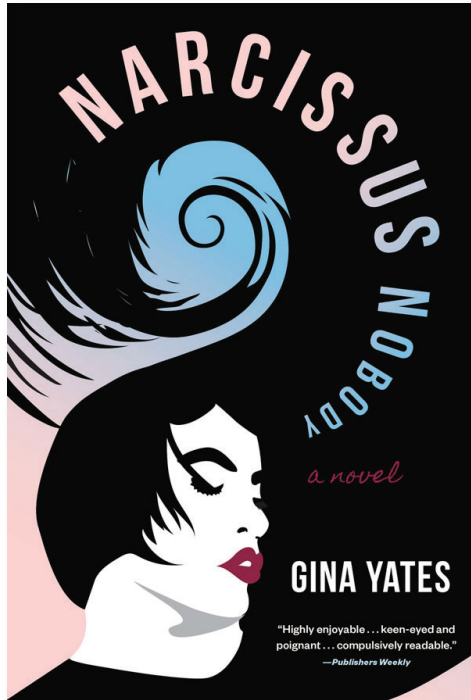


NARCISSUS NOBODY

A NOVEL

GINA YATES



MARKETING POINTS:

- Debut novel of Gina Yates, daughter of renowned literary giant Richard Yates (*Revolutionary Road*).
- Review copy distribution via to more than 75 publications, including national and regional lifestyle publications, book review journals, and newspapers.
- Pre-pub giveaways via LibraryThing, Goodreads, and Amazon Vine program.
- Author will be participating in a virtual blog tour, along with virtual events held in association with bookstores and libraries throughout the U.S.
- Promotion through ALA Annual conference and regional book conferences on West Coast and East Coast.
- Feature article and interview promotion in national magazines.

“Gina Yates—daughter of the American master Richard Yates—is further proof that writing talent is often a genetic phenomenon. Narcissus Nobody is a charming tale of wayward young adulthood and the vicissitudes of love at any time in life.”

—Blake Bailey, author

A Tragic Honesty: The Life and Work of Richard Yates

The voice of disgraced love guru Brooks Nixon seems to haunt Hope Townsend, showing up at inopportune moments to deliver unwelcome commentary on her hapless romances.

Brooks—who once doled out clichéd dating advice to millions—fell out of favor with his fanbase when a life-altering experience shifted his counsel to a free-wheeling, anti-monogamy platform. The about-face earned him the moniker “Narcissus Nixon” and made him slightly less annoying to Hope, a goth music devotee who prefers animals over people. Hope’s dueling traits of misanthropy and compassion often hinder her progress in relationships as well as jobs, as she provides home-care to the elderly—listening to their stories while wading through her own—and does administrative work at a shady psychic hotline. Little by little, she finds herself more influenced by the new Nixon than she’d care to admit. To shake off his hold on her thoughts and come to terms with her own destiny, she must uncover the truth behind Nixon’s transformation and draw the line between his recommendations and her authentic desires.

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Photo: © Gina Yates

GINA YATES has spent years honing her writing craft through an unconventional path of world travel and entrepreneurship. The daughter of the late celebrated author Richard Yates, she currently lives in Albuquerque, New Mexico, where she owns and operates the eclectic clothing shop Frock Star Vintage. *NARCISSUS NOBODY* is her first published novel.

HIGH PRAISE FOR *NARCISSUS NOBODY*

"Highly enjoyable . . . keen-eyed and poignant . . . compulsively readable."

—*Publisher Weekly*

"Gina Yates--daughter of the American master Richard Yates--is further proof that writing talent is often a genetic phenomenon. *Narcissus Nobody* is a charming tale of wayward young adulthood and the vicissitudes of love at any time in life."

—Blake Bailey, author, *A Tragic Honesty: The Life and Work of Richard Yates*

"Gina Yates's *Narcissus Nobody* is an engaging, delightful brew of witty wisecracks, colorful characters, and surprising heart. A novel that's both fun and funny and dances to its own playful and unconventional drumbeat."

—Aaron Hamburger, author, *Nirvana Is Here*

"One of the best novels I've read in years. A delightfully hilarious, gorgeously written, and emotionally complex story of one woman's journey to self-discovery and self-acceptance. Yates's unforgettable cast of lovable misfits will win your heart. A remarkable debut!"

—Andrew Porter, author, *The Theory of Light and Matter*

PHOTO: DC EVENT PHOTO



ABOUT GINA YATES

Author Gina Yates has spent decades honing her craft through an unconventional path of travel and entrepreneurship. After immigrating to Canada on a student visa in the early 90s, she married a Canadian citizen and embarked on months-long backpacking trips with him around Asia, Central America, and Africa, funding their travels by selling handcrafted jewelry at music festivals and at downtown Vancouver kiosks. Following a divorce and a years-long stint on the island of Roatan, Honduras, Gina briefly studied creative writing at the University of Northern Michigan in 2003 before returning to Vancouver and eventually earning a diploma in Fashion Business and Creative Arts. During this period she wrote her first novel, an unpublished fictionalized memoir of her time in Honduras, a time that was marred by the addiction and mental illness she inherited from her father, the late celebrated author Richard Yates. Since moving to New Mexico in 2008, she has owned and operated the eclectic vintage clothing shop Frock Star Vintage in Albuquerque as well as completed her first published novel, *Narcissus Nobody*.

ABOUT THREE ROOMS PRESS

Three Rooms Press is a fierce New York-based independent publisher inspired by dada, punk, and passion. Founded in 1993, it serves as a leading independent publisher of cut-the-edge creative, including literary fiction, memoir, poetry translations, drama, and art. In addition, Three Rooms Press produces and promotes a variety of literary and cultural events worldwide, including readings, plays, workshops, and concerts.

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On Those Drawn to Misfits & Oddballs: An Interview with Gina Yates

by Mary Manspeaker

Narcissus Nobody is the charmingly humorous, satirical tale of a woman struggling to find her own place in the world when constantly influenced more than she'd like to admit by those around her—particularly the words of disgraced self-help author Brooks Nixon. Three Rooms Press spoke with author Gina Yates, youngest daughter of celebrated author Richard Yates, about writing characters steeped in their own mythologies, music as the most perfect artform, and her father's influence on her writing. P.S. check out a playlist to go with the book on Spotify!

Three Rooms Press: *Narcissus Nobody* is filled with people all with unique motivations, quirks, and charms. Where do you draw inspiration for characters, and what is your process for writing them into the world and figuring out how they would act toward one another?

Gina Yates: I'm not shy about the fact that all my fiction is inspired by my real life to some extent, but that's not to say it is autobiographical. I'm not trying to paint a picture of reality, but rather to melt reality down into a sort of clay which I can then use to create something new. Nearly every character in *Narcissus Nobody* started out as a facsimile of someone I met who made an impression on me or a combination of individuals I know. The essence of the real person or people then gets tweaked a bit and dropped into an unexpected situation, and from there they seem to come alive. It helps immensely to have at least one real person I can visualize while I'm writing and whose energy I can channel into the work. I'm especially drawn to misfits and oddballs, so it stands to reason that the novel would have an eclectic cast. My life has a very eclectic cast, too.

3RP: Was any one character particularly fun to write?

GY: I lived vicariously through Hope as I wrote her story, so I had the most fun when she was having fun, and I brought in people I wanted to hang out with. Since I'm an only child myself (I do have two half-sisters from my dad's first marriage but didn't grow up with them), I really enjoyed imagining the relationship between Hope and her younger brother Asher. Mind you, I liked being an only child—I never longed to have siblings around – but certain aspects of siblinghood did always seem fun from the outside, particularly the brother/sister dynamic. I think it must be kind of cool to have a built-in friend of the opposite sex, close in age, who you don't have to work to impress and who you can mock relentlessly without worrying you'll push them away. Asher also has a blunt personality, so I could say things through him that other characters might be too timid to say.

3RP: I'm curious about Brooks Nixon in particular. How did this idea of being haunted by the writings of a self-help author come about? Given how much mythology gets built up around him, did it ever become difficult to imagine how the character himself would act or speak?

GY: The self-help industry as a topic is something that turns up often in my stories. I just think it's awesome how someone can have a random epiphany in the shower, come up with a jazzy title and marketing package for it, and proceed to make millions. The truth is I'm a huge fan of the genre. Years ago, I found myself browsing in the relationship advice aisle at Borders and was struck by the way every title – particularly those marketed to women – seemed to contain the same tired old messaging. I thought about how refreshing it would be if I opened one of these books to find something like, Hey, if it feels good, do it! Who cares how it turns out? Life is short and most people are miserable. Brooks Nixon was born in my head on that day, and he lived there for almost two years before a single word of *NARCISSUS NOBODY* was ever written. In fact, it was precisely his mythical status that prevented me from finding an inroad at first; the story only gained traction when I decided to write about him from the viewpoint of a reader, someone more like me. When Hope came on the scene, she sort of took over everything and now *NN* is the story of one woman's journey to self-actualization. I still have a habit of summarizing the book by saying "it's about a disgraced self-help author," which I suppose isn't really accurate. But on some level I still think Brooks is the one driving the narrative, albeit remotely.

3RP: San Lazaro really feels like a place I can picture in my mind—the overpriced corporate health food stores, the old record store turned café and bookstore, the surprising local popularity of Asher's band. What was your process for building the setting, and how would you describe the character of the town itself?

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On Those Drawn to Misfits & Oddballs: An Interview with Gina Yates

(continued)

GY: I spent a part of my childhood in a rural area near San Francisco, back when it was still possible to find affordable housing in the Bay Area. I lived with my mom—a visual artist among many other things – in a “census designated place” called San Geronimo. San Anselmo and Fairfax were the closest real towns. It was the 70s, and there was a palpable “free to be you and me” vibe in the air at that time. Self-expression and finding one’s own path in life were paramount values. I have since developed a rather romanticized view of that part of the world, and I set the novel there so I could be there in a sense. I bought a Northern California guidebook and did so many Google searches that to this day I still get popup ads and emails from Marin County hotels and realtors. There’s always a certain tension when a community experiences an economic boom and drives out the people who built it, robbing it of its unique culture and soul. That’s something all of us freethinking follow-your-bliss types find a little depressing. I imagine San Lázaro as trying desperately to hang on to its counterculture roots, and I imagine a certain independence of spirit being so ingrained in Hope that she doesn’t even realize there’s any other way to exist.

3RP: As in so many of the books Three Rooms loves, music plays a vital role. Are there bands that are the inspiration for Hope’s eternal favorite, Wasted Grave? Could you make a playlist that would be a companion for someone reading *Narcissus Nobody*?

GY: I love this question. Georgia O’Keeffe famously said she believed music to be the most perfect art form and that she only painted because she couldn’t sing. I’ve read similar quotes attributed to a variety of authors – Aldous Huxley to Leo Tolstoy and Jane Austen—and I agree with them all; I write because I can’t sing. I guess my musical tastes have always tended toward the slightly gloomy. I remember I had a roommate once whose running gag was to walk into my room and say, “Nice music...who died?”

I definitely based Wasted Grave—the fictional band in the book—on The Cure, whose music I drowned myself in from about age 13 to 19. (I think that probably means I have to call them my “eternal favorite,” as they got me through those awkward years.) Anyway, there’s that thing about super fandom where you’re mostly into the band’s older more obscure

stuff and don’t love—or don’t want to admit to loving—their top 40 hits as much. But there’s still something profoundly comforting about hearing one of those popular tracks on the radio at the right time. I loved coming up with the lyrics to the Wasted Grave songs and explaining how they made Hope feel. In fact, if Wasted Grave counts as a character, I’d like to go back to that question and say they were the most fun character to write.

I’m constantly rearranging songs and creating playlists for all my works-in-progress, even the short stories, as it helps me figure out what tone and tenor I’m aiming for. Also I fantasize that there will be a film adaptation and I’ll be in charge of the soundtrack (all authors do that, don’t they?) There was a *Narcissus Nobody* playlist in existence long before this interview, though it has undergone a few changes over the years. If reading the book gives people an emotional experience that’s even in the same galaxy as what the *Narcissus Nobody* playlist does for me, then I’ll feel like my work here on earth is done.

3RP: And finally, you are the youngest daughter of *REVOLUTIONARY ROAD* author Richard Yates. How did his work influence your approach to writing and if a separate thought what inspiration did your father give you personally as a writer?

GY: I can’t say that my dad’s work influenced my approach to writing in any direct way, as I never took lessons from him nor did I consciously try to write like he did or to differentiate my writing from his. But there are undeniable similarities, traits that are so deep-seated in me that I think they must be genetic. For example, I’m allergic to neat and tidy Hollywood endings and good-vs-evil themes. Also there’s the fact that I’m mainly interested in realism; I couldn’t engage my faculties in anything featuring time travel, zombies, robots, aliens, or dragons if I tried. I almost wish this weren’t the case, as I’m left out of a lot of fun conversations, not to mention a huge portion of the market. Fortunately, I’m also an heir to the Richard Yates ability not to get too caught up in chasing commercial success.

On the personal side, Dad was an outrageously doting father. My parents divorced when I was an infant and I grew up with my mom on the other side of the country, but we had three or four visits a

year, talked on the phone every Sunday, and occasionally wrote letters. He died when I was 20, and it was a decade before I began seriously trying to write adult fiction. Although we were very close, one subject we almost never discussed was writing and literature, and I’d say this was entirely due to my avoidance of the subject. I was terrified of saying the wrong thing, so I just kept my mouth shut. Once I became old enough to read his books, the nature of them being so personal made for a weird experience. It was like seeing your parent naked and wishing you could unsee it. When he asked for my opinion, I would just tell him “I thought it was really good” and change the subject. I was also not a big reader in school, probably for the same reason—the whole world of fiction was just too intimidating to me. But as a testament to Dad’s boundless unconditional love, he never let on that he was terribly upset by this. Case in point: when I was failing American Lit in tenth grade because I couldn’t be bothered to read any of the books by his heroes – Fitzgerald, Salinger, and the like—his response was to say that my teacher must be an idiot.

When my dad’s work began enjoying a resurgence of popularity about ten years after his death, in the early two-thousands, I was in a very dark place, having also inherited his well-known struggles with addiction and mental illness. I think that’s when things really started to turn around for me, as there came a realization that he’d managed to become a bona fide legend in his own time despite being (arguably) even more messed up than I was. I began writing about the aforementioned struggles in my first novel, and suddenly I had a sense of purpose. I do think there’s something in the brain chemistry of people with our specific type of bipolar disorder, some propensity for pattern recognition or something, that provides fertile ground for fiction writing. Anyway, the most valuable thing my dad instilled in me by far—as did my mom, from those free-spirited California days up until now—is the importance of remaining radically true to oneself in all situations. Dad showed me this by his example, and also by accepting and adoring me so completely. I’ve felt his presence all along this epic 20-year journey to publication, winking at me with each minor triumph and helping me laugh off the innumerable missteps and fumbles. ♥