Biloxi Blues

The Cajuns at the poker table, drunk
Or novice, change expression guilelessly
According to the nature of their hands.
At roulette clueless equally, in spite
Of having French--Louisiana French--
Betting consistently against themselves
They strain the poker face of croupiers.
"Perhaps they're color blind," mutters a guard,
As it becomes apparent *rouge et noir*
Elude them, although *faites vos jeux* brings down
An avalanche of chips. The slot machines
Do not attract. The offshore drilling rigs
Install them in their recreation rooms,
Along with candy vending, hard core porn,
And, without comment, contraceptive packs.
The slots in any case are held just now
By tour-busloads of widows, sod or grass,
Sod obvious by added pounds, and grass
By nips and tucks. To sound of shaken coins,
Automata to much the same extent
As are the bandits, they depress the arms
To further sounds of baubles, bangles, beads.
It's midnight New Year's Eve; the time ball drops;
None but the Old Year cashes out. Not Hope,
Not Chance, not Venus Avaricia,
Goddess of Alimony. Royal Flush,
Or 35-to-1, or cherries up
By threes to pour the jackpot in the cup.
So near *Evangeline* and all of that,
So far from Guy Lombardo, Zydeco
Assures *les vieux temps* here are not forgot.
The true payoff, the food court, dishes out
Ham hock and blackeyed peas, and one more year.
Debt, helicopters wait; at sea the rigs,
At home the diet and the daytime soaps.
A bus is loading. Next stop Laughlin? Vegas?