

République

Bérangère Fromont

Chose Commune, €65

“Henceforth the construction of a harmonious collectivity will require a revolutionary theory founded not on communitarianism but rather upon subjectivity, a theory founded on individual cases, on the lived experience of individuals,” wrote Raoul Vaneigem in *The Revolution of Everyday Life*, published in 1967 and, like Guy Debord’s *The Society of the Spectacle*, a foundational text for the *événements* of May 1968. Debord’s text is now the better-known, but Vaneigem’s is perhaps the more radical; where Debord critiques the operations of capitalist society, Vaneigem focuses on immediate, lived experience as a site of resistance. Arguing for the liberation of the self from the capitalist commodity system, he seeks out a “radical subjectivity”.

Tender, gentle, focused on individuals, Bérangère Fromont’s *République* suggests Vaneigem in action, not least because it was made in Paris; specifically it was made in Place de la République, a square favoured for left-wing protests, as well as for meet-ups and hangouts. Fromont’s portraits are quietly sensual, suggesting each person’s unique place in the world and their perception of it, rather than loud slogans or commercially (or maybe politically) manufactured identities. Her shot of the monument in the square is similarly sensitive, reanimating stone iconography into something living and vital, not ossified or hidden in plain sight. There are also abstract shots of birds, trees and clouds, and of fading flyers and graffiti (“Votez Front Populaire!”, vote for the left-wing alliance keeping the Far Right out of power in France).

The sun seems to be constantly shining, the mood is from a different, more utopian life; Fromont’s portraits are formally presented but the more abstract shots skitter across the gutter, dancing out of constraints and adding a cinematic or perhaps living unpredictability to the book. In an increasingly polarised political climate, in which tempers are fraying, Fromont suggests a more peaceful mode of existence, more personable and ultimately more humane. **BJP**

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Image from *République* © Bérangère Fromont.

