**"Terrorist, He's Watching" by Wislawa Szymborska - Analysis**

Well-known in her native Poland, Wisława Szymborska received international recognition when she won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1996. In awarding the prize, the Academy praised her “poetry that with ironic precision allows the historical and biological context to come to light in fragments of human reality.” Collections of her poems that have been translated into English includePeople on a Bridge (1990), View with a Grain of Sand: Selected Poems (1995), andMonologue of a Dog (2005).

Readers of Szymborska’s poetry have often noted its wit, irony, and deceptive simplicity. Her poetry examines domestic details and occasions, playing these against the backdrop of history. In the poem “The End and the Beginning,” Szymborska writes, “After every war / someone’s got to tidy up.”

In the New York Times Book Review, Stanislaw Baranczak wrote, “The typical lyrical situation on which a Szymborska poem is founded is the confrontation between the directly stated or implied opinion on an issue and the question that raises doubt about its validity. The opinion not only reflects some widely shared belief or is representative of some widespread mind-set, but also, as a rule, has a certain doctrinaire ring to it: the philosophy behind it is usually speculative, anti-empirical, prone to hasty generalizations, collectivist, dogmatic and intolerant.”

Szymborska lived most of her life in Krakow; she studied Polish literature and society at Jagiellonian University and worked as an editor and columnist. A selection of her reviews was published in English under the title Nonrequired Reading: Prose Pieces (2002). She received the Polish PEN Club prize, the Goethe Prize, and the Herder Prize.

**Discussion of the Poem:**

"Terrorist, He's Watching" by Wislawa Szymborska explores the anticipation of a real life terrorist bombing. The poem is narrated from a third person omnipresent point of view, in a very matter-of-fact tone. The scene described shows various customers entering and exiting the bar in the minutes leading up to the bombs detonation. A few of them that are close to death get away, and one man even escapes and the re-enters the bar, seconds before it turns into a fiery explosion.

The author's purpose in this work is that of creative statement. The poem is mostly about the fragility of life and destiny. The work is not so much about the terrorists, as one would think at first read, it is about the bomb. More importantly, the poem is about the explosion and what that entails for life following it. Szymborska is not necessarily trying to influence the reader's beliefs or values directly, but the author is trying to get the reader to realize how precious life is, and how even the smallest of decisions can change everything. The phrase: "The girl's gone. Was she that dumb, did she go in or not, we'll see when they carry them out", really brings the idea home how fragile life is. The way the author uses words like "fat" and "bald" to describe the customers, shows how the author wants to portray the normality of the customers.

The way the author uses the countdown technique makes the work more suspenseful. This, in-turn, causes the pace of the poem to quicken as a relatively larger amount of time is covered in these number of lines. Furthermore, the way the narrator describes the scene so matter-of-factly makes the work seem heartless. However, the description of each customer contradicts this, because the narrator seems genuinely concerned about each one. This creates a nice contrasting effect which almost forces the reader to decide how he or she feels about it. The phrase: "and what a view - just like in the movies:", makes the reader able to picture the scene.