

WISLAWA SZYMBORSKA

1923—

Szyborska's poetry is strongly influenced by modern science. She assumes that the borderline between us and the rest of nature is tenuous. On the other hand, she knows that our inveterate habits incline us to look at animals and insects with a feeling of our special privilege. Thence her ironic poem.

SEEN FROM ABOVE

On a dirt road lies a dead beetle.
Three little pairs of legs carefully folded on his belly.
Instead of death's chaos—neatness and order.
The horror of this sight is mitigated,
the range strictly local, ~~from witchgrass to spearmint~~.
Sadness is not contagious.
The sky is blue.

ITS is
For our peace of mind, ~~their~~ death seemingly shallower,
animals do not pass away, but simply die,
losing—we wish to believe—~~less of awareness and the world,~~
+ leaving—it seems to us—a stage less tragic ~~than ours~~
Their humble little souls do not haunt our dreams,
they keep their distance,
+ know their place.

So here lies the dead beetle on the road,
it glistens unlamented when the sun hits.
A glance at him is as good as a thought:
he looks as though nothing important had befallen him.
What's important is valid supposedly ^{only} for us.
For just our life, for just our death,
+ a death that enjoys an extorted primacy.

LIKE + R