

“Think about what you’d want to say about Jane Jacobs and it’s hard not to wonder what she’d say right back.

You might not want to get in a debate with Jane; she was sure to beat you. In verbal combat she was overwhelming. When she was in her thirties, before she’d written *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, she wrote a provocative article for a major magazine whose publisher questioned her reporting. When the two of them met, Jane defended her account with, by one account, ‘a screed of facts and firsthand observations.’ Later, she asked a sympathetic colleague, why he’d not stuck up for her more. ‘No need,’ said he. “The poor man’ – the publisher – ‘thought he’d hit a buzz saw.’

You could say Jane Jacobs didn’t suffer fools gladly, which is true. But you don’t want to say it, because it’s such a damnable cliché, and you don’t want to utter a cliché in front of Jane.”