

1942

Two Nocturnes

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Recommended Citation

Houston, Howard R.. "Two Nocturnes." *New Mexico Quarterly* 12, 3 (1942). <http://digitalrepository.unm.edu/nmq/vol12/iss3/16>

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TWO NOCTURNES

i

Some hour I am awake time seems to pause
 Sighing lightly as a sleeper breathes
 And turns to grope toward a yet deeper sleep:

Only my self is watchful at this hushed
 Interval between two inhalations,
 Alone, fearing the secret dark, lost:

Then if a bell chimes life begins to move,
 And self goes forth to bless all things that love
 Asleep and knowing not of their sweet change.

ii

The pied fields have surrendered to gray;
 The woods surround them, sullen cliffs of black.
 Bushes encumber them, like monoliths,
 And moonlight powders them all as thick as rust.
 The wagon might have made this wagon track
 As well a year ago as half a day:
 The wagoner who jolted home this way
 Have stumbled into his own stubborn clay:
 The wheelwright, like his wheels, have rolled in dust.
 Here are the shriveled faces of barns and house.
 From sagging rafters rotten shingles hang
 At angles, like old teeth in an idiot's mouth.
 The gaping moon regards this lunacy.

Who plants his feet in the warm earth at noon
 Gets his quick answer: nostrils choke with loam.
 But venture on this ancient crust at night,
 You will find a stranger staring in return,
 Going alone, under a cold moon.

HOWARD R. HOUSTON