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Film Techniques and Poetic Procedures in Vladan Krečković's Poetry Collection *Pariz, Teksas*

Vladan Krečković's poetry collection *Pariz, Teksas* ("Paris, Texas") (2020) is one of the more recent books released by PPM Enklava, a fairly young, but renowned Serbian publisher focused mostly on poetry. Similar to other Serbian contemporary literary works, for instance Nikola Đurica's poetry collection *Noćne životinje* ("Nocturnal Animals") (2020) from the same publisher, Krečković's book features prominent references to films. Already the titles of these two collections of poetry, which explicitly point to Wim Wenders' and Tom Ford's cinematic achievements – *Paris, Texas* (1984) and *Nocturnal Animals* (2016) – demonstrate that visual culture and, especially film, occupy a privileged place and represents a point of departure for these two Serbian poets. If poetry in the past was thought to be one of the sources of cinematic creativity (cf. Kramer and Röhnert 2020, 5), the case of Krečković's and Đurica's works shows a shift: Here cinematic achievements become a source of poetic creativity. The approaches of these two poets to the subject, however, differ significantly, indicating that there are multiple ways in which contemporary Serbian poets treat film as a source.

On the one hand, Đurica does not explicitly refer to *Nocturnal Animals* as cinematographic work nor to the plot or scenes from Ford's film, except in the title of his work. The title of the film serves as a starting point for the development of the book's leading idea about the changeability, fickleness, and the most deeply hidden sides of human nature. Just as nocturnal animals hide from the sunlight and are only active after dark, one's genuine traits and intentions, as Đurica's book suggests, can be discerned only when one embraces one's own solitude and darkness. Krečković, on the other hand, relies on Wenders' film more openly and more often. The evocation of the plot, themes, and motifs represented in the film but also the poetical reshaping of the entire scenes, enriching them with additional observations and meditations, reveal an intermedial quality in the form of media transposition (cf. Rajewsky 2005, 51) in this book.

Furthermore, Wenders' film as the most prominent reference in the poetry collection becomes a lyrical persona's tool for introspection. Yet, the question of how the intricate relationship between poetry and film is established in Krečković's poetry collection does not only concern explicit references to the latter (as in the titles of the mentioned poetry works) or the transformation of the material from one medium into another. It also concerns the question of the film's impact

in terms of the techniques and procedures deployed in literary work. By borrowing and imitating film techniques, as well as by referring to the film as a medium, Krečković's book develops a distinctly broad system of "intermedial references," which are deployed as "meaning constitutional strategies" (Rajewsky 2005, 52) and affect the book's signification. In other words, in Krečković's poetry collection, film as a medium serves as a structural device of the text. Finally, the references to Wenders' film as well as the references to the medium of film serve as a means of constructing and expressing subjectivity throughout the book, as will be demonstrated in this article.

This treatment will also show that *Pariz, Teksas* is a meticulously conceptualized book whose structure and meaning are reinforced by the mechanisms of film, contributing to the diversity of Krečković's lyrical expression. To date, there have still been no deeper and more detailed investigations of the relations of this poetry collection with film, of structural analogies, techniques, or procedures employed in this book. Therefore, the main focus of this article lies on *Pariz, Teksas*, and on shedding light on its relationship with Wenders' film, that is, on different modes in which film as an individual artwork and a medium appears in this poetry collection, aiming to close an outlined research gap.

From screen to poetic text

Pariz, Teksas is Krečković's first collection of poetry. Soon after its publication, it achieved great success; the poet was awarded the prestigious international literary prize Bridges of Struga established by The Struga Poetry Evenings Festival (SPE) and UNESCO. Translations into Macedonian and English followed and increased the visibility of the book, making it accessible to both regional (Balkan / South-East European) and further European audiences.¹ The title of Krečković's poetry collection alone, as well as the blurb on the back cover that indicates some of the cinematic influences and leading topics, propose a key for reading it, which has directed literary critique to focus more closely on the book's relations with film (Fig. 36). This interest resulted mostly in the detection of films that Krečković explicitly or implicitly evokes in his poetry. Other films besides Wenders' *Paris*,

¹ Jovica Ivanovski translated the book into Macedonian, Kruna Petrić into English; these translations first appeared together in 2021, in the trilingual edition of *Pariz, Teksas* that followed the Bridges of Struga award. Afterwards, PPM Enklava published a separate e-publication of the poetry collection's English translation. All English translations of Krečković's poems in this article will be quoted according to Kruna Petrić's translation from the trilingual edition of the book.

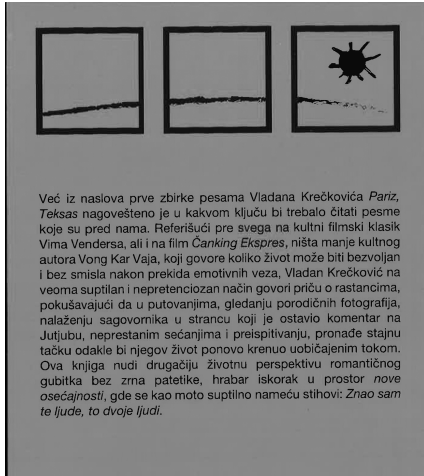


Fig. 36: Back cover of *Pariz, Teksas*. Design by Hajdana Kostić and Stefan Bulatović. 2020.

Texas (1984) that literary critiques listed as influential for Krečković's collection of poetry are *Chungking Express* (1994), *My Winnipeg* (2007), *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004), as well as David Lynch's cinematography, especially the TV series *Twin Peaks* (1990–2017). So far, the research has focused mainly on the specific cinematic atmosphere that emerges as a result of these evocations (cf. Marinkov 2020, 294–295; Đurković 2020).

Right at the outset of the collection, Krečković introduces Wenders' *Paris, Texas* by quoting a part from Sam Shepard's script of the film, referring to one of the most prominent monologues in cinematography: "He ran until the sun came up and he couldn't run any further. And when the sun went down, he ran again. For five days he ran like this until every sign of man had disappeared" (Shepard and Wenders 1983, 180; cf. Krečković 2020, 5 and 2021, 97). The quotation, which represents Travis Henderson's, the film protagonist's, monologue (played by Harry Dean Stanton; 02:08:52–02:09:24) in the film's finale, sets the thematic horizon and the atmosphere of Krečković's poems. It also serves as an indicator of the nature and sensibility of the lyrical persona and consequently of Krečković's poetry. Hence, the story of loss, loneliness, wandering, searching for the right direction, as well as deconstructing and reconstructing family and love relationships is conveyed as poetically shaped introspective insights based on the lyrical persona's experience. This is followed by the lyrical persona's double positioning, which is based on their recognition of the similarities they share with the film's characters (cf. Branigan 1984, 10). On the one hand, the lyrical persona identifies with the boy Hunter (played by Hunter Carson), Travis Henderson's son, through the feeling of being abandoned and torn apart between parents, which is for both of them based

on the childhood experience of family and home disintegration (for example in the poem “The Time When Fernando Torres Was the Best Striker in the World” [“Vreme kada je Fernando Tores bio najbolji napadač na svetu”]). On the other hand, the experience of loss of love in adulthood both re-evokes and re-contextualizes feelings of loneliness, abandonment, and resignation (as in the poem “August, Once Again” [“Avgust, još jednom”]). For this reason, the lyrical persona also identifies with Travis Henderson himself and empathizes with his suffering after broken relationships.

This aspect of the lyrical persona’s identification is most evident in the poem titled “Paris, Texas” (Krečković 2021, 121; cf. 2020, 38–39) which is central to Krečković’s poetry collection (Fig. 37).

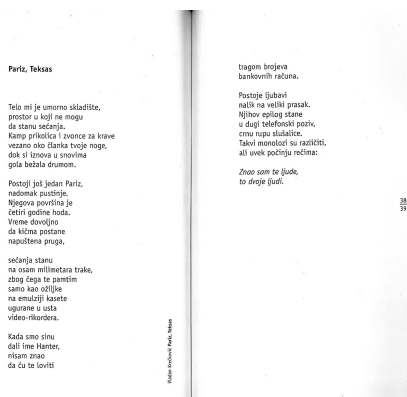


Fig. 37: Vladan Krečković. “Pariz, Teksas.”
Pariz, Teksas. 2020. 38–39.

This poem can be regarded as a lyrical recreation or “adaptation” (cf. Hutcheon 2006, 6) of Wenders’ film. To the same degree as the quotation from the beginning of the book, this poem too points to the film’s finale and thus to the explanation and unfolding of the events preceding the final meeting of Travis and Jane (played by Nastassja Kinski; 01:58:44–02:19:28) in the peep show booth. Since the process of adaptation is always a process of (re-)interpretation and (re-)creation (cf. Hutcheon 2006, 8), the film scenes serve as a source for the poetic images just as Travis’ monologue’s verbal content does. Prominent scenes from the film, such as the wandering through the desert, the memory loss, and the search for the missing wife and son are evoked and poetically transformed. The motifs of the camp trailer and the cowbell tied to the woman’s ankle only verbally evoked in the film become an integral part of the poem, too (cf. Krečković 2021, 121). However, since an adaptation allows only for a gradual approximation of one medium to another (cf. Hutcheon 2006, 16; Benthien et al. 2019, 212–213), the dissonance between the film and the newly created poetic images emerging in the process of

adaptation introduces and adds new aspects to the film scenes in question. For instance, the verbalization of the poem in first-person singular does not only reinforce the effect of the lyrical persona's identification with Travis. It also allows for the articulation of thoughts from Travis' perspective. Since the thoughts evoked in the poem are never explicitly mediated in the film, they are the product of the lyrical persona's taking over the protagonist's position. However, their verbal reconstruction as poetic images through the lyrical persona's voice compensates for the limiting possibilities of the film in representing inner states. It furthermore serves as a counterpart to the film's finale, where the results of the introspective process are visually represented as gazing (cf. Branigan 1984, 80) through the peep show window.

The investigation of the influence of Wenders' film on Krečković's poetry invites for consideration of a film genre as well: *Paris, Texas* is commonly characterized as a road movie (cf. Bromley 1997; Hark 1997, 210–214), a genre that emerged under the direct influence of on-the-road literature (cf. Kohan and Hark 1997; Kuhn and Westwell 2020), and Krečković imports specific themes inherent to this film genre into his book. These elements concern leaving home for a road trip, and thus imply various forms of mobility and means of transportation (cf. Kramer and Röhnert 2020, 7), the naming of numerous temporary destinations, as well as motifs of alienation, tension, self-discovery, and the self-reflection of the protagonist as well as the reflexivity of the genre itself (cf. Morris 2003, 24–48; see Krečković 2021, 101, 105–106, 118–120, 124–125, 131, 134, 137–139). In this sense, mobility serves as a “trigger for poetry” in Krečković's book, while poetry “makes us perceive the devices of mobility as a means to travel not only in the external world but on unforeseen roads of the mind” (Kramer and Röhnert 2020, 11). Moreover, it disguises the paths of transposition of different artistic practices and procedures into different media – in this particular case from literature to film and then back to literature.

The specific poetic quality of Wenders' film is rooted in the structuring of the film itself. Namely, this translates to the fact that the horizontal structure of the film – which concerns the narrative or the development of the plot (cf. Deren 2000, 173–174; Benthien et al. 2019, 118) – is rather simple: it is a quest for a missing wife and child. This pushes forward the film's vertical structure, which regards “what it feels like or what it [the situation] means” (Deren 2000, 173–174). This means that, in Wenders' film, Travis' experiences and feelings are in a privileged position. The audience, together with the characters in the film, learn about the events and their causality from Travis' telling. This, however, happens only when Travis is able and ready to tell his story, for at the beginning of the film he is mute and has no memory of the events that preceded and led to his initial position in the film. This constant delay of the unfolding of the events is

what provokes suspense, emphasizing the change of Travis' emotional and mental states (from jealousy, fear, and anger, to disappointment and unconsciousness, to regained consciousness, understanding, and accepting responsibility) as a causative agent of the events visually represented and verbally evoked in the film. In this sense, the protagonist in *Paris, Texas* and the lyrical persona in *Pariz, Teksas* both travel on a shared 'reflexive road.'

Poetic procedures of capturing mobility

A particularly interesting aspect of the relations between film and poetry in Krečković's book is the question of how mobility affects the creation or development of a scenery. In terms of filmmaking, the scenery is first established within the screenplay; it is a more or less detailed technical description of the space where the film scenes take place (cf. Kuhn and Westwell 2020). However, only when the film scenes are shot, the scenery expresses its full potential as an element in the processes of signification and interpretation of the film. Thus, the scenery contributes to the general atmosphere of the sequence, sets the tone, reflects the characters' attitudes, feelings, and personalities, underlines the leading ideas, etc. When it comes to Krečković's poetry, the lyrical persona's mobility is the key element that distinguishes two types of scenery – the static and the dynamic one – and therefore two different poetic strategies employed in their verbal representation.

In the cases when the lyrical persona is at rest, that is, when their movement is minimized, the scenery is a static one. Often, there is no physical presence of other people in these "scenes," which creates a feeling of isolation, but also a sort of calmness. This kind of scenery is usually presented at the very beginning of the poem, or it is gradually constructed around the lyrical persona, emerging as a background for the lyrical persona's poetic introspection. Therefore, its main function can be explained as setting the atmosphere before the main ideas or feelings are articulated, which usually happens by the end of the poem, accompanied by some sort of conclusion or point. For example, in the poem "Before Midnight in Room 25 (Memories of 11 Schlüsselgasse)" ["Pre ponoći u sobi 25 (sećanje na šlosgasse 11)"], the title indicates the exact position (the address) and type of a place (a hotel/hostel/motel room). The shifting of the lyrical persona's perspective from wide to a narrower one (which will be explained later on in more detail) generates the effect of going closer *into* the space. A more accurate representation of the scenery intertwined with the lyrical persona's impressions is given in the first seven lines: "I find it easier to endure / the passing of time in a rented room. /

The ceilings are high / and there's enough room for doubt / in the building where the ghosts / of previous tourists whimper, / crammed inside the floor cracks" (Krečković 2021, 126). Emphasizing the fact that the room is rented, as well as putting the architecture and purpose of the building to the fore, this poem points to the ambiguity of the space and the ambiguity of the lyrical persona's feelings about it. A hotel room is not an intimate, personal space, but a temporary residence; still, just for this reason, it alleviates the lyrical persona's existential questioning and the feeling of transience, turning the scenery not into a mere background of the poem, but into an important element of an allegorical representation of the transience of human life.

Since the mobility of Krečković's lyrical persona, similar to the protagonist in Wenders' film, has many forms (walking, running, riding) and therefore demands various means of transportation (bicycle, car, train, plane, boat), it does not surprise that this book entails a significantly larger number of poems in which the lyrical persona is on the move. The dynamic scenery, as the second type, is the dominant one in Krečković's poetry. Being mobile impacts the more or less rapid change of scenery surrounding the lyrical persona, depending on the velocity of the motion. A case in point can be found in the poem "The Return" ["Povratak"]. In contrast to Wenders' film, where Travis manages to rediscover and regain his identity through travel and movement, here a downhill ride on a bicycle for the lyrical persona exemplifies the moment of finally being nothing (cf. Krečković 2021, 134). While neutralizing all of the characteristics of the lyrical persona, the speed and movement also shift the focus to the surroundings, as seen from an unusual perspective: the poetic images of houses, courtyards, laundry, children playing, gas stations, the street and the city are quickly changing in front of the lyrical persona's eyes. This rapid change of space increases the kinesthesia (cf. Levi 2017, 75–76) of the poem.

The lyrical persona's awareness of the multiple effects of mobility on the impression of dynamism can be detected in the text. In this regard, it should be noted that the poetic images in Krečković's poems are usually introduced by the lyrical persona's explicit statement that they see, observe, look, watch, etc. (e.g. "Gazing at the dark water crust / in silence" (Krečković 2021, 119; own emphasis)). Moreover, there are examples where poetic images emerge from situations that imply the practices of the lyrical persona's seeing, observing, looking (e.g. "From your bedroom window / the slow stream of the Danube looked like / an exodus of oil" (Krečković 2021, 116; own emphasis)). Therefore, vision and the mentioned practices connected to it function as an initial "aestheticizing procedure" and the "founding gesture of spatial framing/fragmentation" (cf. Levi 2017, 62) in Krečković's poetry. In other words, isolating and putting to the fore a detail from the

scene in the lyrical persona's sight by the notion of practices connected to vision, awards the text with cinematic quality.

For instance, in the poem "Delta," the lyrical persona, during a boat ride, firstly points out the preconditions for the observational practice that leads to a (desired) impression of dynamism: "We need to keep still in the boat / to let the countryside *flow past us*" (Krečković 2021, 101, own emphasis). The mobility of the surroundings is attained by the succession of the poetic images represented as seen from the boat, but top-down: roofs, cable lines, villages, and a dog on the river bank that reappears among the bulrush. Mobility is additionally emphasized by detecting other elements in space that affect the observational practice itself: "Fences, walls, windows, / religious icons – / *everything framing the scenery*, / is a collage of waste." (Krečković 2021, 101; own emphasis) Therefore, it can be said that structuring the poem according to the visual experience contributes not only to its cinematic quality but, in a form of meta-reflection, also becomes an acknowledgment of vision and visuality as a dominant mode in Krečković's poetry.

Concerning the translation of dynamism into poetic language, it should also be noted that the impression of movement depends on a formal aspect of the poem: the faster the movement, the less time the lyrical persona spends in a particular setting, and the shorter the verbal expression reflecting the individual parts of the scenery or objects/subjects in the space, and vice versa.² For instance, in the poem "Trains and Again Trains" ["Vozovi i opet vozovi"], the lyrical persona rides on a train and observes the landscapes passing by: "Across a dreamy space / after the Budapest suburbs / I saw meadows, chessboard pieces, / still cows and powerlines / gliding away" (Krečković 2021, 125). Sequences of the space observed and elements in it are represented either in one line (as the Budapest suburbs) or by a syntagma or a noun that is part of the line (as still cows and powerlines), rendering the poetic language very demonstrative. Moreover, the semantic field of movement adds a certain amount of dynamism to the space itself and reinforces the verbal recreation of the impression of mobility within a space (e.g. the meadows that are "gliding away" like the countryside which was previously flowing past the lyrical persona).

In contrast to these sequences, in the poem "Anima, the Movement of the Concrete" ["Anima, kretanje betona"], the mobility of the lyrical persona is based

2 This can be compared with the ideas present in Miroslav Bata Petrović's short text *Šetaj i gledaj* ("Walk and Look"), where he offers a course on looking at reality. Among other things, he suggests the following: Once in a moving vehicle, one should look through the window and notice how everything is in motion – people outside, cars, trees, the vehicle itself and the observing person in it. By the movement of the head, one could affect the composition of frames, as well as change the object of observation, etc. (cf. Levi 2017, 75–77).

on walking. Here, the third, fourth, and fifth stanzas are dedicated to the representation of a cityscape. Streets and street signs, concrete walls and reinforcing steel bars, as markers of a city space, are tightly intertwined with the lyrical persona's emotional experience of this space (Krečković 2021, 99). The poetic language is thus more associative and abundant with epithets, metaphors, and comparisons. From this it becomes clear that the dynamics of movement also impact the detailedness of spatial representation, causing a constant change of focus. As the examples analyzed in this section show, one aspect of the pervasiveness of the medium of film in Krečković's poetry collection can be linked to the idea that visual representations of movement and acts of mobility in films are self-referential in terms of the illusion that films as *moving* pictures produce (cf. Kramer and Röhnert 2020, 7). Besides evoking the genre of road movies, the movements and acts of mobility represented verbally create an effect of moving pictures within the text. The poetry collection thus acquires a cinematic quality and brings the experience of reading closer to the experience of observing.

Introducing film techniques into poetry

The lyrical persona's mobility in the scenery and its verbal representation are not the sole aspect of intermedial quality in *Pariz, Teksas*. Other influences of film as a medium are also present in the book as poetic procedures used to recreate effects of various film techniques such as tracking and panning shots, point of view, and close-up shots. For example, a poetic image is sometimes comparable to the image produced by a steady camera capturing only what is within the range of the objective. In other cases, poetic images are represented as if they were captured by a camera in a fixed position, but only rotating horizontally or vertically, as in panning and tilting shots. Or the poetic image possesses dynamics as if it was captured by a completely mobile camera following the subjects and objects of interest, as the following examples indicate.

In the poem "We Finally Measured Our Love in Miles" ["Konačno smo ljubav merili u miljama"] poetic images substitute one another as a result of a car ride, which is the central theme of the poem: "The hypnosis of a monotonous panorama, / the scars on the birch trees and streets / sagging under the weight of too much industry. / A highway. / In the sky above Denver / the stars looked like piercings. / It was hard to look at / the Methodist churches by the road, / the homeless whose lives / could fit in a supermarket trolley" (Krečković 2021, 137). Movement is pointed out by naming the toponyms from the map (Denver, but further in the poem also Huron, Illinois, Sierra Azul), and referring to the topoi of the

highway, that is, the motel room, gas stations, and the desert (cf. Krečković 2021, 137–139). However, the birch trees and industrial settlements evoked at the beginning of the poem are the motifs that most strongly transmit the effect of the film technique. Namely, as they are metaphorically represented as scar-like because they occasionally and suddenly appear on the horizon during the car ride and thus interrupt the monotony of the surroundings, the birch trees and industrial settlements become indicators of a movement of the lyrical persona, who is in the driving car. Therefore, the birches and settlements appear as glitches on the film frame or film screen: they interrupt the continuity of the visual (re)presentation of the panorama framed by the windshield or the window of the moving car. In this way, the aforementioned motifs both enhance the effect of the moving pictures in the poem and introduce the materiality of the medium of film into a medium of poetry. This, together with the double meaning of the lyrical persona's statement that "[i]t was hard to look at" – both physically (for the lyrical persona is on the move and thus their field of vision constantly changes) and emotionally (for the scenes leave a strong impression on the lyrical persona, even though observed for a short period of time) – contribute to the creation of the effects of a tracking shot, a shot where the camera follows the character or shows the surroundings (cf. Kuhn and Westwell 2020).

The poem "The Message I Didn't Send" ["Poruka koju nisam poslao"] brings into consideration another type of film shot. Namely, a description of a room in the middle of the night that pays close attention to items, light sources, and sounds (cf. Krečković 2021, 123) gives the impression that the lyrical persona is completely static. The lyrical persona is also only reporting on the things that are within the horizontal axis of its sight, like in a panning shot (cf. Kuhn and Westwell 2020). Visual practices, as previously stated, impose the main aestheticization procedure, which is in the poems reflected in the semantic field of sight. For that reason, as well as for the fact that it is written in the first person singular, very often in an intimate tone and with a predominantly introspective tendency, it can be argued that *Pariz, Teksas* is conceptualized as a point-of-view shot. For example, in the poem "Approaching the Sanatorium" ["Nadomak sanatorijuma"], the lyrical persona finds themselves disappointed and defeated by the loss of a beloved one. This loss is, however, only metaphorical, for the eyes of the beloved one do not reflect the person they once were (cf. Krečković 2021, 103). In the last stanza, the lyrical persona locates themselves at a bus stop and the direction of their gaze is asserted in the following lines: "At times, I'd stare / at the stave of the cables / on the telephone poles, / think about the voices / travelling across the wasteland. / Still in the distance / they will reach someone" (Krečković 2021, 103). The gaze, which is fixed on the objects (telephone poles), becomes intertwined with reflections on the objects' purpose (communication), bringing to the fore the

lyrical persona's solitude and feeling of isolation as a result of the lack or absence of communication with the beloved person. As in the point-of-view shot (cf. Branigan 1984, 6), *what* the lyrical persona sees, is just as much represented as the way *how* the lyrical persona sees it.

Another example of recreating the effects of film techniques in poetry can be found in the above-mentioned poem "Anima, the Movement of the Concrete." The poem commences with an image of a woman holding a gun against her head, while special attention is paid to the hair that touches the gun barrel: "Time and again / a spectre of a woman / whose hair is touching / a 9mm gun barrel / keeps haunting me" (Krečković 2021, 99). The poetic image is built on tensivity at the point of contact between hair and gun. Its sudden appearance at the very beginning of the poem without any kind of context is what immediately directs readers' attention toward the most important detail of the poem. In an analogous manner to the technique of the zoom, where the camera focuses and isolates one specific detail from the bigger picture to show it more closely, the very distinctive language and grammatical structure in this example present the audience with a very powerful poetic close-up shot.

The poem "My Dad's Photos from the West Coast" ["Fotografije moga oca sa Zapadne obale"] deploys yet another visual medium: The first five stanzas of the poem concern five different photographs of the lyrical persona's father. Although the content of the photographs is verbally articulated in the present tense as if the photographed scenes take place at the exact time of the lyrical persona's observations, they testify to the father's life in the past. This can be deduced from the opposed time adverbs "now," "[t]oday," "back then," and "then" (Krečković 2021, 112–113; cf. 2020, 29) in the second line of the fifth stanza and the first lines of the sixth and seventh stanzas. This temporal binary opposition is what indicates distancing (cf. Backman Rogers 2015, 14) between the objects (the photographs) and the viewer (the lyrical persona). While observing the photographs to learn about the father's past, the lyrical persona contextualizes each of them by remarking on what can be seen. However, indications of the time of the day, weather forecasts, occasions, and other people's presence, which the lyrical persona notices, do not suffice for the comprehension of the father's past. This leaves the lyrical persona, and the readers as well, with many assumptions and uncertainties. Therefore, to recreate "the prior condition of the existence of a photograph" (Deren 1978, 64), that is, the specific reality in which the father's photographs emerge, the lyrical persona focuses their gaze on details of the individual photographs (Fig. 38).

The fourth stanza of this poem serves as a good example: "Who were you with that night in Reno? / It's dark in front of the gambling-club, / you are holding a fan of dollars. / I won't ask you about the woman / whose locks are fluttering in



Fig. 38: Vladan Krečković. “Fotografije moga oca sa Zapadne obale.” *Pariz, Teksas*. 2020. 28–29.

the reflection / on a red Ford windshield” (Krečković 2021, 112). Here, the interchange of the wide plan and the specific details within that plan, that is, utilizing zoom as a film technique, is achieved through the rhetorical structure of the stanza. The notion of the casino in wide plan in the second line is subtly substituted with a change of focus to the representation of the father’s hand and a wad of cash in the third line. Additionally, a detail that is supposed to remain outside of the photograph’s focus, the “punctum” (Barthes 1982, 27), which is the reflection of the unknown woman’s hair, is also brought to attention. It adds an effect of mystery and suspense to the poem as well as to the father’s life.

This hidden detail becomes a justification for the posed questions: the explicit and direct one at the outset of the stanza about who the father was with in Reno; and the silent but implied one in the last three lines about the identity of the unknown woman. An explanation of the context that only pertains to what was intended to be represented in the picture – the father’s hand full of dollars as a symbol of success and luck – is provided after the first question. By directing attention to the detail of the woman’s hair, the lyrical persona makes her presence noticeable, potentially confirming another aspect of the father’s success – his success as a lover. However, by suppressing curiosity about the unknown woman, the lyrical persona accepts the fact that they are not present in the reality of the photograph and thus can never fully comprehend its significance. The photographs verbally represented in the poem are then juxtaposed with the image of the father from the present, which in the poem emerges from the lyrical persona’s direct, unmediated observation of the father (cf. Krečković 2021, 113).

Having in mind the ontological and structural relationship between photography and film (cf. Cavell 1979, 23–25; Kramer and Röhnert 2020, 9) and the fact that the film image is created of photographic still images projected at twenty-four frames per second, appearing as continuous movement (cf. Mulvey 2006, 7), it can

be asserted that the succession of photographs in the recreation and reinvention of the father's past alludes to the mechanisms of the moving pictures. In other words, compensating for the lack of knowledge about the father, the lyrical persona picks up the pieces, that is, photographs, trying to give them meaning. For the photographs are evoked successively – each in an individual stanza, the blank space between these stanzas can be comprehended as the spaces between the photographs in the photo album, whereby each stanza is a verbal representation of one photograph. Furthermore, the blanks can be interpreted both as graphic equivalents clear cuts between the scenes in the hypothetical movie chronicling the father's past, but also metaphorically, as blanks in the knowledge of the lyrical persona about their father. In that sense, the poetic images of the photographs in succession constitute a procedure similar to film montage. Once the photographs are juxtaposed with the father's image in the present, an expressive value of the procedure (cf. Antoine-Dunne 2004, 5) comes to the fore, effectively conditioning the meaning of the poem. The impossibility of the lyrical persona to fully grasp the past and present identity of the father from the juxtaposed images, creates the atmosphere of wistful longing in the poem, while the unspoken issues denote the dynamics of the father-son relationship.

The connecting point of the father's images from the past and the present can be found in the details of the last photograph evoked. The father's hands, greased by the oil from a car repair (cf. Krečković 2021, 112–113) belong to both temporal dimensions: the one in which the lyrical persona is not present, which exists only in photographs, and the one in which the lyrical persona recognizes and remembers their father's touches activating multiple senses – vision, olfaction, and the tactile sense. This zoomed-in detail of the photograph, therefore, triggers associations in the lyrical persona, but it is also an invitation for readers to liberate themselves from passive, automatized perception (cf. Benthien et al. 2019, 112, 117) by activating their senses and thus engaging in the process of signification.

Rethinking the process of poetry creation

The influence of the film in Krečković's poetry is notable in its metapoetic and self-reflexive moments as well. The most evident instance of these facets of the book can be found in the poem "The Ability of an Owl" ["Sposobnost sove"]: "Tonight I need neither / assonance nor alliteration, // but like in horror films / to turn my head / through one hundred and eighty degrees / and see the sneaking of nothingness. // In the morning, when the poem is ready, / under the pine tree in the yard / I'll find mice bones" (Krečković 2021, 117; cf. 2020, 33). By rejecting asso-

nance and alliteration as poetic means in the first three lines of the poem, the lyrical persona for the first time fully exposes themselves as a poet. Along the same lines, a preference for cinematographic, rather than poetic strategies, is clearly stated. More precisely, the metapoetic remarks in these lines explicitly connect the creation process of a poem to a specific film genre. Interestingly, the poem refers to horror films and their peculiarities rather than to the road movie as an influential film genre (Fig. 39).

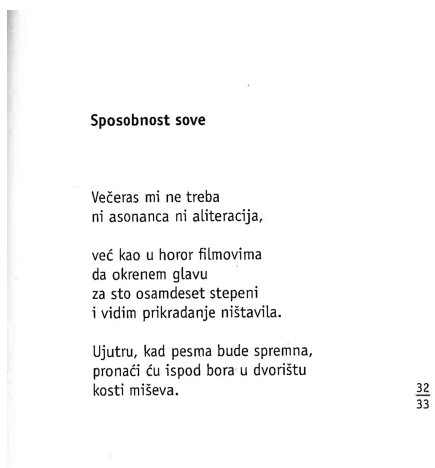


Fig. 39: Vladan Krečković. "Sposobnost sove."
Pariz, Teksas. 2020. 33.

The creation of a poem is thus compared with the experience of watching scenes that provoke feelings of fear, anxiety, and terror, on the one hand. On the other hand, these very feelings become the effect of the poem while reading it: The lyrical persona identifies themselves with an owl, placing themselves within the horror film. This implies several meanings. First off, because of its nocturnal nature and general ambiguity, the owl features prominently in horror films as a bad omen. Consequently, besides alluding to Lynch's *Twin Peaks* and evoking the dark and gloomy atmosphere of the TV series, the owl in this poem reveals the lyrical persona's deep-seated negative self-understanding. The lyrical persona, who is a poet, adopts all of the ominous traits of an owl. Next, just as the owl's ability to turn its head around its axis is unique and uncanny, so too is the lyrical persona's capacity to create poems conveyed as an uncanny activity. Additionally, if the owl's ability to rotate its head is compared to the panning shot film technique, the lyrical persona's field of vision expands to match an owl's field of view and perspective. Furthermore, by taking the owl's place and appropriating its characteristics, this mystification of the lyrical persona underscores the idea of poetic creation as an act of transgressing the given possibilities of vision. This

newly acquired special type of vision enables *looking into nothingness* behind one's back, which is represented as the source of poetic creation. Moreover, it points directly to the filmic representations of introspection in the form of *gazing* or *staring* (into nothingness), which suggests that the object of a gaze is inward (cf. Braning 1984, 80). The creation of the poem is thus not initially connected with writing but with vision itself and with its various practices. In Krečković's poetry, writing happens only afterward, serving as "the camera operator's proto-apparatus" (Levi 2017, 73) *to record* the visual experience.

Some other poems use a similar method to subtly emphasize the value of vision in the poetry creation process. The lyrical persona's acceptance of the impossibility of language to express experience is stated throughout the book, for example in the poem "All That Ramirez Said" ["Sve što je rekao Ramirez"]: "Feel the magnetic needle between your eyebrows. / Language is of no use anymore. / You have to follow the syntax of the pupil, / Step inside yourself through a full stop" (Krečković 2021, 102). Here, the syntax of vision dominates and overpowers the syntax of language. As a result, vision becomes crucial not only for creation but also for introspection, the results of which are most frequently Krečković's poetry's subject. Consequently, visual images and their verbal representations become critical for the articulation of thought processes and emotions.

Another aspect of the metapoetic quality of Krečković's poetry is to be found in poems about dreams and dreaming, as well as in poems about memory and remembering. Here, the metapoetic quality reveals itself through the presence of meta-images. If the concept of the meta-image is understood as any kind of (visual, verbal, mental) image present within another image (cf. Mitchell 1994, 56–57), then the poetic images in Krečković's poetry that verbally represent dream and memory sequences as mental images can also be considered meta-images. For instance, in the poem "Omens" ["Predskazanja"], the lyrical persona states the following: "Last night I dreamt about / my father all in sepia, he spoke quietly and backwards. / The title was in Russian" (Krečković 2021, 115). The father's unusual manner of speaking – quietly, backwards, and in a foreign language – builds up tension in the poem. This further leads to the almost diabolical representation of the father in the lyrical persona's dream and consequently in the poetic image conveying the dream.

Additionally, this dream sequence once again puts the importance of film as a medium to the fore, rendering the meta-aspect of Krečković's book even more complex. The common idea that the structure of film most closely resembles the structure of dreams, for they both dissolve time and space boundaries and their images express a latent message of desires and fears (cf. Morin 1967, 77–78), is introduced in this poem: The notion of subtitles underlines the cinematic character of the lyrical persona's dream sequence, adding another layer to the meta-

image of the father. The dream as a mental image, which is perceived and represented as film-like, is verbally shaped into a poetic image. Furthermore, the mother's repeated question about the deathly omens' presence in the dream – that of either the father's or the lyrical persona's teeth falling out (cf. Krečković 2021, 115) – not only intensifies the already existing tension in the poem, but it also places the lyrical persona into the role of an (unintentional) filmmaker. The mother's urge to interpret the dream and comprehend its latent message cannot be satisfied without the knowledge of the omens' presence. By providing her with this information, the lyrical persona takes responsibility for setting the semantic range of the dream.

When it comes to the question of memory and remembering in Krečković's poetry, as was shown in the case of the poem "My Dad's Photos from the West Coast," it is usually connected to the observation of photographs. A similar strategy occurs in the poem "Cracks in the Ceiling" ["Pukotine na plafonu"], in which, at the request of the dying grandfather, photo albums are displayed back to front: "We faded away / in his arms, / the house shrank / floor by floor, the blurry faces / of my parents' wedding guests, / my father in a suit, / for the first and only time. / A veil on my mother's face / like a mist" (Krečković 2021, 108). Memories as mental images are embedded in photographs, that is, visual images, which are then represented as poetic images in the poem. When being displayed or represented in the opposite order to their emergence, the poetic images of the evoked photographs and thus memories achieve the filmic effect of reverse motion, conveying the impression of the undoing of time (cf. Deren 1978, 68). By achieving the uncanny effect of turning stillness into movement and the past into the present (Backman Rogers 2015, 13), the photographs are transporting the dying grandfather to the beginning. A somewhat analogous interpretation can be connected to the following lines as well: "If they look for me, / the trail leads to the pines and other / power lines, / where the flame, paper / and my memories / rewind to the beginning" (Krečković 2021, 109). Here, the lyrical persona explicitly associates their memories with a film tape and turns it into the foundation of their existence. The hypothetical disappearance of the lyric persona (that is, their hypothetical end) suggested by the conditional clause, however, rests in the return to the beginnings of their memory. Thus, memory is simultaneously perceived as fundamental and destructive to the lyrical persona's identity exploration.

Watching and producing films in *Pariz, Teksas*

In this last section, the privileged position of film in Krečković's poetry collection will be reviewed concerning the aspect of film reception in general. More accurately, in addition to the question of which films the lyrical persona in this book watches – to which Wenders' filmography is one of the answers – it will be examined what kinds of films they are and how these films are being watched. If one closely follows the lyrical persona's explicit statements about the practice of watching films, such as "I would like to tell you / how many nights I've stayed awake / rewatching / Paris, Texas" (Krečković 2021, 113), it is clear that this activity belongs to an intimate setting, like a lyrical persona's home or bedroom. This has various implications. Firstly, the lines cited demonstrate the need for a different kind of privacy and intimacy than was considered to exist in the context of movie theaters (cf. Levi 2017, 34). Being regarded as an experience that guaranteed a high degree of privacy for the audience (cf. Barthes 1995, 418–421), going to the cinema is in Krečković's poetry replaced with home screenings of films. By excluding or at least limiting the presence of others while watching films, the private screening thus becomes an intimate experience in the narrower sense; one could even say an isolating experience. In other words, although displaced from the cinema, film screening in Krečković's poetry retains some of the elements of "the absolute isolation of absorbed viewing" (Mulvey 2006, 27) – the darkness and the absence of intrusions.

Secondly, private screenings exemplify how widely accessible diverse ranges of content, including film, are in the contemporary era. This means that, aside from selecting content and the circumstances under which it is consumed, one has a nearly unlimited possibility of repeating these actions. As implied in the lines above, repeated watching of films allows for the multiplication of their meanings and influences potential interpretations, while also emphasizing the films' aesthetics and visuality. Moreover, since in this poem the lyrical persona most presumably alludes to the screening of a film's digital copy, the question of the film's materiality is again brought to attention. Diverse modes of watching a film in a private setting (such as pausing, skipping, repeating, enlarging, etc.), on the one side point towards "interactive spectatorship" (Mulvey 2006, 190), and, on the other, to the cinema's rootedness in the still image (cf. Backman Rogers 2015, 12; Mulvey 2006, 27–28). Digital technology "enables a spectator to still a film" (Mulvey 2006, 22) and therefore to recreate the presence of a single celluloid film frame. The ability to pause a film image reinforces the importance of consumption and interpretation of films for the lyrical persona's introspection, as well as for the conceptualization of Krečković's book.

In this regard, the genre of home movies, which finds its place in Krečković's poetry as well, should also be mentioned. When evoked, similarly to photographs, home movies are usually brought into connection with the past and memories. They are frequently referred to by the metonymy "VHS tapes," and serve as testimonies of earlier film production and reception. On the one hand, creating home movies shows the integration of cinematic technology into everyday life (cf. Mulvey 2006, 36), meaning that the filmmaking process is not reserved for artists or professionals but is an activity that anyone can practice. On the other hand, the fact that they were supposed to be shown in a private context, stresses their emotional and sentimental rather than their artistic and expressive functions. Therefore, accessibility concerns not only the reception of the film but its production as well.

Still, in the case of Krečković's poetry, making a home movie does not always bring about only a sentimental tone. This can be detected in the poem "My Mother's Portrait in High Resolution" ["Portret moje majke u visokoj rezoluciji"]. Here, the lyrical persona observes a photograph of their mother in her youth, attempting to reconstruct her childhood and recognize the similarities between the photographed and present woman while also remembering their own childhood (cf. Krečković 2021, 110–111). When failing in these attempts, the lyrical persona creates a new portrait in the form of a digital film. This portrait is meant to last forever as an alternative way of remembering the mother: "only the digital god remembers forever" (Krečković 2021, 110). By filming her while she expresses her message as a testimony for the future, the lyrical persona breaks the material connection between the object and its image through the conversion of the recorded information into a numeric system (cf. Mulvey 2006, 19), thereby ensures their mother's eternal existence. Hence, in contrast to the photographs, which are, as the lyrical persona notices, "prone to dementia" (Krečković 2021, 110), digital film is regarded as 'timeless' and invulnerable. Moreover, by allowing the lyrical persona to discard photographs as the keepers of memory, and thus their cinematic potential when flicked through (as in the poems "My Dad's Photos from the West Coast" and "Cracks in the Ceiling"), and then to turn to digital technology, Krečković presents a history of cinematography in a nutshell.

Conclusion: Poetic procedures, film, and photography in *Pariz, Teksas*

This is the exact moment in which the confrontation of non-digital and digital spheres most strikingly appears in Krečković's book of poetry. For the lyrical persona, the non-digital world – the past – is one of unavoidable loneliness, distance,

and isolation. The digital world provides some sort of comfort and consolation, whether by watching films in the intimacy of one's own room, which helps the lyrical persona untangle the enigma of interpersonal relationships and break away from loneliness, or by experiencing understanding from a stranger in a random comment under a YouTube video, as is the case in the poem "After-Midnight Reading of YouTube Comments" ["Posleponono čitanje komentara na Jutjubu"]. The possibilities of the digital age allow the lyrical persona to find a point of anchor: to review and comprehend everything that belongs to the non-digital sphere of life and finally express its emotions towards the past through poetic images.

As has been shown in this article, film as a major part of contemporary visual culture has an immense impact on Krečković's poetry and appears within the book in diverse modes. *Pariz, Teksas* exhibits multiple intermedial relationships between poetry and film. The explicit notions of individual cinematic achievements, of which Wim Wenders' *Paris, Texas* is the most striking influence, introduce the intermedial character of this poetry collection. Poetical reinterpretations of the film's themes, motives, and scenes appear as a means of self-identification and introspection for the lyrical persona. The peculiarities of film genres – road movies and horror films – are reflected within the structures and metapoetic layers of the poems. By evoking the genre of road movies, Krečković's poetry verbally re-enacts movement and acts of mobility, provoking the effect of moving pictures within the text. Moreover, structuring verbal expressions according to the visual experience (either during movement or during rest) also contributes to the cinematic quality of the book. References to horror films provide a strong self-reflexive spot in Krečković's poetry, revealing aspects of vision and of visuality, as well as the overstepping of their boundaries, as dominant modes for the poetry creation process and introspection.

The variety of film techniques used and evoked in the poetry creation process, such as tracking and panning shots, point-of-view shots, close-up shots, cut and montage, expand, deepen, and reinforce the intermedial referencing system of the book. Specifically, the point-of-view shot can be recognized as a primary film technique transformed into a poetic procedure in the conceptualization of *Pariz, Teksas*. The lyrical persona's use of verbs indicates practices connected to vision, inscribing in the poetical images not only into what the lyrical persona sees but how they see as well. The implementation of cinematographic strategies as poetic ones also invites reflection on the ontology and history of film. On this note, photographs embedded with memories appear to be of tremendous importance because, when observed in succession, they both point to the origins of film and enable the conversion of the past into the present in a film-like form. Additionally, poetically shaped dream sequences refer to the dream-like character of film, once again displaying meta-aspects and intermedial qualities of Krečković's poetry collection.

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