

## **Carol Shields, 1935-2003**

“We think we live full lives but in fact we live very narrow lives. We need more... I read [novels] to expand because I know how narrow my life is”. – *Carol Shields*

Born in 1935, celebrated Canadian author Carol Shields died at home in Victoria, B.C. on July 16, 2003 after a long battle with breast cancer.

Shields was born in Oak Park, Illinois in 1935, the youngest of three children. She moved to Canada in 1957 after meeting her husband Donald Shields on a college exchange program in England, and became a naturalized citizen of Canada in 1974. Her subsequent teaching career took her to universities in Ottawa, Vancouver, and Winnipeg. She also lived for a time in Toronto. She most recently lived with her husband Don Shields, in Victoria, B.C., spending summers in their house, nicknamed “Château Pulitzer”, in France when her health allowed. The two had five children.

“Others”, her first book of poetry, was published in 1972; “Various Miracles”, her first collection of short stories, was published in 1982.

A Companion of the Order of Canada (the Order’s highest honour), Shields received numerous awards during her writing career, including the Pulitzer Prize, the National Books Critics Circle Award, the Governor General’s Award, and the Orange Prize.

Vaughan Public Libraries has numerous works of fiction and non-fiction written by Carol Shields in its collection, in addition to a variety of resources containing literary criticism about Shields and her work.

### **Fiction**

#### **The Box Garden**

Carol Shields

FIC Shiel

*A sequel to “Small Ceremonies”. Charleen not only endures but comes out stronger after one especially trying weeklong trip across Canada to attend her mother’s wedding when she is confronted with more of her past than she – or the reader – expects.*

#### **A Celibate Season**

Carol Shields & Blanche Howard

FIC Shiel

*The two award-winning authors give us both sides of a story about the breakdown of traditional roles, rules and communication in a marriage.*

**Dressing Up for the Carnival**

Carol Shields

FIC Shiel

*Shields infuses this enigmatic and quirky collection of 22 short stories with ingenious characterizations in heartfelt tales that are mostly character sketches capturing the gestural, kinetic truths about the lives glimpsed here, with happy results.*

**A Fairly Conventional Woman**

Carol Shields

FIC Shiel

*Brenda takes up quilting, an occupation that rescues her from domestic entrapment and brings her economic reward and a modicum of prestige. She makes art, not craft.*

**Larry's Party**

Carol Shields

FIC Shiel

*This fiction is a chronicle of one ordinary man's life as he searches – at first, bumblingly and inarticulately – for happiness and the meaning of existence.*

**The Orange Fish**

Carol Shields

FIC Shiel

*A variety of well-realized voices animate the 12 short stories in this collection.*

**The Republic of Love**

Carol Shields

FIC Shiel

*A folklorist who has never become involved with a man becomes interested in a three-time divorced man.*

**Small Ceremonies**

Carol Shields

FIC Shiel

*In this lovingly documented year of a woman's life, Judith is revealed to herself; a person with desires, passions, and faults; with instincts that are sometimes right and often wrong. And it is through the very observations she can't help but make that Judith finds her place in the world: as translator and celebrant of life's small – and very important – ceremonies.*

**The Stone Diaries**

Carol Shields

FIC Shiel

*This novel concerns the commonplace but never mundane life of Daisy Goodwill. Arranged as a sort of diary, the novel allows Daisy and others to narrate with letters chronicling passing events.*

### **Swann: A Mystery**

Carol Shields  
FIC Shiel

*This is a story of four individuals whose lives become entwined in the life of Mary Swann, a rural Canadiana poet whose authentic and unique voice is discovered only hours before her violent death. Mysteriously, all traces of Swann's existence in her notebooks, the first draft of her work, even her photograph gradually vanish as the characters in this engrossing novel become caught up in their own concepts of who Mary Swann was.*

### **Unless**

Carol Shields  
FIC Shiel

*A mother struggles to discover what happened to her oldest daughter to make her run away from home only to be found mute and begging on a Toronto street corner.*

### **Various Miracles**

Carol Shields  
FIC Shiel

*In these deftly written short stories, Shields illuminates the moments when ordinary people face extraordinary circumstances – wild coincidences, declarations of love, and startling revelations.*

## **Anthologies**

### **88 Best Canadian Stories**

ed. by David Helwig & Maggie Helwig  
FIC Eight

*Includes "Dressing Up for the Carnival" by Carol Shields.*

### **Emergent Voices: CBC Canadian Literary Awards Stories, 1979-1999**

ed. by Robert Weaver  
FIC Emerg

*Includes "Flitting Behaviour" by Carol Shields.*

### **The Oxford Book of Stories by Canadian Women in English**

Rosemary Sullivan (ed.)  
FIC Oxfor

*Includes "The Orange Fish" by Carol Shields.*

## **Plays**

### **Anniversary: A Comedy**

Carol Shields & Dave Williamson  
819.254 Shiel

*Dianne and Tom, recently split up, get together to divide their assets on – of all days – their anniversary, and old friends who don't know they've parted pay them a surprise visit.*

### **Departures and Arrivals**

Carol Shields  
819.254 Shiel

*In 22 vignettes set in an airport departure and arrival lounge, the play captures a spectrum of travelers awakening to contemporary limbo.*

### **Thirteen Hands: and Other Plays**

Carol Shields  
819.254 Shiel

*Set around a bridge table through different generations of players, the women in the play discover family histories, the tricks of getting old and a companionship that gets passed on, like an exquisite heirloom, to the next generation of bridge players.*

## **Poetry**

### **Coming to Canada**

Carol Shields  
819.154 Shiel

*This is a collection of nearly 60 poems including the key “Coming to Canada” sequence, and is supplemented with selections from two previous volumes, “Others” (1972) and “Intersect” (1974).*

## **Non-Fiction**

### **Dropped Threads: What We Aren’t Told**

ed. by Carol Shields & Marjorie Anderson  
819.0809287 Dropp

*When Shields and Anderson began asking other women – friends, colleagues, family members – what experiences had amazed them, disappointed them, which ones they had been unprepared for, the responses were immediate. Many women reacted as though this was something they had been waiting to be asked, for years. “Dropped Threads” is the treasure trove of reflective writings that emerged. From a wide range of professions and lifestyles, the pieces are immediate, intelligent and revealing.*

### **Dropped Threads 2: More of What We Aren’t Told**

ed. by Carol Shields and Marjorie Anderson  
819.10809287 Dropp

*This book places the reader at the very intersection of 35 women’s lives and as might be expected, that means tragedy and comedy are equally represented through tales of motherhood, sisterhood, step-motherhood, and much, much more.*

### **Jane Austen**

Carol Shields  
823.7 Auste-S

*With frankness, warmth and grace, Shields writes of an “opaque” subject who lived a short life and about whom very little is known beyond family letters.*

**Susanna Moodie; Voice & Vision**

Carol Shields

819.83 Moodi-S

Thesis

*A critical study of three major themes occurring in the novels and non-fiction work of this author.*

## **Literary Criticism**

### **Writers**

Janice Parker

J 819.09 Parke

*Includes a chapter on Carol Shields.*

## **Web Sites**

### **Canadian Literature: A Quarterly of Criticism & Review**

<http://www.canlit.ca>

*Contains a number of critical reviews of Shields' work (type the name of the author in the search box to locate articles).*

### **Carol Shields 1935-2003**

[http://www.cbc.ca/news/obit/shields\\_carol/index.html](http://www.cbc.ca/news/obit/shields_carol/index.html)

*An online tribute to the author, with links to audio and video clips. Published by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.*

### **Carol Shields Author Web Site**

<http://www.carol-shields.com/>

*Official web site of the author.*

### **Shields, Carol**

[http://www.nwpassages.com/author\\_profile.asp?au\\_id=1234](http://www.nwpassages.com/author_profile.asp?au_id=1234)

*Obituary and selected bibliography of her works, published by "Northwest Passages: Canadian Literature Online".*

## **Premium Subscription Databases**

### **Literature Resource Center**

*A Web-accessible database subscribed to and paid for by VPL that includes articles pertaining to Shields' biography and her works. To access the database, go to the URL indicated below, click on the Literature Resource Center link and enter your valid VPL library card number:*

<http://www.vaughanpl.info/databases/view/litresource>