

## TRANSGRESSIONS

When youth  
and beauty are  
sacred the transgressions  
most feared are deformity and  
old age.

## HOLY BATHING PLACE: ALLAHABAD

i.

Ancient Prayaga, where the Jumna  
meets the Ganga and where all India  
mingles together in holy pilgrimage.

Here in the deep shade of a Moghul wall  
rows of barbers attend the orthodox,  
for whom immersion at this hallowed place  
requires a total shaving of the head.

Nearby in an underground temple  
stands a sacred banyan tree which many  
Hindus believe will never die,  
first mentioned by a Chinese traveller  
over thirteen hundred years ago.

ii.

A smiling Brahmin sitting placidly  
under a bright yellow sunshade  
gives his blessing for a small fee.

A Rajasthani peasant clutching a bundle  
threads his way warily between  
buffalo carts, camels, and sauntering cows,  
between sadhus, gypsies and beggars.

A Delhi business man in a loincloth  
strolls along the sand watching the women  
throwing rose-petals into the Ganga,  
then lingers before a gaudy picture of Brahma  
at one of the many improvised stalls.