

GEORGETTE'S REVENGE

CHRISTY SHEFFIELD SANFORD

GEORGETTE’S REVENGE (Linked Frames)

Reverberations,
After Images

New Images,

New Template),

Recurring Dreams,
Deleted and
(Deleted and

The Protectorate

Unforgettable,
Save-As

The computer played a significant role in constructing “Georgette’s Revenge.” Repetition, although not exact, occurs throughout and was often derived from selectively deleted templates of previously typed pages. This is an electronic palimpsest. Another computer inspiration was linked frames, in which type flows from column to column. Words in a large font appear in borders at the top and bottom of the page. In the interior in smaller type are linked frames – readable top and bottom, three columns across, or straight down and from bottom to top. The large type deals with the problems and philosophical ideas that surround the love story and affect the characters’ lives. The frame, at a higher level of abstraction than the interior passages, provides a context for them. The story of a Senegalese woman’s struggle for love, success and happiness in France is told in a mosaic of flashbacks with contemporaneous images and episodes.

When reading the poem, allow time to pass during drops or spaces between the stanzas. Space affects the poem's mood and pacing. Each reading of the poem should vary.

An important difference between the printed word and the poem on the web: Columns and frames are analogous, but through html (HyperText Markup Language) coding, frames online can change text and/or image independently of each other. Page transitions online could be highly complex.

GEORGETTE'S REVENGE

(linked frames)

survive? To fast is not to starve. Dirt cracking. Always fissures, hungers,

A Portrait of Daniel:
I think of a river
running through you.
It flows from your
head to your upper
thighs and groin. The
river surrounds your
head but you are not
drowning. Inside you
there are rocks and
the water crashes
against them. Your

arms and legs are
lights that the ground
crew uses to guide the
plane in. They are
always backing up.
Sometimes the arms
and legs are fireflies.
Sometimes they are
pure fire, a cleansing
fire along the river
bank. And some-
times they rage and if

there is a little oil on
the water, they
dance across and con-
sume it.

He has stolen some
of my cynicism, the
part based on despair.

The coral vine has

heart-shaped leaves
and heart-shaped
flowers—two hearts
with a third squeezed
inside. Only half the
inner heart shows. If

you peel away the
petals, a light char-
treuse bud appears.

Soap, a wash basin,

prayer-bubbles. As I
stood on my head for
you, blood rushed to
my face. I thought
clearer. My legs, seen
through the harem

*fasting, famine. I like to eat. Digging
for tubers, pinching off smilax shoots.
How much food is needed for survi-*

by her name, to hear her name whispered was only a dream. What's in a

The turtle's white carapace she left at his door. A totem, a love token demanding pay attention.

Daniel is six foot two and the color of black amethyst glass. In certain lights, purple

glints are visible just beneath his skin. Each day when he returns from casting his nets, he spends three hours before sunset tending his garden. The basil, tomatoes, courgettes and anise are in one section. the butterfly bushes, rose, wine red tulips, blue poppies

in another. The kidney-shaped carp pond is surrounded by bamboo. Green and amber broken bottles. crown his béton wall. He is fifty-four and has created a Garden of Eden.

Contusions, a profusion of love bites on

her breasts. Her overbite now charming in others. She didn't smile for seven years.

It can be brutal, the

pine straw sticking in the catch basin, the torrents of rain hitting again and again, making the opening spasm uncontrollably.

Your body, I saw you, your body, and oh, your body, your body and, yes, your body in the river, your body—

name? Entrancement at the end of a trance. Bulrushes line the mouth of a cave. An underwater entry rimmed

Irresistible, the con in the métro. She had loved watching him and would

Bare handed, Daniel had strangled his sister's husband for punching her pregnant belly. That was one reason Georgette liked Daniel. That and the garden, they somehow fit together.

His thighs, his thighs,

his thighs are monumental; one thigh takes her whole field of vision. A close-up of one thigh could sustain her for a week.

After seeing him, the yellow petals of the hibiscus are transparent, the moss hangs in

rows of long curls, the palm fronds splay more openly.

Tiger Sharks eat tin cans, turtles, people, money. Their innards

always harbor surprises. Now Daniel kills only for food. The he eviscerates a shark, she loves to watch.

His thighs, his thighs, his powerful thighs shift in his chair.

Georgette, first black French movie queen.

Needed: a servant in white wig to perform degrading acts for aristocrats.

His thighs shift, they

have given him more, her clothes, her rings. Who deserves what? A captivator ought to be covered with kisses

*smell of smoky bars and sweat. To
dance close is not to fuck. Large wet*

I met Claude at a Paris
disco. I was studying
Economics at the
Sorbonne. But I was
modeling—hoping I
might become a film
star. My father was a
wealthy ground-nut
farmer in Sénégal.
My mother had taught
French in Dakar.
Then she oversaw the

workers on the farm.

A wastrel from a for-
merly aristocratic
family, Claude did
nothing but gamble. I
loved to dance, and he
was a wild dancer.

On Daniel's dresser,
a bank of candles

glimmers. Pink glass
rains over the floor.
He has stolen some
of my cynicism, the
part based on despair.

I was surprised that
Claude wanted to
marry me. Sometimes
I think he wanted to
shock his mother. The

fact that I was a black
woman and Moslem—

When we left the boîte,
Daniel pushed me up
against the green truck

in the parking lot—not
even his—and fucked
me. I wore no panties.

I remember feeling my
toes touch the ridged

rubber of the running
board.

The powerful thighs
shift in his chair, the
aristocratic—

*moon shapes under the arms. Sweet
kisses through a dusty windshield.
Sleaze is more than a neighborhood.*

Sins. Nature knows nothing of this. Can thoughts kill? Who wanted me

Claude and I began
bickering right after
the wedding. He
hater my struggle for
an Economics degree.
I was pregnant when
his mother asked me
to try saving the
vanishing family
fortune. I laughed.

Every Sunday, the
horse-races, the whips,
dust, and money. My
father was a farmer in
Sénégal. My mother
worked with him on
the farm. She over-
saw the harvesters.

I recall how the low-
flying mosquitoes

of Sénégal nipped at
heels but never rose to
the level of the heart.

The powerful thighs—

On Daniel's dresser,
a bank of candles
glimmers. Pink glass
rains over the floor.

The amassed fortune,
the amassed power,
especially in the neck.
To swallow a cry of
pain or desire would
cost him dearly. I

wept.

Against the green truck
in the packing lot—the
bites I later noticed on
my thighs.

I held onto the window
frame and rode—feet
planted on the running
board. Wind in my hair.

A wild dancer—

*dead and how often did I oblige? The
pagans go almost naked (pg. 366). A
child eats, eats, loves, is loved. Adult—*

The ability to save people. The fingers reach for food, guilty, guilty hungers.

The river runs through him; it covers his torso. Sometimes the water recedes and traverses his nipples. This happens when the river is love.

Daniel: incarcerated five years for manslaughter.

Purée of pears, prunes, carrots, split peas dribbling down the chin; milk, milk, milk dribbling over breast and chin. French wine and caviar from the Caspian Sea.

The squall line was spawning tornadoes the night Claude left.

a quarrel over roulette losses while Baby Henri screamed in his high chair. Claude sped off in a yacht. That night the empty craft ran aground.

Georgette, blaming herself, remained chaste for five years.

She built her estate from nothing. Her neighbor and friend, Nicole, helped her sell everything to garner capital.

The Paris bourse became her lover.

As a child, she smeared clinkers, pieces of burned-out bowl, with

pink, blue, and green salt. Black castles with untold tunnels.

Salt in the river of love.

Strong currents. High on a wooden stand sits a man in a white bathing cap and sunglasses. Guardian angel.

*To make money, a living and to relax
into dialect, the accents of sweetness.*

After amassing a comfortable living, gangsters came to collect Claude's gambling debts. Her refusal enraged them. They ransacked, then burned her house. She fled with Henri to Nicole's coastal villa.

After seeing Daniel,

the first time, she fingers the green buds of the chinaberry tree. The hard roundness feels like her nipples when erect.

The fire on the riverbank was a pure fire, a cleansing fire that danced—

In the fire that started along the baseboards, she lost all her belongings.

The amassed fortune, the amassed living, the amassed power in the thighs, the neck.

The air blew softly over her softly.

When Daniel takes her

to the river, he dips her in the water. From the bank, he digs up the roots of a hazelnut shrub. He rubs the cut roots over her naked

body. The smell of cinnamon repels all insects. He spends the night on one side of a hill, she spends the night on—

Feeling protected is a vague, pleasant memory. To have only the greenness of grass between you and desire

*To fly is not to escape. Master the art
of fleeing. To be winged borders on*

Nichole flies to London
on business; there in
a small pub, she spies
Claude—his complexion
now yellow-green,
his nose enlarged and
florid. He confesses
he fled, fearing mob-
sters might murder
him.

A comfortable living
amassed, casino gam-
blers came to collect
the dead husband's
debts. Her house was
ransacked and razed.
With her child, she fled
to the coast.

For half an hour every
morning. Daniel sits

outside in the darkness
before dawn. He
thinks occasionally of
Georgette, but more
often of the plants
surrounding him, the
toads wet with dew,
the sounds of waking
egrets on the water
nearby and of the sky
at sunrise turning
shades of red and pink.

The shark's blood
dissolving in the sea.

Rounding my chair, he
played a chord once

lightly on my back.
Medium close-up of me
in the chair, his body
rounding the chair, then
a slow zoom to my left
shoulder and his hand—

a slow, gentle riff of
fingers. Then difficult
to capture on film: inner
happiness and warmth
spreading, time ceasing.

*heaven. Gangsters fade—eclipsed by
the stars overhead, the first kiss: the
myriad ways of cheating on death.*

All children cling to life. I'm a little girl, upside down—legs wrapped

I went to his cottage,
at 3 a.m. or so, and
walked right in the
unlocked door. Had I
been a little slower, he
might have killed me.
I knelt at his bedside
and demanded, "Kiss
me once, and I'll
leave." I left after
the kiss—satisfying,
as I knew it would be.

I wanted him to wake
in the morning, won-
der if I'd been a dream.

A Portrait of Daniel:
I think of a river run-
ning through you. It
flows from your head
to your upper thighs
and groin. The water
rushes by me.

Oh, to bathe there!
Soap, a wash basin,
prayer-bubbles.

Inside you there are
rocks, and the water
crashes against them.
Sometimes your arms
and legs are pure fire.

Soap, a wash basin,

the power of prayer-
bubbles.

As a child, I clawed the
earth for cacahouètes.
Dirt streaked my face,

lodged under my nails
for weeks.

Only an experienced
sailor could navigate
the rocky shoreline.

My mother oversaw
the workers. After her
death, the ground-nuts
rotted in pyramids.
For my father, I flew
to Dakar.

*round the thick branch of a baobab.
And, oh, baby, who are you, living
on berries out under the stars? ★ ★ ★*

Pain is easy, joy hard. The only easy joy is that of revenge. To be happy: a

I met Claude at a Paris disco. I was studying Economics at the Sorbonne. I had hoped to become a film star. Now I would oversee workers on my father's farm near Fadiouth.

I stood at the gate of Daniel's garden.

admiring the perfume of his night-blooming jasmine. His offer of tomatoes and basil startled me. I didn't walk past there again for two months.

The first tomato I ate

was a huge, shiny red with a vibrant tartness.

At nine a.m., four p.m., four a.m., I often think of Daniel's tomatoes and the basil.

I could smell the sweet acrid aroma of his

body, fresh from the garden.

Daniel's garden, in the south of France, stood at the mouth of a river

that emptied into the sea. I felt safe and relaxed in the garden, but entering took tremendous effort. My body moved—hairline

sweating, hands shaking—through the toothed turnstile.

A 2-in. slash-mark scarred his right cheek.

right or a duty? Must one enjoy a caressing voice, the first soft kisses, the promise of oysters and abandon?

who wanted me. Someone who felt like “home.” For all the good reasons

Daniel handed me a
tisane of rose hips
and lemon grass. Pink
glass rained over the
floor.

The wind in my hair,
forcing my hair to
tremble

To be baptized in white
water was a surprise.

Daniel gripped the
white casting net in
his teeth; part of it
wrapped around his
arms, making him look
entrapped. The white
web over his black
skin: a topographic
map of his body’s
terrain. His bald,
perspiring head bent
intently forward.

Never a more beautiful
Neptune.

Your body, your body,
I saw you in the river,
and oh, your body, so
near, your body so—

The voice, charming,
spontaneous. Actions
belying the words.

The power of words,
especially in the shoul-
ders. The sun, polish-
ing them. To shudder
in pain or desire would
cost him. I wept.

To long for parakeets
and a house made of
shells surprised me.

I held onto the window
frame and rode—feet

planted on the running
board wind in my hair.

Have you met the love
of your life?

*or the bad? Home, where one swims
naked in salty green seas. Eats, eats,
loves, is loved. Or where silence dis-*

Irresistible. The sounds of the surf at each tide. Have you met the love of

After seeing him, the yellow petals of the hibiscus are transparent, the moss hands in rows of long curls, the palm fronts splay more openly.

Georgette invites Daniel to visit her farm near Fadiouth.

He likes the river that runs through it to the sea. She offers him the house; he chooses a small cabin on the Saloum, several miles away from her.

When he gives her a glass of palm wine, her hands still tremble.

Tiger sharks eat tin cans, turtles, people money. Their innards always harbor surprises.

Never to get used to the thighs, the sharks, the viciousness. Never to get used to surprises.

Now, Daniel kills only for food. When he eviscerates a shark, she loves to watch.

His thighs, his thighs

his powerful thighs shift.

His touch is light, musical. He plays a chord on her back.

Screen career over, Georgette has a gift for making money. She cannot stop amassing wealth. A strange blessing.

your life? Was it...? Could it have been...? Or perhaps it was ...? Go scream at the sea, "Who loves you?"

To be bonded is not pleasant. It's invisible, sticky, ineluctable. Lighter than

To be baptized in salty waves was a surprise. Daniel gripped the white casting net in his teeth; part of it, wrapped around me—a white web over my black skin: he cast me out again and again.

To cry would cost him. dearly in the neck—the

tremendous power in the neck. His bald perspiring head bent intently forward: never a more beautiful Neptune.

At daybreak, lying on the porch of Daniel's cabin, we watched the moon and sun. An occasional rat snake

slide between the floorboards to eat the insects. The mosquitoes of Sénégal fly low, seldom rise to the level of the chest.

Is the kiss for each person different? I hoped to become a virgin. Before the first

kiss. I practiced on my wrist, over and over.

A house made of sea-shells, and in my yard, parakeets of all colors

flew, and monkeys swung in the trees.

In a dugout canoe, we explored the mangrove swamps. We.

discovered oyster beds where we loved to dig for hours.

Wind in my hair. Have you met the love of —

*sea foam, stronger than undertow.
One bathes there at risk, no lifeguard.
But without it, there is only death.*

to stand the test of time. To be examined, evaluated. To apply for love

Daniel of the color of
black amethyst glass.
In certain lights,
purple glints are
visible just beneath
his skin. Each day, he
tends his garden.
Bougainvillea—fuchsia,
yellow and purple—
thrive in his backyard.
The mango trees,
heavy with fragrant

fruit, provide shade
Coconut fronds rustle
in the wind.

His arms and legs are
fireflies. Sometimes
they are pure fire, a
cleansing fire, that
rages on the river
bank.

Three or four times

each week, she sees
him. They sit in his
garden in the dark.
Sometimes, he comes to
dinner. He likes her
couscous. He takes
Henri fishing, weeds
her father's tomatoes.

His touch is light,
musical. He plays
chords on her body.

Gazing at a quarter
moon, they float on a
pink, saliferous lake.
Above the jellied water
line, their buoyant
bodies form a shifting

landscape of hills and
valleys.

A profusion of love
bites—the body
claimed, marked.

Three to four times a
week, he sees her.

Your body, I saw you,
your body, and, oh, yes,
your body in—?

*or other positions. The end of a trance.
Bulrushes line the mouth of the cave.
An underwater entry rimmed by—*