
Volume 14

Issue 2 *Spring-Summer: Writing From the World:
Selections from the International Writing Program
1977-1983*

Article 71

1984

Four Squares

Agnes Nemes Nagy

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.uiowa.edu/iowareview>

Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Nagy, Agnes Nemes. "Four Squares." *The Iowa Review* 14.2 (1984): 196-197. Web.
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.3064>

This Contents is brought to you for free and open access by Iowa Research Online. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Iowa Review by an authorized administrator of Iowa Research Online. For more information, please contact lib-ir@uiowa.edu.

Agnes Nemes Nagy · *Hungary*

FOUR SQUARES

1

The first windowpane is a park.
A garden path between bare branches,
a garden path offside a clump of yew
speckled with small winter fruit,
rose-tinted fin-de-siècle glass,
and there's more
I could provide more details but why?
What spells out the image on the pane
is the garden path the birdneck path,
what cannot be spelled out in words, only
in gesture as it cranes back
and extends its unimaginable birdhead in-
to the garden's obscure denseness.

2

The second windowpane is clouded up.

3

The third pane is concrete.
What I mean is: a garage roof
(sliced in two by the window sill and under it
invisibly covered with fitted tarpaulins
the mechanical animals,
the varnished, polished, chromed
lightning-brilliance of surfaces,
and inside cavernously their cylinders
the mute quadruple meter
crammed with the winter garages' congealed cool)
and outside rays of the hot winter sun
and—climatic misfit—

the variegated woodpecker's tropical colors
as it shears the snowfield
and reels away the horizon
like a steering wheel spinning
imaging the dazzle of the noonday sun meridian.

4

The fourth windowpane is the sky,
sky strung taut, unwrinkled.
The atmosphere's rarefied silence
that does not record, dense blackboard,
its irreducible cloud-colloquies,
only, here and there, a line sign-snippets,
gropings for meaning,
rags of promise.

STREETCAR

to the memory of Sidney Keyes

The streetcar groans down the street.
In its pain, poor thing, it lurches.
On the yellow animal's dwindling
electric-milk we hang in bunches.

From the depths an African house rises slowly,
it is white and round, like the girl who rose from the sea,
the grass touches the windows' parted lips,
in the curve of an armchair a small salamander sits.

A bathroom—tiles, bakelite—on its own ledge
a steel helmet, colored for camouflage,
preserves the molding helmet-liner, the leather straps,
as its shell preserves a dead turtle's corpse.

They're always fixing the streets.
The stones almost touch your feet
under the thin platform;
as the streetcar jolts along