

## Holy Wisdom

A Failure as a mosque--it does not point  
Toward Mecca even sort of... Ataturk  
Was right: the building's most effective use  
Would be as a casino. Is its dome  
Not like a great roulette wheel upside down?  
The decades of the Orient Express  
Would have espoused it; have had minarets  
In lighting vivid as the Vegas Strip,  
As those in Cairo at this moment are.  
The round quotations from the Koran, lamps,  
Uneven floors (a loose flagstone is luck,  
As Proust's Marcel found out) combine to shill.  
Mosaic Theodora, beaded bag  
Swung at the ready, is prepared to bet.  
The temple of Justinian indeed  
Surpasses: it drives money changers *in*.  
It is itself surpassed, and not alone  
In reference to rigor, by the mosques  
Of the Magnificent, whose architect,  
Siana, was not a man to take a chance.  
He was a military engineer,  
And no designs of his say Monaco.  
If they were used as powder magazines  
No enemy bombardment could reduce  
Them to a Parthenon, no Elgin seize  
Their graven images that are not there.  
They are the indestructible outcome  
Of strict Islam de-Hellenizing pi:  
The circle and the square made algebra.  
On red horizons, as our planets rise,  
And as on launching pads wait minarets,  
True mosques are planets nearer--partial globes,  
Among the standing rockets that have brought them close.