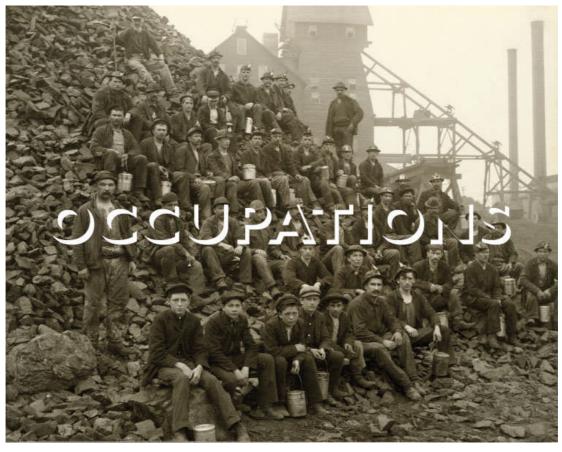
Excursions

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Elizabeth D. Johnston, 'Stripp'd'

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Elizabeth D. Johnston

Monroe Community College

Stripp'd Lines Written after Attending a Teacher's Conference On Revisiting Las Vegas, March 16, 2013

Stripp'd of their gaudy hues by Truth, We view the glitt'ring toys of youth, And blush to think how poor the bait For which to public scenes we ran And scorn'd of sober sense the plan Which gives content at--Thirty-eight

Charlotte Smith, "Thirty Eight" (1783)

At twenty-three, a paradise.

A gin in hand and pair of dice,

I chased the scenes I've learned to hate.

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Rapturous joy, all appetite, no sober plan I lacked the sight I now enjoy at-- Thirty-eight.

I scan the strip, the gaudy lights,
the view in which I drank delight —
I blush and wish to turn away
from smoke-soaked halls, the carpet's stain,
the cracks along the window panes,
the players losing life at play.

On break for lunch, we stroll the streets past men, bent-kneed in sweat-drenched tees, who press in palms coupons for girls, "quick delivery to your door"-- the bait so young, the bait so poor-- odious swine who slop in pearls.

I blush and wish to render more than incensed scowl, or glare of scorn before the shuttle picks us up then drops us at the Stratosphere, where book reps buy our food and beer, and high above we richly sup. We wits, who from a distance pan the trappings of this shiny land, glut our pity on those weaker-bemoan the beggar, bloated gambler, sagging stripper, vagrant dweller, the drunk, the drugged, wayward seekers.

We gorge on lofty discontent, then wonder where the waiter went, return to rooms, our bellies full, to scented soaps, to laundered sheets and fall into a blameless sleep, no thought that we're responsible.

In sleep suspended, scholars rest,
then rise, pack bags, with other guests
through airports drag our weary weightessays to grade and souvenirsrelieved that we live nowhere near
Las Vegas when we're—Thirty-eight.