

**“In Praise of Feeling Bad About  
Yourself”** (1976)

by Wislawa Szymborska

The buzzard never says it is to blame.

The panther wouldn't know what scruples mean.

When the piranha strikes it feels no shame.

If snakes had hands, they'd claim their hands were clean.

A jackal doesn't understand remorse.

Lions and lice don't waver in their course.

Why should they, when they know they're right?

Though hearts of killer whales weigh a ton,

In every other way they're light.

On this third planet of the sun

among the signs of bestiality

A clear conscience is Number One.