

Guillevic. *Summoned. Poems 1977-1982*. Trans. Monique Chefdor and Stella Harvey. Introduction Stella Harvey and Monique Chefdor. Afterword Lucie Albertini Guillevic. Anderson, South Carolina: Parlor Press, 2016. *Requis*. Paris: Gallimard, 1983.

Requis is one of Guillevic's major collection of poems, of personal, thematic and stylistic importance. On a personal level, it marks the period which ends the relationship with Marianne Auricoste and begins his life with Lucie Albertini. Thematically, the volume is fragmented, touching on a myriad of earthly things and topics, typically Guillevician, but also engaging periodically in musings towards the planetary and starry spheres of the universe. However, the form and language of these poems constitute its most significant aspect. Guillevic continues to explore and develop here poetic traits initiated in *Du Domaine*, namely a haiku-like form which he calls *quanta* and a fundamental, minimalistic language devoid of figurative and descriptive elements. The present translation, *Summoned*, captures admirably these formal and linguistic traits and communicates precisely the meaning of each *quanta*. On the other hand, the poetic quality of these fragments is even more elusive in English than in French, since the poetic in *Requis* is more a function of the non-said than the said, more of the white space than the written text.

Of special critical value is the Afterword by Lucie A. Guillevic, which generally explains the genesis of the volume and includes a number of manuscript pages of the poems. Particularly interesting is the reference to the original title given to this collection, *Tohu-bohu*, not retained because, apparently, there was another publication with this title. It must be noted, however, that “Tohu-bohu” is significant in that it reveals Guillevic’s intention to relate these poems to Rimbaud and specifically to the inebriated visions of his *Bateau ivre*. “Tohu-bohu” represents the bobbing, up and down thematic and spatial movement of his poems and, more importantly, the avant-garde nature of his poetic form, the *quanta*, totally modernistic.

The two prefaces are equally interesting and useful in that they give context to *Requis* within Guillevic’s works, and explain the nature and method of the translating, as well as the overall significance of these poems. Stella Harvey reads into the text the poet’s attempt to structure some sort of cosmogony, such as the one represented by the illustration on the book-cover, and even to give expression to Einstein’s theory of relativity. Certainly there may be such intimations in these fragments, as in the ones identified in this preface. However, imposing such a structure on this text, betrays its intrinsic fragmented character and the austere, simple nature of its language, relatively speaking. If there is some kind of unifying element in this volume, it is the “blankness” or “starkness” of the expression and also its minimalistic “light” content. “Light”, so dominant in other Guillevic texts, is almost absent here. Indeed, using a phrase from a beautiful song from *The Phantom of the Opera*, one can say that *Requis* bathes in darkness and expresses Guillevic’s “music of the night”.

It is quite difficult to relate the title of this volume, *Requis*, taken as an adjective or as a noun, to its fragmented sequence of poems. The translation of the title as *Summoned* communicates some kind of poetic imperative or the act of writing: the poet is “summoned” to fulfill a calling, at the same time personal and social. However, the word “Requis” carries also juristic semantics, designating as a noun the “defendant” and thus, possibly, expressing a call to defend one’s existence as “accused”, a theme not uncommon in Guillevic’s poetry.

Similar translation projects of other texts by Guillevic should be encouraged. Not only do they expand readership of the poetry, but also and

perhaps more importantly, they contribute to our understanding of the text and to its critical appreciation.

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Bibliographie de Guillevic

Nous prions les lecteurs de nous signaler les erreurs et les omissions, toute référence à des publications pas incluses dans cette bibliographie. S.V.

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