

Document name: Extract: D'Anuiar the longest memory pdf
Document date: 2015
Copyright information: Content is made available under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 Licence
OpenLearn Study Unit: Start writing fiction
OpenLearn url: <http://www.open.edu/openlearn/ocw/course/view.php?id=1256>



EXTRACTS USED IN 'WRITING ABOUT PERSONAL CONCERNS'

Derek Neale

Start Writing Fiction

Extracts used in 'Writing about personal concerns'

Fred D'Aguiar – *The Longest Memory*

Again I stood riveted to the spot as the crowd around my son drifted to the center of the yard where punishments meant to dissuade onlookers from similar activities were staged. My son called his mother. I heard this above the clatter of 250 plantation slaves.

I grabbed the arm of the strongest kin to me, a man close to my son's age, third grandchild of the tenth of my twelve daughters. I told him to run the five miles to the deputy's house since only he could save my son from this public display of savagery. He looked alarmed. I'd forgotten. A slave discovered off the plantation at night was liable to be killed. I told him I would go myself to save my son. He touched my arm, nodded at me and darted into the shadows of the dusk skulking beneath the trees. I watched his back blend with the shadows then melt into them. My son shouted again for his mother. I parted the crowd to get to him.

'She can't come to you my son. I am here for you.'

He saw me and fell silent and dejected. I put myself before Mr Sanders who frowned. 'My son is all I have, sir. Spare him. Let me take his place.'

Mr Sanders laughed aloud, brushed the air in front of his face as if to rid it of a pest and ordered that I be restrained for as long as it took to administer 200 lashes to my son.

When he said the number of lashes an astonished cry rose from the crowd and filled the early evening air. I began to struggle against the grip of two men who simply tightened their hold on me and forced me to my knees. Fires were lit. Each flame conspired with the remaining scraps of light to drive away the ensuing darkness but to no avail. The first lash ripped a hole in my head and I screamed for my son, who fell as silent as the grass and trees. My two remaining daughters cried with their children and grandchildren and begged Mr Sanders for leniency. They begged and cried. The night was torn to ribbons by their grief.

D'Aguiar, F. (1995) *The Longest Memory*, London: Chatto & Windus, pp. 24–26.