

On Richard Yates' Former Girlfriend  
Robert S. Griffin  
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Natalie Bowen had been an old girlfriend of writer Richard Yates (1926-92). Yates is best known for his 1961 novel *Revolutionary Road*. In 1972, Bowen received a phone call from Yates. "Dick called me out of the blue," she recalls. "He was drunk, of course, and woke me up, but I was glad to hear from him." Yates told Bowen he was starting a new novel and that it appeared to him she had led the kind of independent, lonely, and troubled life he had in mind for his central character and asked her whether she would be willing to talk about her life. Bowen said she would. She told Yates she'd been married briefly to a man who told her he hated her body. She'd had two abortions. Someone had penciled a "long, thick penis" on one of the wallpaper horses in the hallway of her apartment. She collected unemployment and stayed drunk all day. She woke up in the morning with strange men in her bed. She had gone to a walk-in mental health clinic. Yates invited Bowen to dinner to talk more and meet his wife.

Source: Blake Bailey, *A Tragic Honesty: The Life and Work of Richard Yates* (Picador, 2003).