

Grace Be Said at the Supermarket

Howard Nemerov

This God of ours, the Great Geometer,
Does something for us here, where He hath put
 (if you want to put it that way) things in shape,
Compressing the little lambs into orderly cubes,
Making the roast a decent cylinder,
Fairing the tin ellipsoid of a ham,
Getting the luncheon meat anonymous
In squares and oblongs with all the edges bevelled
Or rounded (streamlined, maybe, for greater speed).

Praise Him, He hath conferred aesthetic distance
Upon our appetites, and on the bloody
Mess of our birthright, our unseemly need.
Imposed significant form. Through Him the brutes
Enter the pure Euclidean kingdom of number,
Free of their bulging and blood-swollen lives
They come to us holy, in cellophane
Transparencies, in the mystical body.

That we may look unflinchingly on death
As the greatest good, like a philosopher should.