

THOUGHTS ON NIGHT DRIVING

Frances Roberts

NEAR MISS (I)

Stumbling there in the dusk,
An old, old man—
Moist stubbled gray chin
Lurching ahead of his
Spit-stained patched overcoat, gray, too—
Shuffles across my vision. He,
Lost in some murky lower
Skid road of his mind,
Nearly is felled. I brake, stop,
Shaken, shiver, see
The urgency.

We-WE-must kiss now, love,
Now, love.
Tomorrow may
Come too soon, love,
Stumbling, blind, fragile,
Bent, love, on crushing thee
And me, quick to vanish from
Our frail and tenuous world.

NEAR MISS (II)

In the dark, hands thus on the wheel,
Mind off there absent un-minded,
Unprepared for this new deviation
When the yellow line, losing its senses,
Ravels off to the left, and the highway
Spits up raw gravel and earth piles
Flung up by night-blooming bulldozer.

An ungainly stagger of braking
Thrusts me half up an engineer's mudpile,
While the headlights leer crazily upward
Looking cross-eyed at the moon.

(And I wonder if at some unexpected
Hour I will land in a dust-heap,
Leering cockeyed at God in the distance,
Malfocused to greet the eternal,
Finding thus to have run out of road?)