C.I.N.E.M.A.

By Velina Derilova

I'm a porcelain doll in a glass box. I'm exquisite. Still, I'm not empty on the inside.
I'm filled with images and light, with love and obsession, with life itself. I'm
murderous but sweet, abusive yet generous, ridiculous but wise. I'm every film
I've ever seen. I know no other way of being.

***

It's intense. It's exhilarating. I'm alive.

***

As with the prehistoric riddle of the chicken and the egg, I have no idea what came
first, my introversion or my love for literature. The logical response would be, *they
go hand in hand*, but no, sometimes they don't, and sometimes one leads to the
other.

I read a lot when I was little and I often imagined my life was novel worthy
material, which it totally wasn't. I was the girl the strong leading man was in love
with and I was the strong leading lady when the book I read happened to portray
one.

...my point is: literature was for a very, very long time the supreme art form for me.
In many ways it still is. I won't ramble on in clichés about how it makes your
imagination go wild, how it takes you to places you never even suspected existed and
blah and blah and blah. Everyone who reads knows all that.

***

It's summer. It's glorious. I don't believe there's bigger happiness than this: me sitting in my grandma's lush garden, breathing in life around me through my tiny nostrils. I hear every little rustle of leaves. I can _feel_ the grass swinging in the melody of the wind. I _am_ the grass.

I have a book in my hand.

***

How I became fascinated with cinema remains in the realm of the obscure. What I remember is I realized this fascination had already taken shape the winter I was preparing for the SAT, the exam that got me into the American University. It was a miserable time in my life, as always when math is involved, and I needed to escape it somehow. Movies helped me do it.

When I say movies I don't mean cute rom coms that girls usually go for or, the leaders when it comes to escapism, Sci Fi slash action slash superhero blockbusters. What I watched that winter can best be described as low (to the second power) budget European flicks with weird plots that almost no one ever saw. The less mainstream it was, the more vigorously I pressed the play button. The stranger the story, the more relatable I found it.

***

I like it when it's dark and there's no one else in the room. It's quiet. What goes on in there is only between the film and me. I sometimes cry even after it's over. It makes me think, it makes me remember, dream nostalgically. More often, I'm silent. I frequently fall in love, too. I smile the morning after and I think about it throughout the day. Occasionally, it's what keeps me going when life gets rough.

I know a film is good when it makes me anxious, eager. When it speaks to me about how worth it at the end of the day life is, how inexplicable and fascinating human emotions are; when I'm breathless. I know this thing I'm seeing is good when it makes me want to live more tirelessly than I've lived so far. When time stops and nothing else really matters, when I'd rather be here than with anyone else, when I'd rather be here than any place else. Everything just feels right.

***

I'm a porcelain doll who isn't still. I'm a doll whose skin is more alive than dew. I dance and sing and swing. I look at you with cinematic eyes. Come.

***

It's intense. It's exhilarating. You're alive.