The Desert of Melancholy

Lewis Turco

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“Immediately he left the knives, the vague, gray shapes of the wolves turned solid, out of the darkness and the snow, and set ravenously to licking blood from the honed steel. The double edge of the knives so lacerated the tongues of the starved beasts that their own blood poured copiously forth to replenish the dog’s blood, and they ate more furiously than before, while Kantiuk laughed, and held his sides laughing.

“And I laughed also, perhaps in relief that Providence had delivered us yet again, or perhaps—under conditions of extremity, far from Connecticut—finding these creatures acutely ridiculous, so avid to swallow their own blood. First one, and then the other collapsed, dying, bloodless in the snow black with their own blood, and Kantiuk retrieved his turnoks, and hacked lean meat from the thigh of the larger wolf, which we ate gratefully, blessing the Creator, for we were hungry.”

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_They have myriads in their mouths._
—Robert Burton

It is not far from here to nowhere. Merely across the furniture. We are experiencing technical difficulties; please
do not adjust. If there were
ink in this pen, it would be different.
However, it is not. This,
then, is a poem written among

furniture, on paper like
a glass screen, pen like a stainless steel steak
knife. It is a poem made of
mirrors. In it you will see, if

you look technically, small
creatures dancing on the head of a pin—
any number of them: I
have myriads in my mouth. They
do not know that they are there—
no more than we know they are watching us.
Well, quite a charming place, this,
wherever: Chairs, tables, the smell

of meat in the air. No one
will wonder at this devastation of
syllables. Who is to be
awed? It is my devastation,

and I am past wonderment.
It is at this point precisely that the
cactus must resume blossom.
If it does not, words will have no

point. Expect nothing. You will be disappointed in other things. The
desert does not flower.
It is the flower that flowers.