieutenant Parker's *The Young Ladies of London, or, The Mysteries of Midnight* (1864), published originally by Brett's Newsagents' Publishing Company in penny weekly numbers in the year of the first Contagious Diseases Act, was one of these socially radical texts whose narrators act as urban guides. Parker's penny publication reconfigures the female sex worker as an urban spectator striving for autonomy and mobility in her own right. Little is known about Parker, who is also credited as the author of *The Boy Rover, or, The Smuggler of the South Seas* (1865). *The Young Ladies of London* was advertised by *Reynolds's Newspaper* as an "authentic narrative of the struggles and temptations of the poor girls of London" ("Advertisements and Notices"). Parker's "authentic" penny dreadful focuses on the socio-economic issues that may lead to prostitution as well as discussing the complex power structures within brothels. The serial contained many illustrations which, despite the salacious reputation of the genre, did not rely on sexually exploitative imagery of the women in the story.

The Young Ladies of London tells the story of a heinous brothel-keeper, Edward Lewis, as he cons gentlemen and entraps young women in his brothel as sex workers. Parker's text combines the guide structure that was established by men-about-town sporting guides with the philanthropic social journalism of writers such as Mayhew to illustrate the bias in privileging male perspectives of the city. Ultimately, by showing the confidence and pragmatism with which the women in the narrative navigate the city, Parker encourages the reader not only to trust the female perspective but to acknowledge the sex worker as an urban citizen who can contribute to society in meaningful ways.

Discussing the complex figure of the prostitute, Judith Walkowitz notes that

No figure was more equivocal, yet more crucial to the structured public landscape of the male flâneur, than the woman in public ... In the mental map of urban spectators, they lacked autonomy: they were bearers of meaning rather than makers of meaning. As symbols of conspicuous display or of lower-class and sexual disorder, they occupied a multivalent symbolic position in this imaginary landscape.

(Walkowitz 2013: 21)

The sex workers in *The Young Ladies of London* gradually gain autonomy as they redefine male spaces, while their male oppressors become, by the end of the narrative, static and immobile, unable to adapt to the new environment carved out by these women. The narrative privileges the sex workers' gaze over that of the man-about-town or the flâneur, a figure prominent in the writings of Charles Baudelaire and developed critically by Walter Benjamin in *The Arcades Project* ([1927–40] 2002). Parker challenges the prioritisation of male voices in Victorian literature and non-fiction by suggesting that the streetwalker's intimate knowledge of the city enables her to operate as an urban guide for the reader and male characters. By re-thinking who can interpret the city, Parker allows for new conclusions to be drawn about sex workers by the Victorian reader; these new conclusions refrain from stereotypical depictions of the sex worker as either a deviant and dangerous figure, or a purely sympathetic individual who lacks any agency whatsoever.

These new and radical representations were not targeted towards Evangelical reformers who saw prostitution as the "Great Social Evil," but were instead marketed towards younger readers who may have had less ingrained preconceptions about sex workers and the sex trade. While the primary target audience of penny dreadfuls consisted of working-class adolescent boys, young women and girls also read them, as suggested by the introduction of female characters. *The Work Girls of London* (1865), for example, discusses the controversy of the "white slave trade" (a term explored by Knepper, 2010, chapter 4) in relation to the

exploitation of seamstresses, while *Rose Mortimer, or the Ballet Girl's Revenge* (1865) places outspoken and complex female heroines at the centre of the narrative. As Springhall states, women in the penny dreadfuls of the 1860s were “allowed a more independent, even aggressive, role than could be occupied by the polite middle-class heroines of most adult three-decker novels” (Springhall 1999: 49). Like these contemporaneous penny dreadfuls, Parker’s text allows its female protagonists considerable prominence.

Male Strangers in the City

A range of guides published in the 1830s and 1840s aimed to enable men-about-town (“swells”) to navigate around London by providing reviews of theatres, bars and brothels or what were called “introducing houses.” These guides expanded upon earlier publications such as *Harris's List of Covent Garden Ladies* (1757–95), which detailed prostitutes available for hire and provided obscene reviews. The most popular of these guides was *The Swell's Night Guide, or, A Peep through the Great Metropolis* (1849), which was largely the work of Renton Nicholson and styled on an original *Swell's Night Guide* (1841) by the anonymous Hon. F. L. G. In 1836–40, Nicholson had worked as an editor for the *Town*, which was known for its sensational content and coverage of scandals. The *Swell's Night Guides*, as well as acquainting men-about-town with various brothels and sex workers, also provided information on slang terms to use around the city and proper etiquette for certain establishments. These texts were aimed at young educated men, particularly those who were unfamiliar with the city.

Though targeting a very different demographic of working-class juvenile readers, *The Young Ladies of London* adopts the guide format in its descriptions of urban pleasures and spectatorship, but individual characters also act as guides to London. Initially, the guide structure emphasises the powerlessness and immobility of the female characters, but Parker’s mapping of the locations of crime and sex trafficking eventually shows the darker side of London life to be depraved and violent. This allows the author to question the concept of male spectatorship of the city, draw attention to the reader’s own ignorance about London life and highlight how sporting guides glossed over the realities of the brothel. The reader is initially guided by the narrator, who intersperses the text with various moral teachings that serve to frame the narrative that follows. Several characters, with varying levels of insight into the city, also resemble tour guides, providing information either to other, more naïve characters or to the reader. In effect, therefore, there are three types of urban guide in the text: the trustworthy, omniscient narrator who inserts his own moral teachings and directs the reader’s gaze; antagonist, conman and brothel-keeper Edward Lewis (who also uses the alias Count Lewiski), an unreliable guide to wealthy male visitors; and the female sex workers who reveal, for both readers and characters, the complex network of the city and offer guidance on how to navigate it.

Immediately after the narrator has introduced us to the scene, the reader is introduced to Lewis, who is leading would-be man-about-town George Williams around some of the more exclusive haunts in London’s West End. Unbeknown to Williams, Lewis plans to entice him into his brothel so that he can rob him. Williams is introduced as a “stranger” to the metropolis as Lewis comments: “Only to think now you have been in London a whole week, and not paid a visit to this spot. Why a man may as well be out of the world as not make himself acquainted with London life” (Parker [1864] 1867–8: 2). Lewis acts as a personal night guide by introducing Williams to a side of the city previously unknown to him. As an intrepid explorer, insecure because of his lack of mastery over the city, Williams is the ideal

reader of the *Swell's Night Guides*. The concept of the man-about-town, according to Philip Howell,

offered men – of various backgrounds, though it was predominantly a populous ideal – a form of cultural identity which helped make sense of the complex and dynamic world of the nineteenth-century city. This ideal allowed men to feel at home in the city, at least in their imaginations.

(Howell 2001: 24)

Williams, however, is no knowledgeable flâneur. He trusts the seemingly benevolent guidance of Lewis, acting under the guise of Count Lewiski, as being able to ease his urban anxieties and alienation. However, as Howell suggests, the city is an imaginative construct created by Lewis to achieve personal, pecuniary gain. Lewis's strategy of concealing parts of the city whilst simultaneously professing to reveal its secrets also characterises *The Swell's Night Guide*. Lewis's romanticisation of the city is particularly evident in the apparent luxury and decadence of the brothel:

couches and settees of the most exquisite workmanship, and covered with pale blue satin, were placed around the walls, and reclining upon them in attitudes of the most voluptuous ease and grace, were a number of young women, some mere girls, attired in dresses which revealed their white globular busts ... as if by accident revealed the slender ankle and beautifully moulded limbs encased in stockings of the finest texture.

(Parker [1864] 1867–8: 2)

The women's pretense of coyness is part of a theatrical display as instructed by Lewis. Williams is therefore paradoxically unable to see the reality of the brothel on his supposedly authentic tour of London. However, the next morning the daylight enables Williams to see the brothel for what it truly is as "the subdued light revealed to his gaze, the objects in the apartment, now looking grim and miserable, which, the night before had presented almost a fairy scene in the bright gas-light" (Parker [1864] 1867–8: 3). After a tantalising beginning, the text quickly shifts from voyeuristic erotic titillation towards critique of the guide genre and social commentary on the reality of sex work and human trafficking as the reader is introduced to the women who live in the brothel, including prominent characters Emma Langdon and Laura Dashwood. By unflinchingly depicting the reality of the sex industry so early in the text, Parker resists the easy profits that more pornographic or voyeuristic descriptions might have attracted; moreover, he also seeks to influence the reader's interpretation of the sex trade.

Like Williams, the reader has been lured in by the promise of erotic scenes, only to be made aware of male clients' culpability for the plight of women working in the sex industry. Though mimicking the guide format, Parker seeks not to entertain or sensationalise but to enlighten in the manner of the philanthropic work of Mayhew or the social problem novels of Charles Dickens and Elizabeth Gaskell. The role of the urban guide shifts from the unreliable Lewis to a trustworthy omniscient narrator, who presents an authentically bleak version of London. The narrator addresses readers in the second person, forcing them simultaneously to confront urban problems and quickly move on. The narrator carefully guides readers through the cityscape, telling them to "Mind how you step; there, you are all right," to "turn to the left" and to "haste on – away from the poverty which here abounds. Gaze not upwards at the curtainless window" (Parker [1864] 1867–8: 14). The narrative allows the reader to experience London vicariously. However, far from enjoying the sophistication and natural curiosity of the flâneur, the reader assumes the uncomfortable position of a naïve tourist in the lives of the urban Other. As Deborah L. Parsons argues, "the London observer tends to be a more shadowy figure haunting the underworld of the working class, a social investigator or rather criminal 'man of the crowd,'" not a true flâneur (Parsons 2000: 20). The highly

political nature of the text subverts the voyeuristic guide format, forcing the reader to choose between complicity with human trafficking and active assistance in helping the women to escape their fetters. In providing examples of passive observers and active agents, the text foregrounds the reader's dilemma. The voices of the male characters lose authority as they turn from pressing social issues to pleasant distractions.

If Parker's narrative commences with a peep into a brothel that belongs to Renton Nicholson's London, it soon proceeds to reveal a whole clandestine network of criminal operations, particularly sex trafficking. The trafficking plot of *The Young Ladies of London* focuses on a young working-class woman called Martha who is drugged, kidnapped and raped by an upper-class man before entering a life of prostitution. The guide format allows Parker to show how such operations are carried out while spotlighting the powerlessness of the victims of trafficking. The kidnapping of Martha from the East End speaks to anxieties over the exploitation of impoverished young women from poor neighbourhoods and the crime in the East spilling into the West. As Drew D. Gray asserts, "it was suggested that upper-class gentlemen from the West End were preying on the daughters of the working classes in the East" (Gray 2010: 145). The movement of Parker's characters between the West End and the East End foregrounds the narrative's authenticity as an urban guide to London's geographical and social divisions, with Lewis's West-End alias, Lewiski, spotlighting that secretive, illegal networks are upheld by deep-rooted class divisions.

We are made aware of this division as the narrator moves the reader from the comfort of the West End to the East End, where an insensible Martha is being held:

Away from the fashionable West to the dirty, smoke-covered East – from the neighbourhood of St James's to the purlieus of Whitechapel and Bethnal Green – from the balconied mansion to the pigeon-housed roof – from the abodes of comfort and wealth to poverty and sin.

(Parker [1864] 1867–8: 13)

Parker's account of Bethnal Green closely reflects a description of the "Dwellings of the Poor in Bethnal Green" published in the *Illustrated London News* in 1863, which also depicts the district as an unknowable labyrinth:

Let the traveller penetrate further, and he will enter upon a maze of streets each of which is a social crime, and each of which contains tributary hovels many degrees worse than itself. They are not always easy to find, since, if they have ever had any names, the names have been obliterated except from the memory of the police and the City missionary, the doctor or the landlord; and the entrance to most of them is by a covered alley not wider than an ordinary doorway.

("Dwellings of the Poor" 1863: 423)

The similarities between these two texts signal Parker's shift towards an investigative, socially and politically responsible journalism but also identify Bethnal Green, and places like it, as likely operational bases for sex trafficking networks because of their outcast and overlooked nature. Martha's downfall is completed in plain sight as she is transported, unconscious, from Bethnal Green, through Cheapside, to Haymarket where a wealthy gentleman has paid to have her transported. The cab carrying Martha drives "[a]long past the oyster rooms, coffee-saloons and public-houses in Anton Street" before "draw[ing] up before the silent house with its ever-covered windows" (Parker [1864] 1867–8: 16). The deliberate mobility of Lewis's associates is juxtaposed with the helpless passivity of Martha. Urban dwellers' lack of awareness of Martha's plight reflects their own alienation from the city, further challenging the possibility of the urban spectatorship associated with the flâneur.

Female Mobility: Evading Surveillance

Having shown the ignorance of the male spectator and the passivity of the sex worker, Parker allows the women in the text to use their understanding of the city to become autonomous agents. Parker does not confine the women in *The Young Ladies of London* to the brothel but instead shows them visiting the infamous Cremorne and even places that are unknown to male clients or Lewis. Unlike the urban explorer, the prostitutes roam the city purposefully, aware of its dangers, carving out a space for themselves to organise and conduct business away from Lewis's prying eyes. Parker prioritises the women's perspective, their inside knowledge of the metropolis making the sex workers authorities on city life not unlike the flâneur.

Critics disagree over the presence of the flâneuse in the nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century city. Scholars such as Deborah Parsons (2000) have extended the definition of the flâneur to include figures prominent in city life such as the rag-picker. Deborah Epstein Nord (1995) discusses the middle-class female urban observer's struggle to become a spectator instead of a spectacle. Despite restrictions placed on women in public, Epstein Nord concludes that many female investigators and writers were attempting to reconfigure the tradition of the male flâneur.

By contrast, Janet Wolff states that the flâneuse was a "non-existent role" due to the restrictions placed on women in public in the nineteenth century (Wolff 1990: 41). Lauren Elkin, similarly, rejects the notion of the sex worker as a flâneuse:

there wasn't anything like the flâneur's freedom in the street prowler's prowl; prostitutes didn't have free range over the city. Her movements were strictly controlled: by the mid-nineteenth century there were all sorts of laws dictating where and between which hours she could pick up men. Her clothing was strictly policed; she had to register with the city and visit the sanitary police at regular intervals. This was no kind of freedom.

(Elkin 2016: 8)

While this is also true of the women in Parker's text, the text's advocacy for urban freedom adds nuance to the narrative. In spite of these restrictions, many of the sex workers in Parker's text, like Baudelaire's flâneur, possess an intimate knowledge of the city and exist on the periphery of society, alienated from the social milieu to which they belong. However, unlike Baudelaire's aimless, leisured flâneurs, the women in Parker's text move around the city purposefully and pragmatically.

Where Parker's male characters are shown to be ill-informed tourists in the lives of marginalised individuals, the women's superior knowledge is revealed through their heightened, moving perspective and ability to enter clandestine or exclusive spaces sealed off to the general observer or even the male flâneur, whose familiarity as an urban presence could make anonymous spectatorship difficult. Lewis's underestimation of the women's street-knowledge, combined with his unshakeable faith in his own omniscience, leads to his downfall. In a conversation with Emma, Lewis reveals that he is "well-informed as to the movements" of her clients and of Emma herself (Parker [1864] 1867–8: 10). Lewis's surveillance network resembles Jeremy Bentham's model prison, the Panopticon, theorised by Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* (1975). The Panopticon was designed to control deviance by monitoring human behaviour in ways that could not be detected by inmates. Eventually, Foucault writes,

He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection.

(Foucault [1975] 1991: 202–3)

The panoptic principle of self-inspection can be seen in Lewis's brothel as those who have been taken there against their will are allowed to roam around the city freely in search of clients. Lewis uses the women's fear of his invisible surveillance network, destitution and familial rejection to ensure their obedience and return.

Lewis feels complacent enough to "leave [the women] to themselves for a time" while he takes care of his other business: coin forgery (Parker [1864] 1867–8: 62). In trusting the women to be self-governing bodies, however, Lewis overlooks their capacity for autonomy, resulting in his own downfall. The women have in fact for some time been making secret arrangements for leaving Lewis in order to escape his abuse and exploitation, and, in some cases, to regain independence and financial control. Laura uses Lewis's absence to reach out to a former client, Aubrey Eastville, to find alternative accommodation in return to helping Eastville with his debts. Eastville is surprised at Laura's knowledge of his financial worries: "you seem better acquainted with my affairs than myself" (Parker [1864] 1867–8: 20). Laura's knowledge extends to identifying suitable urban spaces for clandestine meetings: "Speak not so loud," she advises Eastville, "walk with me into Trafalgar Square; there the space is open, and we can see anyone approach. Here we may be overheard" (Parker [1864] 1867–8: 20). Laura's urban knowledge, which indicates that she may have arranged meetings without Lewis's permission before, places her authority above that of Eastville. Instead of the epitome of the man-about-town, it is Laura who has mastery of urban space not only as a spectator but an active participant.

Laura's urban agency is confirmed when she secures Williams as a private client without Lewis's knowledge. This encounter yet again sees Williams being led through the city by a guide who is more experienced and authoritative than him. Finding Williams's suggestion that he and Laura go to a hotel indiscreet, Laura decides on her private lodgings: "I have apartments in Jermyn Street ... whither we will go. I can enter the house without the knowledge of the inmates and there the count never goes" (Parker [1864] 1867–8: 58). By working for herself, she is able to keep the profits and carve out her own space in the city.

Mobility and Stasis

As Parker's men-about-town lose their authority as narrators or guides in the city, they also begin to lose their ability to roam freely. The increased mobility of the sex workers coincides with the immobilisation of wealthy male characters, particularly Lewis and his associates. Parker shows how gendered spaces, which have been previously considered stagnant, can be radicalised and made mobile. As Doreen Massey states, time is

typically coded masculine and space, being absence or lack, as feminine. Moreover, the same gendering operates throughout the series of dualisms which are linked to time and space. It is time which is aligned with history, progress, civilisation, politics and transcendence and coded masculine. And it is the opposites of these things which have, in the traditions of western thought, been coded feminine.

(Massey [1994] 2013: 6)

For the majority of *The Young Ladies of London*, the sex workers exist in a space of stasis unable to break free from Lewis's influence due to inertia, social stigma, fear or violence. However, towards the end the women become autonomous individuals whilst the male characters are rendered immobile. Though many of the women remain sex workers, by bringing the exploitative male figures to justice, they are able to work for themselves. They are further shown in a position of strength, unlike the male characters who are shown to be increasingly reliant on the women for a variety of reasons. One example of this would be the initially wealthy and influential Tom Softon, who is left destitute and homeless due to his lavish spending in Lewis's brothels. Still lingering around Haymarket, Softon explains: "I cannot tear myself away from it. It has been the scene of my ruin, yet it has associations which cling to me, and I believe I can exist nowhere else. There is a fascination in the place – a magnetism which draws me hither" (Parker [1864] 1867–8: 88). Like Williams at the start of the narrative, Softon experiences the brothel as an almost mystical place with the power to influence and control his actions.

Similarly, Lewis is unable to escape from the police when Emma, wishing to break free from his control, reports him for trafficking, profiting from sex work and forgery. Emma tells Lewis: "You have trampled on the worm, it has stung you. Go to a prison, and expiate your crimes; and when justice holds you in its grasp, think of the vengeance of an outraged and insulted woman" (Parker [1864] 1867–8: 120). Reversing their earlier roles, Emma consigns Lewis to an enclosed space, restricting the freedom of movement he has enjoyed throughout the text and frustrating his escape attempt by her knowledge of his hideouts. Though Lewis seems to escape, Emma guides the police to his coin-forging den. They are then joined by Martha's husband-to-be, with whom Martha has been recently reunited during an altercation with a street harasser, prompting her to leave the brothel. Martha sends her fiancé after Lewis as retribution. With Emma, Martha and Laura using their knowledge of the city to secure justice, freedom and independence, Lewis proves unable to monitor the women in his employ despite his pride in his knowledge of the city and its inhabitants. In the final scene of the narrative, Lewis shoots Emma as she confronts him; Lewis is then shot by Martha's fiancé and falls in a vat of boiling metal. Though Emma meets an unfortunate end, she has been responsible for bringing retribution and for emancipating the other women from the control of Lewis and his criminal associates. Laura continues a life of prostitution albeit away from the Haymarket brothel, and Martha elopes with her fiancé. Conversely, Lewis's remaining companions die, while George Williams is placed in debtor's prison.

While there is not a traditionally happy ending for many of the women in the text, Parker reveals how the social and economic conditions would not generally allow for an easy transition out of sex work. More importantly, however, Parker's sex workers display greater morality than other characters in the text and effect change by evading their male oppressors and eventually bringing down Lewis's empire. Parker's text therefore presents female characters who, while perhaps not exactly flâneuses, renegotiate their own confinement and use their intimate knowledge of the city and its inhabitants to try and alter the parameters Lewis has established. By politicising the penny dreadful and the guide format, Parker allows the mobility and agency of these women to challenge the authority of the male characters and the eroticisation of the city's imaginary landscape in favour of a depiction of London that shows the female voice to be one not only of authority, but of authenticity.

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