

Lefebvre and Cheype

Unpublished letter from Michèle Bernstein To Raoul Vaneigem, 3 August 2014¹

There were two young women, politicized and more or less students, who took Henri Lefebvre's courses (perhaps at the Collège de France, but I am not sure). They were Nicole (I don't know her last name) and Denise Cheype.² They were very friendly, without being a couple, and shared the same room.

Nicole, who was charming, became Lefebvre's lover, before becoming his official companion. That was how we knew her, and Denise Cheype at the same time.

Was Cheype a competitive person? I don't know. Nevertheless, since Nicole had her celebrated Marxist, Cheype wanted hers. Until very recently I believed that she had "been" with René [Viénet], but he corrected me, telling me that they'd had two or three drunken nightcaps and that was enough. At the same time, Cheype became the official little friend of Guy, who then had a room in which "to work" on the rue Bara, where Denise Cheype lived. Same thing on Rue Saint-Martin. She and Guy – without me, of course – shared the big bed, etc.

Of all of Guy's little lovers, Cheype is the only one who had antipathy for me (I even remained friends with several of them). Guy told me excitedly that she drank even more than he did – that sealed it. To me, she engaged in a parroting of Marxism that I found intolerable. Moreover, I found out that she had a dirty mouth (one doesn't have a dirty mouth innocently).

Being Guy's official girl, she thenceforth prided herself on a certain authority over Nicole. When Nicole was pregnant, Cheype went to town, in the name of theory, in an attempt to persuade her to get an abortion. In a tactless way; very tactless. I was already far away, and not up-to-date at all.³ If not, my advice would have been what it has always been: "If it were me, I would not want a child. If it is you, do what you want and God bless." I could provide many other examples.

¹ Published in Raoul Vaneigem and Gérard Berréby, *Rien n'est fini, tout commence* (Editions Allia, 2014). Translated by NOT BORED! on 30 October 2014.

² Cf. Debord's letter to Mustapha Khayati dated 13 February 1966:

<http://www.notbored.org/debord-13February1966.html>.

³ Circa 1965-1966.

As for “The Trashcan of History,”⁴ perhaps the forceful intervention of Cheyfe led to a certain coldness in the Debord-Lefebvre relations, I don’t know. But what I do know is what made Guy the furious most [with Lefebvre]: he gave the text⁵ to *Arguments*. *Arguments* the Unnamable! *Arguments* the enemy!

Today, and this only involves me, I have a reflection on the affair: the notes came from long conversations, and only Guy drafted them. Knowing the human heart (?), I suppose that Guy sincerely believed that this text principally or totally came from him alone, while Lefebvre, on the contrary, attributed them to himself.

That said, Henri didn’t have to sell them to *Arguments*. He knew that Guy would see red from the name alone. It was inelegant and venal.

⁴ The SI’s denunciation of Henri Lefebvre for plagiarizing its text on the Paris Commune.

⁵ His text on the Paris Commune.