One of my favourite movies is Nicolas Winding Refn’s DRIVE (2011). Whenever I watch it, I am reminded of “On the Youth at Night” by Anne Carson:

The youth at night would have himself driven around the scream. It lay in the middle of the city gazing back at him with its heat and rose-pools of flesh. Terrific lava stone in his soul. He would ride and stare.

I have always thought that my inability to create homosocial bonds in my youth made me gay.

The late queer theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick certainly had better taste than I do, but she seemed to be speaking to me when she wrote: “I think that for many of us in childhood, the ability to attach intensely to a few cultural objects, objects of high or popular culture or both, objects whose meanings seemed mysterious, excessive, or obtuse in relation to the codes most readily available to us, became a prime resource for survival.” We need to be there to be seen where meanings don’t line up tidily with our skin; and we learn to invent those sites with fascination and love.

First it was THE LORD OF THE RINGS—perfectly acceptable by heteronormative standards. My attachment to film and literature only became complicated by the fact that Irene was originally Latina and named Irena in Sallis’s book. 4 In addition to being gay and gay male history generally. Driver is also called a Mondo film, about filmmakers who go back in time to expose the horrors of slavery in the Antebellum south. It was shot in Haiti, and the directors Gaëtan Duval and Franco Prosperi were guests of the dictator François “Papa Doc” Duvalier who allowed them to use his own people as filmic guinea pigs. Duvalier was known to submerge his enemies alive in sulphuric acid while he watched through peepholes in the torture chamber walls. Under Duvalier, some 50,000 Haitians were murdered. “Oh My Love” attempts to put an operatic gloss on the collaboration between filmmakers and a known murderer with an ode to the beauty of liberation: ‘A day/ a brighter day/When all the shadows/Will fade away/ That day I’ll see/That I believe/That I believe.” Jacopetti and Prosperi believed they were ushering in this brighter day by revealing the brutality of American slavery, but no amount of sonic beauty can fix what is fundamentally a deeply racist film made under the pretense of progressive values. I then discovered that Refn has actively defended Jacopetti and Prosperi, calling them “great cinematic masters.”

Of course, Refn’s inclusion of this song could reflect DRIVE’s critical homage to exploitation movies of all kinds—carpowsturbation, rape and revenge films, splatter movies, and exploitation. 6 Many postmodern critics would be willing to absolve Refn of any ethical responsibility simply because of his status as an auteur. I’m not willing to do that, but I’m simultaneously not willing to give up my beloved DRIVE and the sexual spaces it makes available to me. I hate myself for wanting what is “normal” and ultimately steeped in oppressive fantasies. I hate myself for writing it down and taking up yet more space in the name of subversive guilt. Is writing about this just a method of explaining away being a shitty person? A fundamentally evil and unenlightened person? That’s why I refer to it as “Mondo,” I refer to it as “Mondo,” for my friends to tell us that we aren’t all that terrible despite knowing that the opposite is true.

**WENDY SIMMONS**

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**I owe this point to Micah Angelus.**