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A Literary Form for Love: Yves Navarre's *My Friends Are Gone with the Wind*

Abstract

In *My Friends Are Gone with the Wind* (*Ce sont amis que vent emporte*, 1991), one of his last and most innovative texts, Yves Navarre (1940-1994), one of the most important contemporary French novelists to deal significantly and regularly with gay themes, returns to his preoccupation with the dangers that the forms inherent in traditional literary narrative pose for the expression of authentic human experience. The narrator, Roch, wants to capture the reality of his love for David, in part to prove to what he sees as a largely hostile heterosexual world that gays are as capable of loving relationships as straights, in part to show those often inhibited straights how to express their love. He realizes that love's excessive nature requires a literary form that throws off the shackles of traditional order and chronology, so he allows memory to erupt within his manuscript as it occurs, unordered by logic. In the process, Roch accepts that he has to let everything in, even David's infidelities, but that by capturing the truth of love, its impulsive nature, he will convey their love in such a powerful way that it will testify convincingly throughout time to their feelings for each other.

Keywords

My Friends Are Gone with the Wind, *Ce sont amis que vent emporte*, Yves Navarre, contemporary French novelists, French, gay themes, gay, human experience, Roch, David, love, express, hostile heterosexuality, heterosexual, inhibited, memory, relationship, gay relationship

A Literary Form for Love: Yves Navarre's
My Friends Are Gone with the Wind

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In his earlier works, Yves Navarre (1940-1994), one of the most important contemporary French novelists to deal significantly and regularly with gay themes, demonstrated a preoccupation with the dangers that the forms inherent in traditional literary narrative pose to the expression of authentic human experience, in particular gay love.¹ In *Ce sont amis que vent emporte* (*My Friends Are Gone with the Wind*, 1991), one of his last and most innovative texts, this preoccupation leads to challenging structural experimentation but also to conflict, as his efforts to capture the truth of (gay) love bring his narrator into contact with the pain that such love can entail.

Navarre's earlier narratives already expressed his desire to capture the reality of human experience in general and his conviction that literature too often interferes with that desire. In *Le jardin d'acclimatation* (*Chronos's Children*, 1980), for example, he at one point remarked that "des histoires vraies ne se racontent pas" 'true stories aren't told' (370), having earlier complained that "le texte d'une vie supporte difficilement l'outrage de l'écriture" 'the text of a life tolerates the outrage of writing only with difficulty' (150).² In *Le temps voulu* (*Our Share of Time*, 1979), which immediately preceded *Chronos's Children* and which offers one of Navarre's most extended depictions of gay love, the narrator tries to recall whether his lover, Duck, made the decision to move in with him or he invited Duck. "Comment savoir? Le texte ne devrait

pas ordonner” ‘How can I know? The text shouldn’t establish the order’ (116), because, as the narrator explained at the beginning of the novel, “la littérature a trop fabriqué de littérature, pour et par elle-même, définissant ses propres structures, ses styles, ses finalités, organisant et fignolant ses hermétismes” ‘literature has fabricated too much literature, for and by itself, defining its own structures, its styles, its endpoints, organizing and fiddling with its hermeticisms’ (8), all of which take shape by themselves without reference to external realities. In *Le petit galopin de nos corps* (*The Little Rogue in Our Flesh*, 1977), another of Navarre’s important earlier novels, one of the two gay protagonists, Joseph, had confessed to his diary that “jamais poème ne sera assez vrai pour dire cet accord [with his partner Roland]” ‘a poem will never be true enough to speak of the relationship between us’ (84), and Roland, who at the end of his manuscript intended to capture their relationship, had despaired: “Rien ne peut codifier ni restituer les gestes et leurs unions, les regards et leurs joutes, les désirs quand ils ne peuvent que céder à l’inassouvissement” ‘Nothing can codify or restore the gestures and their union, the glances and their sparing, the desires when they can only give in to lack of satisfaction’ (217). In her important study of the quest for identity in three of Navarre’s later texts, “Yves Navarre et le processus de quête identitaire dans ses écrits québécois,” Sylvie Lannegrand noted that “the route toward identity that the individual looking for himself follows is a personal undertaking that cannot follow any pre-established pattern or refer to any model” (145).

My Friends Are Gone with the Wind takes up this concern again and makes it a central focus. Throughout its pages there are warnings that literature can easily falsify any reality that one uses it to depict. Near the end of the novel, for example, the narrator, Roch, recalls a note received from their friend Abel Klein that contained only the words: “tout ce qui est écrit est factice” ‘everything written is factitious’ (145). Though a sculptor by profession, Roch is himself keenly aware of literature’s potential falsifications: early in the narrative, having recalled a particularly difficult telephone conversation with his lover David’s mother, he remarks: “Ce n’est pas ainsi que ça se passe dans un roman. C’est

ainsi que ça se dit dans la vie" 'Things don't happen like that in a novel. That's how people speak in life' (30).

David is a dancer, and in *My Friends* dance often serves as a metaphor for art in general and literary creation in particular. Often, David seems to have worked out in the medium of movement and gesture a problem that Roch, a sculptor trying his hand at writing, has yet to solve with words. Thus, when Roch recalls that David "se plaisait à dire, 'je ne suis à la recherche d'aucun style'" "took pleasure in saying "I'm not looking for a style" (16) and later rereads a letter in which his lover, speaking of some fellow dancers, explained that "Je veux dépasser leurs styles imposés. . . . Je ne peux danser vrai que seul" 'I want to go beyond the styles that they impose. . . . I can only dance true alone' (117), Navarre is once again insisting upon the distortions that "style," any sort of fixed literary form, imposes upon the expression of truth. David, it would seem, has found a way to avoid such distorting convention: early on, Roch explains that "les pensées lui venaient comme des gestes, rien de convenu, nulle chorégraphie, il dansait avec les mots comme sur une musique que nous eussions improvisée" 'thoughts came to him like gestures, nothing conventional, no choreography, he danced with words as if to a music that we had improvised' (13). In literature, however, unlike in dance, Navarre would seem to suggest, such freedom is much harder to achieve: near the end of the novel, Roch is still dreaming of being able to produce a work "où il serait question du texte quand il ose, propose et n'impose pas, écrire contre toute attente" 'where it would be a question of the text when it dares, proposes, and does not impose, writing against all expectation' (110).

Such a literature, one that can convey the truth of human experience, is particularly important for Navarre when it comes to conveying feelings and emotions because, as we shall see, he viewed the non-gay world around him as one that, by and large, did not accept the existence of gay love (as opposed to simple desire) and so denied the legitimacy and equality with their heterosexual counterparts of the gay relationships that were often the focus of his work.³ Already in *Our Share of Time* the narrator, himself a neophyte novelist, described the "nature première" of a

novel as “mettre en vie des sentiments, des attitudes, les incarner dans des personnages” ‘giving life to feelings and attitudes, incarnating them in characters’ (274). In *My Friends*, Roch notes that David, again a metaphor for the successful literary artist, “disait également qu’elle [la danse] ne pouvait pas avoir de ‘circonstances atténuantes.’ C’était . . . l’émotion ou la déception” ‘also said that dance could not have “attenuating circumstances.” It was either . . . emotion or deception’ (24); Roch himself remarks on the “sincérité” of David’s dancing with Yoshi (121). Some dance critics complained that “il s’implique trop dans ce qu’il danse” ‘he puts too much of himself into what he dances,’ insisting that “le charme implique la distance” ‘charm implies distance’ (30), but Roch, looking down on his partner as the latter lies dying of AIDS, thinks to himself: “Je ne t’ai jamais vu faire sur scène un pas charmeur pour la frime” ‘I never saw you take a charming step on stage out of pretence’ (32).

For Navarre, expressing the truth about feelings and emotions was particularly important for gay men in general and writers dealing with gay themes in particular not just because he sought legitimacy for their relationships, however. Part of being in love involves a desire to speak of one’s feelings with others who will listen and understand; as the narrator remarks in Dominique Fernandez’ *La gloire du pariah* (*The Glory of the Pariah*, 1987), echoing countless writers and other humans before and since, “la meilleure part de l’amour [est] le bonheur de crier qu’on est heureux” ‘the best part of love is the happiness of shouting out that you are happy’ (123). Navarre, like other authors of gay-themed literature before him, recognized that this is as true of gay men as of anyone else. Already in 1879, as gay literature got underway in a still very intolerant France with Pierre Loti’s first novel, *Aziyadé*, the protagonist’s fellow naval officer, Plumkett, exclaims to his friend: “Quel bonheur de pouvoir dire tout ce que l’on sent à quelqu’un qui vous comprend *jusqu’au bout* et non pas seulement *jusqu’à un certain point*” ‘What happiness there is in being able to say everything that you feel to someone who understands you *all the way* and not just *up to a certain point*’ (144).⁴ Forty years later, speaking from the safety of an allegedly heterosexual narrator,

Proust would describe gay men as a "race . . . qui doit vivre dans le mensonge et le parjure, puisqu'elle sait tenu pour punissable et honteux, pour inavouable, son désir, ce qui fait pour toute créature la plus grande douceur de vivre" "race . . . that must live in lies and denial, because it knows that its desire, that which comprises the greatest sweetness of living for all creatures, is regarded as shameful and deserving of punishment, as not to be admitted' (16). Benefiting from a more tolerant climate, Navarre, in *Our Share of Time*, could describe the literary artist as a "franc-tireur de son art" "free-shooter for his art," someone who "dit ce qu'il a à dire, rejette le défendu, le jeu des fortifications sociales, les contraintes des mentalités cotées en Bourse et prend le monde tout entier dans la paume de sa main" 'says what he has to say, rejects the forbidden, the game of social fortifications, the restrictions of mindsets that are listed on the Stock Exchange and takes the entire world in the palm of his hand' (129).

But even if he has the freedom to speak of love, an author still has to struggle to find a way that will allow him to do so without falsifying it. Listening to friends react to his reading of a passage in Proust describing Charles Swann's love for Odette, the narrator-novelist of *Our Share of Time* wonders to himself: "Mot à mot, mot pour mot, comment exprimer l'état amoureux, état de dépit et de révolte, état rêvé, terriblement vécu?" "Word by word, word for word, how does one express the state of being in love, a state of resentment and revolt, a dreamed state that is so terribly real?" (191). Near the end of that text he admits: "Je viens de me relire, ici, comme on relit une lettre. Ce n'est pas [Duck], ce n'est pas moi, ce n'est plus ce que nous avons vécu" 'I just read myself over again, here, as you reread a letter. It's not Duck, it isn't me, it's no longer what we lived' (338). Even for a dancer this poses a problem, as David once confessed to Roch: "Comment codifier le geste et l'émotion?" "How do you codify gesture and emotion?" (117). Roch's pursuit of an answer to this question constitutes the crux of the novel, but also its great danger.

The literary expression of emotion, feelings, love, preoccupies Roch because he has decided to write a work that will focus on the story of his relationship with David, the man he loves: "Ce

n'est pas ici l'histoire d'une mort mais celle de notre vie" "This is not the story of a death, but of our life" (113), he explains at one point. Elsewhere he remarks: "De mot en mot, ici je ravirai . . . la part de nous deux dans ce monde" "Here, word by word, I will recapture . . . our part in this world" (14); "j'écris encore notre 'pas de deux'" "I am still writing our "pas de deux" (91). As in some of his previous narratives, so here Navarre puts a premium on the depiction of a (loving) relationship between two men. In this respect, he portrays his protagonists in a very different light from those in some of the more notorious (and therefore already translated into English) French gay-themed novels of the last two decades, such as Renaud Camus' *Tricks* (1979) or Guillaume Dustan's *In My Room* (*Dans ma chambre*, 1996), which focus on apparently happily single individuals who pursue sex with a constantly changing stream of largely anonymous partners to the exclusion of any concern with emotional involvement. In this sense Navarre is completely outside another, very different French gay literature tradition, one that goes back to Gide's *The Immoralist* (*L'immoraliste*, 1902), in which, as Leo Bersani has remarked in *Homos*, "Michel has no interest in the boys to whom he sacrifices his wife" (123).⁵

As with the relationships depicted in some of Navarre's previous novels, the premium Roch places on his long-term relationship with David and the love that marked it seems to have grown, in part, out of a knowledge and fear of being alone. Already in *Our Share of Time* the narrator had begun by explaining how he had set aside a room in his apartment because "je souhaitais l'arrivée de quelqu'un" "I hoped for someone's arrival" (11), not just a friend, of which he had several, but a significant other. Similarly, *Chronos's Children* had recounted several characters' efforts to put an end to the lack of romantic love in their lives. In *My Friends*, one of Roch's first recorded reflections on David's imminent death is that it will leave him "seul" 'alone' (11). As with the narrator in *Our Share of Time*, it is not that the sculptor is isolated or without friends, the old stereotype of the gay man as loner caught in French literature most strikingly and painfully in the

works of Julien Green, such as *Le malfaiteur* (*The Transgressor*,

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1955).⁶ Quite to the contrary, as David nears death, Roch begins to break off contact with their friends and acquaintances: he disconnects their doorbell while his partner is still alive to prevent interruptions (79), and after David's death refuses any obituary or other notification that might lead friends to attend David's funeral (135). Even before David began to deteriorate, some of their friends had joked that he and Roch were "seulement copains de vous-mêmes" 'friends only for each other' (13).

These examples make clear that, for Roch, being "alone" means very specifically being separated from the loved one, from love, but his statement early in the novel that "je nous veux, ici, entièrement livrés à nous-mêmes, vivants, ivres l'un de l'autre, tels quels" 'I want us, here, completely given over to ourselves, alive, each intoxicated with the other' (32) also indicates that he wants to be able to portray his relationship with David as nothing less than total devotion to one another: "entièrement livrés à nous-mêmes, . . . ivres l'un de l'autre" 'completely given over to ourselves, . . . each intoxicated with the other.' If that is extreme, it seems to be because he harbors a doubt about the possibility of the very love, the togetherness to which he has decided to devote this book. Again expressing his own concerns through his description of David's dancing, Roch describes one of his partner's performances as a "bref instant . . . quand l'illusion fait croire qu'un couple peut être unique, fondu et non, réalité, l'union de deux solitudes" 'brief moment . . . when illusion makes us believe that a couple can be unique, melted together and not, in reality, the union of two lonely men' (120). Already in *Our Share of Time*, the neophyte novelist-narrator there had spoken of "l'espoir absurde de former un couple ou de trouver un compagnon" 'the absurd hope of forming a couple or finding a companion' (270). In setting out to depict himself and David as "entièrement livrés à nous-mêmes, . . . ivres l'un de l'autre" 'completely given over to ourselves . . . each intoxicated with the other,' can Roch be true to reality and especially to the reality of their emotions, or will such a depiction simply be an illusion, a literary convention unrelated to the truth? If Roch is going to devote a work to their "pas de deux" and if he, like David, is not going

to avoid the truth for the comfortable “charm” of convention, he is going to have to seek out and present the reality of their relationship in its entirety and at all costs.

There are certainly indications that their relationship was, in fact, very close. Roch worked very hard to make their two lives one. He refers to his partner as “mon autre moi” ‘my other me’ (32), and as he lies next to the sleeping dancer reports that “mon coeur bat au rythme du sien” ‘my heart beats in sync with his’ (10). So much does he feel one with David that, near the end, he confides to his manuscript that “je ne sais plus lequel de nous deux écrit, celui qui sommeille ou celui qui tient le stylo en tremblant” ‘I no longer know which of the two of us is writing, the one who is sleeping or the one who holds the pen while trembling’ (106). Nor does this confusion bother him: when David’s sister Ruth pays a visit to their apartment and asks whether it belongs to her brother or to Roch, insisting that “vous devez bien savoir ce qui lui appartient et ce qui vous appartient” ‘you must know what belongs to him and what belongs to you,’ the sculptor simply murmurs “nous ne savons plus” ‘we don’t know anymore’ (20).⁷

David also made efforts to efface the differences—and distance—between them. In one of his letters, in that “non-choreographed” (and here very poetic) style that Roch admired, he had written to the sculptor that:

rien ne nous sépare et plus le temps va, plus ton corps entre dans le mien et le mien dans le tien, cheveux blonds et cheveux bruns, peau blanche et peau brune, l’immigré de sept générations et l’apatride de vingt siècles, qui est qui?, tour à tour, une fois toi, une fois moi, une seule et unique fois nous deux désormais.

nothing separates us, and the more time goes on, the more your body enters mine and mine yours, blond hair and brown hair, white skin and brown skin, the seventh generation immigrant and the man who has been without a country for twenty centuries, who is who?, each in turn, once you, once me, one single and unique time the two of us henceforth. (27)

Elsewhere Roch asserts that David “ne pouvait parler de lui sans parler de moi” ‘could not talk about himself without talking about me’ (16).

another troupe member had asked him his name, "je lui ai donné le tien. Comme il me faisait remarquer que ce n'était pas celui qui avait été annoncé par l'appariteur, je lui ai dit que c'était le vrai, 'David n'existe pas'" 'I gave him yours. When he pointed out to me that it wasn't the one that had been announced by the apparitor, I told him that it was the real one, "David doesn't exist"' (26). Similarly, when David joined a dance troupe in Seville and the impresario told him to change his name because it sounded Jewish, "David s'était fait inscrire sous le nom de Roch" 'David had himself listed under the name of Roch' (86).

So successfully do the two strive to become one couple that David's mother, after first struggling with her son's homosexuality and blaming it on Roch, finally writes them what is, for the sculptor, the highest accolade: "Je salue en vous, vous deux, un seul corps" 'I send greetings to you, the two of you, as to one body' (81). Maintaining such a relationship is not easy in the world Navarre describes, however; indeed, much of the novel focuses on the various forces and aspects of society that work against it.

To begin with, there is AIDS.⁸ Early on Roch refers to it as "cette peste de fin de siècle [qui] est notre honneur, notre victoire, et notre sceau" 'this end of the century plague that is our honor, our victory, and our seal' (11), recalling such works as Fernandez's *The Glory of the Pariah*, where Bernard, regretting the outlaw status of gays in previous generations and not happy with being viewed like everyone else, finds "son unité, sa vérité profonde dans la maladie, l'exclusion, la solitude, le secret" 'his unity, his deep truth in sickness, exclusion, being alone, secrets' (246). More often, however, in *My Friends* Navarre portrays AIDS as a negative element because it isolates gay men from the rest of humanity and finally from each other. Roch recalls how, when his nephew, himself named Roch by a sister and brother-in-law who wanted to affirm their solidarity with the sculptor, first came for a visit, "J'allais l'embrasser, je me suis ravisé. Après tout je suis un P. W. A." 'I was going to give him a kiss, I caught myself. After all, I'm a P. W. A. [Person With AIDS]' (103). Elsewhere there are the episodes of the hospital staff putting on sanitary gloves when entering David's room (50); the employees in the funeral home with

their “gants de caoutchouc et des masques ouatés sur le nez” ‘rubber gloves and masks over their noses’ (135). But in this text, where the togetherness of a loving couple is so important, it is its effect on such togetherness that Roch singles out as the disease’s worst quality. “Le mal qui nous emporte n’est rien en regard de tant d’autres malheurs, épidémies, trahisons, violations de droits” ‘the evil that carries us off is nothing compared to so many other misfortunes, epidemics, betrayals, rights violations,’ he concedes; “rien en regard de tant de causes, et pourtant, c’est du baiser dont il s’agit, de la réjouissance, du tact, d’une profondeur, d’un exploit, d’un recours à l’autre, se nicher, s’engoncer, s’enfouir, se fendre, s’étourdir, se réjouir un peu, se serrer l’un contre l’autre, se humer” ‘nothing compared to so many causes, and yet, it’s a question of having sex, of rejoicing, of touching, of a depth, an achievement, turning to the other, building a nest, bundling up, burying oneself, splitting oneself open, going crazy, rejoicing a little, holding each other close, breathing each other in’ (101-02). It keeps gay men from experiencing that state of being “entièrement livrés à nous-mêmes, vivants, ivres l’un de l’autre, tels quels” ‘completely given over to ourselves, alive, each intoxicated with the other’ (32) that is so essential to him.

At one moment Roch describes AIDS as a “virus produit par tant de siècles d’intolérance” ‘virus produced by so many centuries of intolerance’ (30). In so doing, he demonstrates his conviction that another, and perhaps the principle, element that works against gay men’s creating the unity that he seeks and seeks to express, is the too-often hostile heterosexual society around them. Not content to distance gay men from themselves—in the poem that he writes David before leaving for Paris, one that casts curses on much of non-gay society, a line reads “Maudits soient ceux qui s’approchent / Pour plus encore nous écarter” ‘Cursed be those who approach us / To push us that much further away’ (75)—in this novel society exerts repeated efforts to distance gay men from each other.

First, there are the relatives. In one of the letters from David that Roch inserts into his manuscript, his partner had remarked that “il y aura toujours du reproche dans les familles” ‘there will

always be reproaches from the families' (27). Some, such as Roch's sister Marleine, try to keep him from functioning as part of a couple: when he arrives at their sister Josée's wedding with David, she murmurs to him: "fallait-y vraiment que tu nous le montres?" 'did you really have to show him to us?' (31). Often, Navarre suggests, this is because non-gays focus on what they imagine to be gay men's sexual activities: as David writes to Roch when the latter is in Paris, "les autres ne pensent qu'à la débauche" 'the others only thought about the sex' (52).⁹ Certainly this is true of Roch's brother-in-law, Hans, whose cool treatment of Roch and David is attributed directly to "un vague dégoût de nous et de l'emploi de nos corps" 'a vague disgust with us and what we do with our bodies' (20); when he hears that David has entered the final stages of AIDS, Hans is so unfeeling as to call David's mother to inform her, "quasiment triomphant" 'almost triumphantly' (82).

The most serious of the non-gay world's assaults on the realization of gay love, however, given Navarre's focus, is that many non-gays do not respect or recognize the possibility of love between two men, anything other than "la débauche" about which they do not want to think but on which they continue to focus. When, early in the novel, Roch calls David's mother to inform her of her son's imminent death, she tells him "je suis sa mère. Je l'aime" 'I'm his mother. I love him.' "Moi également" 'So do I,' Roch asserts, to which she replies with a curt, dismissing "Oh, vous" 'Oh, you' (30). Given such a non-comprehending and non-respectful environment, it is understandable that when a newspaper reporter calls after David's death to inquire "de quoi est-il mort?" 'what did he die of?' Roch replies "D'amour, madame, d'amour" 'Of love, madame, of love' (137). It is also understandable why, with this text, Roch—and Navarre—have decided that it is crucial to express that love in all its truth.

These efforts by non-gays to prevent and deny the existence of gay love are, in addition to being tragic, painfully ironic, because in Navarre's world non-gays have problems expressing emotions such as love themselves and could only benefit from association with those who are working to overcome that difficulty. As David's mother, later when she begins to accept Roch

and her son's relationship with him, admits to the sculptor in a letter: "les gens de notre temps savent si peu l'exprimer" 'people today have so little idea of how to express it' (80). Nowhere is it clearer that non-gays need to work on the expression of their emotions and can benefit here from the help of gay men than at Josée's wedding.

Brusquement, David entraîna le jeune couple dans sa danse, les plaçant de mille et une manières au centre de la piste, les forçant à s'embrasser, montrant, au grand dam amusé de tous; à Josée comment poser ses lèvres sur les lèvres de Rodrigue embrassant Rodrigue du même coup; à Rodrigue l'art de prendre Josée par la taille. . . .

Suddenly, David drew the young couple into his dance, placing them in a thousand and one ways in the center of the dance area, forcing them to kiss each other, to everyone's amusement showing Josée how to place her lips on Rodriguez' lips, kissing Rodriguez at the same time; showing Rodriguez the art of taking Josée by the waist. . . . (91-92)

So impressed by David's generosity and ability to facilitate the communication of feeling is Josée that, at the end of the evening, becoming the total opposite of the early Rachel, she tells her brother: "Vous vous aimez plus que nous tous" 'You love each other more than any of us' (92).

In her previously quoted letter to Roch, the won-over Rachel tries to explain society's inability to deal with its feelings by attributing it to "pudeur" 'modesty': "Cette 'incommunicabilité' . . . n'est-elle injustement pas due à cette sorte de pudeur, malsaine en soi, le vrai mal qui nous emporte, et qui veut qu'on cache ses sentiments par peur du ridicule ou pour être à la mode?" 'Isn't this "failure to communicate" . . . due to that sort of modesty, which is itself unhealthy, the real evil that carries us off, and that would like us to hide our feelings out of fear of ridicule or to be in fashion?' (80-81). Earlier her son David had suggested the same thing, adding an important link: "les émotions comme les gratitudes nous mettent mal à l'aise. Voilà pour nous rapprocher au royaume des reproches de ce que nous sommes l'un pour l'autre." 'emotions, like gratitude, make us feel uneasy. That sort

of thing moves us closer to the realm of rebukes for what we are for each other' (57). In Navarre's world, society works to condemn emotions in general. If it condemns gay men, and in particular their emotional involvement with each other, it is because gay men's emotions, being outside convention, appear to (many) non-gays to be by their very nature excessive, out of control, heedless of the "pudeur" 'modesty' that society tries to impose on all its members.¹⁰ By the same token, Navarre would seem to suggest that art, and in particular art by gay individuals, be it David's dancing or Roch's manuscript when he finds the technical means of equaling his partner's emotional expression, far from being a threat to non-gay society could actually offer it liberation from the restrictions under which it suffers.

This can only be very difficult in a society that focuses on norms and a fear of excess, however. Roch's landlord gives him notice because he intends to sell the apartment building, "et il a précisé, 'il faudra que vous preniez à votre charge les frais de désinfection'" 'and he specified, "you'll have to assume the cost of disinfecting," ' leading the sculptor to observe: "Ainsi, l'amour n'est recevable que lorsque les mornes *normes* sont respectées" 'Thus, love is admissible only when the dreary *norms* are respected' (14; my emphasis). Later Roch refers to landlords as those whose dance is made "de l'ennui et de la norme" 'of boredom and the norm' (97) and, recalling the critics who found David's dance too full of emotion, writes disparagingly of "les charmes de la norme, la fascination du conforme" 'the charms of the norm, the fascination of that which conforms' (111). If the dance critics' definition, "le charme implique la distance" 'charm implies distance' (30) and therefore a lack of the emotion that they criticized in David's dancing, holds here as well, Roch and, through him, Navarre would seem to suggest that non-gay society, in focusing on their definition of "la norme," included in it not simply the typical but also the non-excessive, a double-threat to the realization of the sort of extremely, openly emotional couple, "ivres l'un de l'autre" 'each intoxicated with the other,' that Roch seeks, and seeks to portray in literature.

Society also impedes the realization of the sort of relationship to which Roch aspires because, just as it condemns excess, so it refuses to tolerate difference. Not only does it display complete “indifférence” to anyone who “n’entrera jamais dans leur clan” ‘will never enter their clan’; it exerts an active “acharnement à empêcher les autres de devenir ce qu’ils sont” ‘relentlessness to keep others from becoming what they are’ (98, 100).

If these forces work to impede the creation and survival of a gay couple, art in general, and literature in particular, has the power to overcome them and make a relationship work. In the chapter entitled “Tenir” ‘Holding,’ where Roch begins to work out the aesthetic that will allow him to create the work that he envisions, he realizes that “écrire c’est d’abord écouter, observer, peut-être aussi noter, journal intime, inscrit ou en simple mémoire, gestation, écrire c’est pétrir” ‘writing is, first of all, listening, observing, maybe also noting, a private diary, written down or simply in the memory, gestation, writing is molding’ (110). He will therefore attempt a work “où il serait suggéré que l’écriture . . . procède . . . d’une réponse à l’autre, non pas seulement à soi” ‘where it would be suggested that writing . . . proceeds . . . from a reply to the other, not just to oneself.’ In his own medium of sculpture he had already tried this. Recalling the trouble he had in selling his work, he notes that “la sincérité, en soi, était un excès dont seul David pouvait comprendre l’urgence et l’économie: tout lui était dédié” ‘sincerity, in itself, was an excess whose urgency and economy only David could understand: everything was dedicated to him’ (17; note the link of a gay man’s feelings with sincerity and excess); “seuls comptaient le geste vers l’autre” ‘only the movement toward the other counted’ (16). Similarly, David had once written him that “Je danse, par et pour toi” ‘I dance, by and for you’ (25). Now with this manuscript Roch wants to “lui donner, jusqu’à son dernier souffle, ce que j’aurais voulu que l’on m’offrît si j’avais été désigné à sa place” ‘give him, to his last breath, what I would have wanted to be offered if I had been designated in his place’ (10).¹¹ One of the reasons that writing can create this bond between two is that, when done as Roch envisions it in “Tenir” ‘To Hold,’ “une parole circulerait, d’égal à égal,

chacune et chacun n'ayant plus peur de l'autre" 'a word would circulate, from one equal to another, each man and woman having no further fear of the other' (112). As an act of complete and open communication, it disarms the other's suspicions and natural defensiveness and allows union.

If the artwork can establish bonds between two men, it can also reinforce them by testifying to them. Just as he told the reporter that David died of love (137), so, in constructing his manuscript, Roch seems intent on making it a proof of their profound feelings for each other: "Il sera ici question de l'amour tel quel" 'Here it will be a question of love as it is' (11). To this end, he fills it with documentation of their love, transcribing, often in their entirety: a lengthy letter that David had mailed him (25-28) in which the dancer had written that he preferred sending messages rather than phoning "puisque je sais que tu gardes mes cartes, mes messages, comme si un jour ils pouvaient t'être d'un secours et témoigner" 'since I know that you keep my cards, my messages, as if one day they could be of use to you and witness' (26)¹²; the postcards that David had sent during his tours, dated "l'an II de nous" 'Year II of us' and "an XIII ou XIV de nous" 'Year XIII or XIV of us' (40) as if to indicate that their meeting was the beginning of something as enduring and, at least for Roch, as liberating as the French republic; the letters that David had sent Roch when the latter went to Paris to try a new AIDS treatment (48-52); and, of course, David's final letter, written while Roch was out of the apartment and David realized that his end had come (138-39). As Roch remarks at the end of the first transcription, "j'endossais son écriture" 'I put on his writing' (29): just as it entered into his manuscript, so he entered into it, once again blurring the distinction between the two of them so that, as already noted, "je ne sais plus lequel de nous deux écrit, celui qui sommeille ou celui qui tient le stylo en tremblant" 'I no longer know which of us two is writing, the one who is sleeping or the one holding the pen, trembling' (106).¹³

The result, Roch proclaims repeatedly, is a work that does succeed in expressing them as a couple: it becomes "ce cahier de nous deux" 'this notebook about the two of us' (86), "ce roman de

nous" 'this novel about us' (141); he begins the last chapter with the declaration that "je nous suis écrit" 'I have written us' (146). An outside observer concurs: Doctor K., to whom Roch has the manuscript consigned after his own death, describes it as "ce texte de deux" 'this text of two' (152). Once David dies, Roch envisions it as their joint final resting place: "ce tombeau de deux, ici, à ces lignes" 'this tomb of two, here, in these lines,' and exclaims "vivement que je disparaisse" 'may I disappear, full of life' (141), wanting to exist nowhere else but there where David and their love now reside.

At the same time, however, Roch had filled the manuscript with his repeated fear that he would not succeed in capturing their love and unity in words. Sitting next to David one night while the latter had tried to sleep, Roch had wondered: "Comment saisir cet instant fécond, fastueux, où la pensée atteint la limite extrême de la possibilité d'être deux sans cependant la franchir?" 'How do I seize this fecund, sumptuous moment, when thought reaches the extreme limit of the possibility of being two without, however, crossing it?' (34). After he had read some of the early chapters to David, the latter commented: "tu as oublié l'humour, notre humour de tous les jours, exemple, moi demandant, qui sont les invités et qui sont les évités?, d'autres détails comme celui-là. L'essentiel" 'you forgot the humor, our everyday humor, example, me asking, who are the invited and who are the avoided?, other details like that one. The essential' (59). Near the end, having transcribed David's last letter, Roch had despaired and written: "La réalité de notre amour échappe à ce texte" 'The reality of our love isn't in this text' (136). Even on the last sheets, he remarked: "ces lignes . . . n'ont pas pu retenir l'amour d'une vie" 'these lines . . . were not able to retain the love of a life' (146-47) and "j'ai tout dit sauf l'essentiel" 'I've said everything except the essential' (148). Where and what is the truth?

It lies, in part, as the text reveals as it progresses and clarifies, in David's instances of infidelity. At one point Roch admits that "jamais il n'y eut entre nous de pacte ou de délibéré" 'there was never any pact or deliberation between us' (119), and once he had tried to dismiss the seriousness of the issue by writing that "la

fidélité est une bien singulière trahison, rien d'idéal à notre lien" 'fidelity is a really singular betrayal, no ideal in our relationship' (41). Nonetheless, slowly as the manuscript progresses, Roch includes more information about David's actions and his reactions to them. Early on, in a message David had sent from Sydney while on tour, there had been the vague: "mon Roch, cherchons avant tout à marquer d'une légère encoche que nous tenons à la possibilité de déséquilibre au risque d'échouer, et à l'exclusivité de nous" 'dear Roch, let's try, above all else, to note that we insist on the possibility of disequilibrium at the risk of failing, and on the exclusivity of us' (12-13). In another early letter there had been the unspecific remark: "Si souvent, dans mon regard, tu sens que par tentation j'ai étreint un autre que toi, sache que ce n'est ni par jeu ni par trahison" 'If often, in my glance, you feel that I embraced someone other than you out of temptation, know that it is neither playing games nor a betrayal' (26).

Later, however, things become more specific. While on a cruise through the Greek isles with a dance troupe David took off one day on his own, leaving Roch with the others and returning only late that night, "la chemise . . . déchirée et son pantalon blanc taché de cambouis" 'his shirt . . . torn and his white pants stained with grease,' followed by a whole troop of laughing young men. There is no indication of what happened, but there were suspicions: "Paul [another dancer] s'approcha de moi, 'tu supportes ça? Tu acceptes tout?' Je me tus. Il insista, 'tu vas me dire qu'il est libre et toi aussi.' . . . je me mis à sourire, ce sourire qui masque une peine réelle qu'on ne veut pas considérer comme telle" 'Paul approached me, "do you put up with that? Do you accept everything?" I fell silent. He insisted, "you're going to tell me that he is free and you as well." . . . I began to smile, a smile that masks a real pain that I don't want to regard as such' (36-37). And at the end of the manuscript, after repeated references to Beethoven's Waldstein sonata, Roch finally inserts his memory of finding David in the bushes at the Baths of Caracalla with the pianist who had just played that work for him on the stage, a memory triggered by the entrance of the neighbor's cat which recalls the cat that crossed the Caracalla stage during the performance (147-48). If all this

happened, were David and Roch ever “*entièrement livrés à nous-mêmes, vivants, ivres l’un de l’autre, tels quels*” ‘*completely given over to ourselves, alive, each intoxicated with the other,*’ or is Roch’s attempt to portray them that way simply another literary illusion? What had he meant at the beginning of his manuscript when he wrote: “*J’inventerai pour le fond plus que pour la forme*” ‘*I will invent for the content more than for the form*’ (17)?

The answer lies in Roch’s definition of the type of writing that he is undertaking. On that same page he had remarked: “*la mode ne supporte que l’écrit, qui reproduit, pas l’écriture, qui produit ce qui perdure, l’écrire-juste est insupportable*” ‘*fashion only supports the written, which reproduces, not writing, which produces that which lasts, writing right is unbearable*’ (17). As he explains later in the manuscript, what he is producing here is “*l’écriture, réalité en soi, et non de l’écrit, reproduction du réel*” ‘*writing, reality in itself, and not the written, reproduction of the real*’ (109).¹⁴ He seeks to “*produire et ne pas seulement reproduire, créer et ne pas seulement recréer*” ‘*produce and not just reproduce, to create and not just recreate*’ (110). For him, “*ce qui se produit et ce qui eût pu se produire, tout est réalité et fiction à la fois*” ‘*everything is reality and fiction at the same time, that which is produced and that which could have been produced*’ (31), such that “*la réalité est la pire et pure fiction*” ‘*reality is the worst and pure fiction*’ (129). Part of his goal, at least, is to produce a work of art that will last (*perdurer*). To this end, the simple reproduction of reality, untransformed, is insufficient. He needs to “*créer*” ‘*create,*’ which will involve producing a “*réalité en soi*” ‘*reality in itself.*’

How he does that while remaining faithful to his insistence upon capturing the truth of human emotion comes out of his remark that “*j’inventerai pour le fond plus que pour la forme*” ‘*I will invent more for the content than for the form.*’ It is the form here, finally, more than the content, more than the transcriptions of letters and messages and remembered comments, that will capture and convey the truth and power of love. Already at the end of his first chapter Roch had written that “*un amour, comme ces lignes, ne se décide pas, il survient, surgit, vous tombe dessus*” ‘*a*

love, like these lines, is not decided upon, it arises, surges up, hits you out of nowhere' (14). It is the ultimate form of disorder, the very thing that non-gay society fights so hard to control. As he notes later, "la logique sangle l'affection" 'logic hogties affection' (106). Realizing this, he sets aside any concern with logic, order, structures, styles, etc., and settles upon "une écriture qui ne procède pas d'une décision ou d'une idée, mais d'une émotion et d'un appel" 'a writing that does not result from a decision or an idea, but from an emotion or a call' (112). Repeating the vocabulary he had used above to describe love, he declares that "écrire, ça survient, ça vous tombe dessus, ça ne se décide pas, ça vous entraîne" 'writing arises, hits you out of nowhere, it isn't decided upon, it drags you along,' specifying moments later that "l'écriture ne procède pas d'une décision, d'un délibéré, mais bien d'une pulsion, d'un appel" 'writing doesn't result from a decision, from a deliberation, but from an impulse, from a call' (110); it is as a "pulsion" 'impulse' that he describes his later chapters (133).¹⁵ So, especially in the later chapters of the manuscript, one recollection is often interrupted by another, sometimes triggered by a connection like the strolling cat that summoned up Roch's memory of David's infidelity with the pianist. So frequent do these interruptions and changes become that, at one point, Roch exclaims: "Je me perds, je suis perdu" 'I'm becoming lost, I'm lost,' but rather than try to impose some order, he promptly asks: "Qui impose ici une logique?" 'Who is imposing a logic here?' (109).

The result, in part, is that, like Proust on speed, *My Friends* becomes a scene of rapidly and constantly intermixed memories: as Roch remarks, "la mémoire est l'encre des textes" 'memory is the ink of texts' (94), or, earlier, "tout est à portée de mémoire" 'everything is within reach of memory' (63). Because such eruptions must not be regulated or guided if the truth of love is to be maintained, he warns: "gare à celle ou celui qui ne lui [la mémoire] laisse pas dire ce qu'elle clame" 'woe to her or him who doesn't let memory say what it cries out' (94). If, using the same expression, he also warns, speaking of the sort of writing that he intends to cultivate, that "écrire, ça survient, ça vous tombe dessus, ça ne se décide pas, ça vous entraîne et gare à celle ou celui qui dit

je sans jouer” ‘writing arises, hits you out of nowhere, it isn’t decided upon, it drags you along and woe to her or him who says I without playing’ (110), he makes it clear that, in his text, writing will be the scene of memory given free rein. This is very different from Proust’s Marcel, to whom involuntary memory presented the past in an arranged and ordered whole that allowed him to make sense of it for the first time. Roch, instead, uses the metaphor of the javelin: “les mots l’emportent sur la réalité puisque ces phrases [lines from a note that David had sent him from Berlin], à cette ligne, me reviennent en mémoire, trajectoire du javelot qui se plante sur cette page” ‘words win out over reality since these sentences [lines from a note that David had sent him from Berlin], at this line, come back to my memory, the trajectory of a javelin that comes down on this page’ (12). With all the violence and disorder of a hurled spear, memory and the emotions connected with it constantly interrupt the chronologically ordered narration of the present moment, what Roch, we now realize, means by “réalité,” to produce a “réalité en soi” ‘reality in itself’ that, by its very disorder, conveys the non-ordered truth of love: “un amour, comme ces lignes, ne se décide pas, il survient, surgit, vous tombe dessus” ‘a love, like these lines, is not decided upon, it arises, surges up, hits you out of nowhere.’¹⁶

It is because he did remain faithful to his desire to depict the truth of their love, which meant giving way to it as it “survient, surgit, vous tombe dessus” ‘arises, surges up, hits you out of nowhere,’ that Roch had finally included those instances of David’s infidelity that would seem to undermine his effort to present the two of them as “entièrement livrés à nous-mêmes, vivants, ivres l’un de l’autre” ‘*completely* given over to ourselves, alive, each intoxicated with the other.’ If he writes “j’inventerai pour le fond *plus* que pour la forme” ‘I will invent for the content *more than* for the form,’ that does not mean that some of the “fond” ‘content,’ even some of its most unpleasant aspects, will not be authentic. In writing about memory, he had warned that “elle ne transige pas. Gare à celle ou celui qui ne lui laisse pas dire ce qu’elle clame” ‘it doesn’t compromise. Woe to her or him who doesn’t let it say what it cries out’ (94), so it is not surprising that in bringing

back their relationship, it had brought back those painful moments with the rest. Still, to have suppressed or altered any part of the “pulsion” ‘impulse’ would have been to falsify it. As he noted after having finished the story of David’s apparent infidelity on Rhodes, “le sentimental [like “le charme”] est répressif, le sentiment est offensif. Je serre le poing gauche. Je viens même de donner des coups de poing sur le bureau. Ce texte infirmier, serviteur, valet, doit exprimer l’offense” ‘the sentimental [like charm] is repressive, feeling is offensive. I clench my left fist. I even struck the desk with my fist repeatedly. This text, nurse, servant, valet, must express the offense’ (37).

Why is it so important to Roch to be so unswervingly faithful to the results of his new way of writing when they are so offensive to him? He explains at the opening of his manuscript that “C’est d’éternité qu’il s’agit à ces lignes, une éternité de deux” ‘It’s a question of eternity in these lines, an eternity for two’ (18). If he can convey the complete truth of their feelings by creating, allowing a form that itself expresses and so reinforces those feelings rather than distorting and “sentimentalizing” them, he will be able to give them an artistic permanence, even though during their “réalité” he had occasion to fear for their “real time” duration. Thus he can refer to the manuscript as “notre part d’infini” ‘our share of the infinite’ (109) and assert that, because of it, “Nous avons une histoire et nous allons continuer à en avoir une, infiniment” ‘We have a history and we will continue to have one, infinitely’ (32).¹⁷

At the same time, if the work is right, it will somehow take care of the blemishes that threaten to tarnish the love that it is designed to express. Continuing the passage quoted above, “C’est d’éternité qu’il s’agit à ces lignes, une éternité de deux” ‘It’s a question of eternity in these lines, an eternity for two,’ Roch had asserted that “rien ne pourra salir notre histoire, pas même les détails qui font l’horreur du quotidien” ‘nothing will be able to sully our history, not even the details that constitute the horror of everyday life’ (18). Somehow “ce texte dévore douleurs et malentendus” ‘this text devours sorrows and misunderstandings’ (56); “à écrire, je nous retrouve joyeux et sûrs de deux” ‘when

writing, I find us once again joyous and sure of two' (14), perhaps because the form of the text conveys so overwhelmingly the very nature and experience of their love. And, perhaps best of all, because of this non-ordered form Roch can no longer determine "Qui dit je? Qui dit l'autre? Qui peut dire 'deux'? La fusion va de pair avec la confusion des aveux, des souvenirs, des remontrances et des insouciances d'un avenir" 'Who says I? Who says the other? Who can say "two"? Fusion goes along with the confusion of confessions, of memories, of remonstrations, and of lack of worrying about a future' (78). The final goal, presenting a couple "entièrement livrés à nous-mêmes" 'completely given over to ourselves' to the point that one cannot tell "Qui dit je? Qui dit l'autre?" 'Who says I? Who says the other?', has been achieved, and in a medium that will allow it to have permanence, to "perdurer" as, in simple chronological "réalité," it sometimes appeared on the brink of not doing.

In the process, and in line with the preoccupation that Sylvie Lannegrand has noted in other Navarre texts, this allows the two of them to know themselves as well. Early on Roch notes that "par la sculpture d'abord, par David ensuite, j'ai trouvé qui je fus, qui je suis, qui je demeure" 'through sculpture first, then through David, I found who I was, who I am, who I continue to be' (44). While this sort of "l'écriture . . . procède . . . d'une réponse à l'autre, non pas seulement à soi" 'writing . . . results . . . from an answer to the other, not just to oneself,' because "une parole circulerait, d'égale à égal, chacune et chacun n'ayant plus peur de l'autre" 'a word would circulate, from one equal to another, each man and woman having no further fear of the other,' it also allows the writer to "être ce que l'on naît, être ce que l'on devient, être ce que l'on est" 'be what he is born, be what he becomes, be what he is' (110), even as he becomes part of "un couple [qui] peut être unique, fondu et non, réalité, l'union de deux solitudes" 'a couple who can be unique, melted together and not, in reality, the union of two lonely men.'

Notes

1 Navarre began publishing novels in 1970. He won the Goncourt Prize in 1980 for *Chronos's Children*, and in 1992 the French Academy awarded him the Amic Prize for the totality of his work (Claude-Marie Durix, e-mail to the author, 2 April 2001).

2 On this concern in *Le jardin d'acclimatation*, see Mechthild Albert, Kurt Ringger, Christof Weiland, "L'outrage de l'écriture—A propos du 'Jardin d'acclimatation' d'Yves Navarre."

3 In *Le Rapt de Ganymède (The Rape of Ganymede)*, his important history of European and in particular French attitudes toward homosexuality over the last two centuries, Dominique Fernandez, another of the important contemporary French novelists to focus on gay themes, ascribes to François Carlier, the chief of the Paris vice squad from 1850-1870, and his 1887 pseudo-scientific treatise, *Etudes de pathologie sociale: Les Deux prostitutions, 1860-1870*, the "basic axiom that excludes the hypothesis that between two persons of the same sex (two men, to be more precise: Carlier ignores lesbians) a loving relationship can be established. That is the primary interest of those pages: to confirm to us that, in the last half of the 19th century, homosexuality was catalogued, very distant from and very much beneath the realm of feelings, as a defect, a monstrosity, a subhuman instinct that could only be satisfied by paying someone. A question of the senses, not of the heart. . . . Neither friendship nor tenderness: only base desire and the debasing of all human dignity" (40-41). For more on Carlier and his treatise, see William A. Peniston, "Love and Death in Gay Paris: Homosexuality and Criminality in the 1870s."

4 On *Aziyadé* as one of the first gay novels in French literature, see Richard M. Berrong, "Portraying Male Same-Sex Desire in Nineteenth-Century French Literature: Pierre Loti's *Aziyadé*."

5 In *Corydon* (1911; 1924), Gide has the eponymous character assert that "love [as opposed to simple desire] is a completely human invention; for love, in nature, does not exist" (42). In his section on Jean Genet (151-81), Bersani demonstrates a similar desire to avoid emotional relationships in that author's *Funeral Rites (Pompes funèbres)*, 1955).

6 Green translated the loneliness and isolation of his view of gay men into heterosexual terms for most of his narratives. Even in the origi-

nal edition of *The Transgressor*, published by Plon in 1955, he omitted a large section of the text that made its protagonist's homosexuality clear, not restoring it until the appearance of the Pléiade edition of his works in 1973.

7 In her previously cited article, Sylvie Lannegrand, studying the quest for identity in three of Navarre's works, among them *My Friends Are Gone with the Wind*, notes that the protagonists exhibit "a desire for fusion and a difficulty accepting others in their singularity and therefore in their difference" (149). In *The Little Rogue in Our Flesh*, for example, Roland had written of "ma volonté de me perdre en [Joseph]" 'my will to lose myself in [Joseph]' (55). In *My Friends*, however, Roch is bothered not by David's difference but by a fear of losing his love, of their relationship being only an "illusion."

8 As Christopher Robinson has remarked with regard to the novel in his entry for Yves Navarre in the recent *Who's Who in Contemporary Gay and Lesbian History*, "in *My Friends Are Gone with the Wind* [Navarre] broached the subject of AIDS, but the [work] is still very much a novel about love" (301).

9 Already in *Our Share of Time* the narrator, speaking of his own family and their reaction to his relationship with Duck, had noted that when "ils ont lu la lettre de Duck, avec moi, . . . ils ne veulent pas admettre qu'elle est touchante, vraie, ils ne veulent pas des images de l'étreinte, ils taxent tout ce qui leur échappe d'obsession sexuelle" 'they read Duck's letter, with me . . . they don't want to admit that it is touching, true, they don't want images of our embrace, they accuse everything that they don't understand of being sexual obsession' (177).

10 In her excellent essay on "The Lesbian Narrative," Marilyn R. Farwell hypothesizes that "because lesbians are by definition not policed by male sexual desire, they represent to many sexologists the ultimate threat of a rampant and uncontrolled female sexuality" (160). Navarre would seem to suggest something similar with regard to general society's view of gay men.

11 In her already-cited article, Sylvie Lannegrand observes that "each of the author's present and past texts is an urgent and loving call addressed to the Other" (147).

12 Already in *The Little Rogue in Our Flesh*, Joseph had at one point written in his diary that he intended to give it to Roland if he pre-

deceased him “afin de t’aider à recomposer les faits de notre vie” ‘in order to help you reconstruct the facts of our life’ (80).

13 In *The Little Rogue in Our Flesh*, Roland, transcribing some of Joseph’s letters into his account of their relationship, had at one point written “qu’il me fut doux de recopier sur ce cahier la première lettre de Joseph. Mon écriture endossant la sienne” ‘that it was sweet to me to copy Joseph’s first letter in this notebook. My writing put on his’ (17). Elsewhere Joseph, in his diary, had at one moment wondered: “Qui écrit, ici? Toi, ou moi? Je te porte en moi, voyageur clandestin!” ‘Who is writing, here? You, or me? I’m carrying you, a clandestin voyager, in me’ (186).

14 Already in *Our Share of Time* the narrator-novelist had at one point written in the manuscript upon which he was working: “Il ne s’agit pas d’écrit, reproduction du réel, si peu réaliste en somme et qui montre trop, mais d’écriture, une réalité en soi. Dessiner avec les mots” ‘It is not a question of the written, reproduction of the real, which is not very realistic and which shows too much, but of writing, a reality in itself’ (129-30).

15 Already in *Our Share of Time* the narrator-novelist had remarked: “Il y va de l’emploi des mots comme de l’emploi du temps: la volonté doit l’emporter” ‘It’s the same with the use of words as with the use of time: the will must win out’ (90).

16 In her previously-cited article, Sylvie Lannegrand remarks more generally that “Yves Navarre’s texts present, most often, an exploded writing, in pieces, close to the technique of the puzzle, whose particular form recalls the theme of wandering and interior exile that the author experiences” (144). In *My Friends*, however, Navarre, intensifying this technique, makes it the goal and explanation of what in this novel he seeks to express.

17 Already in *The Little Rogue in Our Flesh* Roland, working on his memoir of his relationship with Joseph, had at one point written to his deceased partner: “Tu ne me quitteras qu’à la dernière ligne de l’inachèvement de ce texte” ‘You will not leave me until the last line of the incompleteness of this text’ (34), and later had spoken of the manuscript as “ce cahier qui, pour nous restituer, ne sera pas sans nous perpétuer” ‘this notebook that, in restoring us, will not go without perpetuating us’ (194).

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