



Random Illuminations: Conversations with Carol Shields

Eleanor Wachtel

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A great conversation can offer insight into the hearts and minds of its participants. In this intimate, wide-ranging collection of conversations (and some correspondence), writer-broadcaster Eleanor Wachtel and her friend, author Carol Shields, touch on both the personal and the professional. Eleanor Wachtel first met Carol Shields in 1980; her first interview with Carol occurred in 1987, following the publication of *Swann: A Mystery*. They soon became friends, embarking on a correspondence and conversations that would last her almost two decades. In this illuminating book, Eleanor Wachtel brings together her rich collection of interviews with Carol from that first occasion to Shields's death in 2003. Disarmingly direct, Carol Shields talks about her writing, language and consciousness, and her interest in "redeeming the lives of lost or vanished women," all the while touching on topics as diverse as feminism, raising children, the metaphorical search for a home, and the joys and griefs of everyday life. Carol Shields is best known for her Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, *The Stone Diaries*. She also won the Governor General's Award for fiction, the National Book Critics Circle Award, the Charles Taylor Prize for Literary Non-fiction, the Orange Prize, and numerous other awards. She was twice shortlisted for the Booker Prize.

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