



# Original Minds

*Eleanor Wachtel*

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"Eleanor is much more than an interviewer: she enters into conversations, opens debates, sketches in background. She interprets and suggests, but never imposes. She projects curiosity, spontaneity, humour and goodwill. Her sense of respect, her tact, her utter lack of obsequiousness... and her uncanny ability to ask difficult questions... have endeared her to readers and listeners."

— Carol Shields, from the foreword

Eleanor Wachtel's award-winning CBC Radio programme "Writers & Company" has set the gold standard for intelligent, insightful, riveting interviews. To mark the dawn of the new millennium, Wachtel talked to some of the most inspiring and influential thinkers of our time—people who have forever changed their area of specialty and influenced the world around them. As she writes in her introduction, "I wanted to interview people who had shaped the last century and whose influence would continue into the next... I hoped to have wide-ranging conversations with some of the most inspiring men and women of our time, people who've made a difference."

And what an outstanding list of people she met:

- Jonathan Miller — internationally acclaimed theatre and opera director, writer, member of *Beyond the Fringe* comedy troupe
- Jane Goodall — primatologist and scientist best known for her work with chimpanzees
- Bernardo Bertolucci — director whose films including the Oscar-winning *The Last Emperor* and *Last Tango in Paris*
- George Steiner — teacher, literary critic and theorist
- Desmond Tutu — former Archbishop of South Africa and co-chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission
- Susan Sontag — writer of novels, essays, works of non-fiction, and plays. *In America* won the National Book Award in 2000.
- Amartya Sen — Nobel Prize winner in Economics (1998)
- Gloria Steinem — feminist and activist, author whose 1983 collection of essays is titled *Outrageous Acts and Everyday Rebellions*
- Jared Diamond — teacher, Pulitzer Prize winner for *Guns, Germs and Steel*
- Oliver Sacks — neurologist, best known for his books *Awakenings* and *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat*

- Jane Jacobs — internationally respected commentator on city design and planning
- Umberto Eco — "the Pavarotti of Semiotics" and writer of the international bestseller *The Name of the Rose*
- Mary Douglas — anthropologist, author of the classic *Purity and Danger* (1966)
- Noam Chomsky — world-famous linguist and dissident intellectual
- Arthur C. Clarke — writer, best known for his science fiction masterpiece *2001: A Space Odyssey*
- Harold Bloom — "one of the world's most influential critic-scholar-theorists" according to the *New York Times*

Each interview enlightens not only the subject's master area but how we see the world and our role in it. Not content to sit back on their intellectual laurels, Wachtel's subjects seem driven to influence their world and encourage us to do likewise. As Jane Goodall says, "The nicest thing I'm told after lectures is that I make people realize that their lives have more value. And thousands of children from all over the world have said, 'You taught me that because you did it, I can do it too.' That's amazing. That makes it all—all this effort—really worthwhile."

A book for Eleanor Wachtel's many devotees and for anyone who has a curiosity about the fascinating intersection of people and ideas, *Original Minds* is a captivating read.

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