

## *Jastrzębia Góra*

26 April. Mother is putting my new secondhand clothes in order. She prays now, she says, that I may learn in my own life and away from home and friends what the heart is and what it feels.

—JAMES JOYCE, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*

Where the pines rise up, the road ends;  
 And here, away from home and friends,  
 Slumped at the centre  
 Of my life (a zone of course that none can enter),  
 My luggage a short, single shelf  
 —I had come to the sea to cure myself—  
 A window on waves, toothpaste-white,  
 A ghost here and there on the beach at night,  
 Where each sunset was a forest fire  
 —I saw I had been abandoned by fear—  
 I took my heart in my hands. *It feels,*  
 I said, *like the place I imagined, where all hurt heals.*

## *From the River Limpopo: A Letter*

I write to you all from the River Limpopo  
 (the countries it runs through none of you'll know).  
 Outside my tent elephants walk  
 and red- and emerald-coloured folk.  
 I can see the crooked oil lamp that sways  
 above the table each night like a face

in a dream; the fat spiders sitting  
 in corners, knitting.  
 Each day you wait for the post. But who knocks?  
 Only the wireless, a polished box,  
 brings you “concerts”—organ-blasts—  
 when an organ-army bursts  
 into the room, brandishing spears and threats.  
 It is then your old hearts  
 creak with fear,  
 like the door.  
 Each night a voice from the box declaims:  
*Tomorrow it is going to rain.*  
 Here, though, huge stars—and huger rubies!  
 Little dark boys  
 run up and pin back  
 the royal palanquin  
 and the King  
 of the River Limpopo himself calls for an uncut pack...  
 while you sit with your poverty, boredom,  
 mice and rain back home.

*(Translated from the Polish of  
 Konstanty Ildefons Ga³czyñski [1905-1953])*

## *Ancutsa, Ancutsa*

A  
 Niece  
 Comes, dripping,  
 Up out of the mess  
 That tyrants see you sleep in:  
 Sodden cots peopled with flies and disease  
 And dreams that put paid to even the dream of release.

A

Nice

Cool dip,

Up to now amiss;

Then a fresh towel in which to wrap,

Softly, the tiny frame. Then to work on the lice

And the warts and the wax. *Beginning*, we are, with cleanliness.

A

Noose

Cut down, ripped

Up the monstrous mas-

Ter plan that would have you raped

Sooner than saved. Nothing short of miraculous,

As a poor, young mother in Bucharest (?) might yet say to the news.

A

Neat

Clean leap

Up off the Christmas

Trampoline, and into the open,

Solicitous arms. No shortage now of the necess-

Ary love—and *To hell*, say we, one and all, *with the hopeless diagnoses!*

A

Nuisan-

Ce, an imp

Up to no good. Maes-

Tro, too, of the scrounged hug, up-

Side down and splitting your sides, or dragging us,

Anxiously, up to turn, one by one, the lights off on your darkness.