

On Velocity

I want to leave Earth behind, so I dash past the bridge over the stream by the meadow, past the reindeer-feeding-trough in the dark of the forest, turning at Monowitz on the corner of Schuhkammer and Kleiderkammer, into the street in my desire to move faster than the Earth in whatever direction this thought has taken from the point it started, for everything has converged to such a point of departure, leaving everything behind, leaving behind the Earth, and I set off, rushing instinctively, doing the right thing by rushing because it wasn't East or South or North I was heading or in some other direction in relation to these, but West, which was right, if only because the Earth spins from left to right, that is to say from a western to an eastern direction, because that is right, that's how things are, that's how it felt right, was right, from the first half-fraction of the instant in which I started, since everything moves most definitely from West to East, the building, the morning kitchen, the table with its cup, the cup with its steaming emerald-coloured tea and the way the scent spirals upward and all the blades of grass in the meadow that are pearled with morning dew, and the empty reindeer-feeder in the dark of the forest, all of these, each and every one, moves according to its nature from West to East, that's to say towards me, I who wanted to move faster than Earth, and rushed through

the door over the meadow and the dark of the forest, and had to move precisely in a western direction while everything else, the whole of creation, the lot, each billionth of a billionth component of this overwhelmingly vast world, was continuously spinning at unimaginable speed from West to East; or rather I, who wanted to move faster, therefore fixed my own speed in the opposite, wholly unexpected, direction, one beyond the realm of physics, that's to say having chosen to do so with self-evidently instinctive freedom, had therefore to run counter to it, counter to this terrifying world and everything in it that comprises corner, meadow and forest, or rather, no, as I painfully realised in the second half of the instant, no alas, of course not in that direction, opposing its movement being precisely the worst choice, my instincts had led me to turn in precisely the wrong direction at the corner, over the field and past the dark of the forest, when I should have chosen to move in the same direction, from West to East as Earth did in its, O! Entirety, and so, in the blinking of an eye, I immediately turned about my axis wondering how my instincts could have led me to move so firmly in the direction opposite the Earth's movement since, if I did what I was doing now, its speed would be the same as mine, its and mine the same, they would have a positive relation to each other, combining with each other to greater

Laszlo
Krasznahorkai

*Translated by
George Szirtes*

effect, would, in effect, be doing the same thing, the Earth turning from West to East, I moving from West to East, the majestic immovability of the starting point being assumed to be an absolute value, so that it would be practically impossible to see how the smaller part belonged to the Greater Whole, and how the Greater Movement would allow space for the little counter-movement, the one independent of the other, the two linked only in one way, in that the Greater Movement permitted the small counter-direction to function within it, and what a short-circuit that would be, I concluded as I was already turning, but then why was I thinking this, instinctively thinking moreover, since if I were talking about one single relationship, then that single relationship could be no other than that of one term comprehending the other, so that one contained the other, its subservient part, its subsidiary, its little brother, its little sister, carried by the Greater whichever way it moved, and that Earth was quite certainly, and indeed correctly, moving in the one direction it could move, that is from West to East, and I was a part of it, inside it, I who had desired to be faster than the Earth to whose movement mine was demonstrably related, in, moreover, the most strictly logical way, since the velocity, that is to say of the Earth, contained my velocity, my sprinting, the fact being, one way or the other, that whatever else Earth did, its velocity certainly comprised mine, after all whatever Grand Perspective was employed it didn't

matter whether I ran counter to its direction of movement, that is to say registering as a minus quantity, or in the same direction as it, that is constituting a plus, it was just that, to me personally, it was a matter of supreme importance since it was this precisely I wanted, that is, to move faster than the Earth, in other words it was the plus, the positive value, I needed, that's to say what mattered was to have the Little Independent Micrototality moving within the Great Free Macrototality as part of it, but the fact is I was simply running within the Great Inwardness of the Laws of Physics, but this time in absolutely the right direction, that is to say from West to East, according with the movement of the Earth, since it is precisely in this fashion, in precisely this manner, of course, I'd have to run in order to be faster than the Earth, running with it so to speak, from West to East, from a western direction to an eastern direction, and – suddenly the thought hit me like a bolt of lightning – I was already faster, since my velocity now comprehended that of the Earth, that is to say it comprehended it without me having to do much more than move a muscle, and that this way, by running over Earth's surface from West to East, I had made the task so much simpler, that I could breathe ever more easily, since it was fresh out here, enjoying the night of freedom or the dawn of freedom, or something between the two, and that I was locked into that interval between night and dawn, feeling perfectly calm, because the thought of having now chosen the correct direction I was moving faster

than the Earth, since Earth is thought, as I thought, right at the beginning, and now I wanted to move faster than thought, to leave thought behind, and that that had suddenly become my aim, so it was what I did when I turned at Monowitz on the corner of Schuhkammer and Kleiderkammer, across the meadow with its pearly grass, past the bridge over the stream, beyond the dark of the forest, passing the empty reindeer-feeder, so it was right that I should have set out in the wrong direction at first, on instinct, and then corrected myself and quick as blinking turned and moved in the right direction, from West to East, a small micrototality within the Greater Macrototality, in which case I had only to add my speed to its speed, which I did, running as fast as I could, my feet pounding on under the enormous sky that was changing from night to dawn, and there was nothing in my head but the sense that everything was as it should be, that I was simply contributing my share of velocity to the Earth's, my velocity to its velocity, when suddenly a new thought struck me that, fine, this was all very well, but how did my speed relate to that of the Earth, how much faster was I, and was that an interesting question in the first place? That is to say the question of how much faster I was than the Earth. And no, it's not interesting, I said to myself, my feet pounding all the while as normal, since all that was interesting was that I should move faster than thought, that is to say, outrun the Earth, but then the little brother within me started making calculations in my

head, arguing that there, on the one hand, was the Earth's velocity, that majestically challenging, vast, eternal per secundum and there, on the other, were my best efforts at running at whatever per secundum the occasion offered, and then, it seemed to me, any relative value would do for me to run ahead of the Earth, that I needn't run particularly fast since it would make very little difference to my overall relative speed if I did slow down a bit, so I immediately slowed, and it was clear as clear could be that there were innumerable ways of being faster than Earth, it being enough for me to continue in a West to East direction, and enough simply to run because putting aside the magnetic drag of the various latitudes which would cumulatively increase, there being an infinite number of velocities to choose from, infinite values were therefore available for my own running-speed and what is more, I thought, further decreasing my velocity all the while, the fact is it would be enough if ... if I moved at all, just put one foot in front of the other, the essential thing being to move in a West to East direction, enough simply not to stay still, since there were billions on billions of possible velocities in which case I was free, entirely free, or so I observed as my steps instinctively slowed, perfectly free to choose just how fast I moved since any movement in the right direction would result in moving faster than the Earth and therefore faster than thought, since Earth is itself thought, and that was the way I was thinking, even before I started the whole process a little

while ago, the way I was thinking when I dashed past the bridge over the stream by the meadow, past the reindeer-feeder in the dark of the forest and turned at Monowitz on the corner of Schuhkammer and Kleiderkammer. Providing I make no mistakes, I told myself, providing I keep going in the right direction, providing I simply move, just carry

on walking through the fresh dawn air, I would achieve what I had set out to do, and be faster than the Earth – it was just the darkness of the forest that would recede into the distance, just the meadow, the corner, just the scent of that emerald-coloured mist vanishing into time for ever, into infinity, beyond recall.