

Slavery as seen through *Copper Sun* (2006) by Sharon M. Draper, a toponymic perspective

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Abstract

Copper Sun (2006) written by Sharon Mills Draper is a historical fiction. It is actually about a young girl named Amari who has been forced to undertake an unpredictable journey to the New World. Amari is a young woman living among her Ewe people in a village located in Ghana in West Africa. She has been kidnapped and sent to African coast where a slave ship is waiting to embark her. On board as prisoner across the sea, Amari is submitted to hardships from the white strangers around her. At the end of the long and hellish travel, Amari is sold to Mr. Percival Derby as a birthday present for son Clay Derby. She should experience an atrocious life with other slaves on Derby's plantation. At the end, Amari, Polly and Tidbit escape to Fort Mose where they become free.

The objective of this study is to focus the very route followed by Amari from the Gold Coast (Ghana) to Florida where she has become free. Each place has influenced her physically and morally. The theories used are historicism and Marxism. As a matter of fact, Sharon M. Draper has used the character of Amari to pinpoint each aspect of the transatlantic slave trade with a special emphasis on the Ewe tribe experience. The Gold Coast (today's Ghana) was one of the very important slave provider area. According to David Eltis and David Richardson (1997) "it appears that between 1662 and 1867 over four out of five slaves left Africa from just four regions - the Gold Coast, the Bights of Benin and Biafra, and West-Central Africa". Amari, in *Copper Sun*, is the symbol of all these people deported to develop the New World.

Key Words: Gold Coast, journey, slave, plantation, escape, freedom.

Introduction

Ten to eleven millions of African strong people were obliged to leave Africa for the New World between the 16th and 19th centuries. The British, Portuguese, and French slave traders were very active in transporting this human chattel. This Transatlantic Slave Trade, According to data from Du Bois Institute mentioned in *Routes to Slavery: Direction, Ethnicity and Mortality* edited by David Eltis and David Richardson on page 6, over four out of five slaves were shipped from Africa between 1862 and 1867. These slaves originated from the following African areas: Gold Coast, Bights of Benin, and Biafra, and West-Central Africa. Shipments took place at Cape Coast Castle, Whydah, Calabar, Benguela, Luanda, etc. At arrival, forty per cent went to the following areas:

Brazil: 40%;

British Caribbean: 20%;

French West Indies: 17%;

Spanish Islands: 10%;

North America: 7%.

In sum, captives embarked from the above mentioned area, as stated by Du Bois Institute, were dispatched according to the need in human labor in the Western Hemisphere.

In *Copper Sun* (2006), Sharon Mills Draper has scrutinized the different places, aspects and legs of the transatlantic slave trade. In her Historical Fiction, she has depicted the system from the capture of slaves in African villages, transportation, selling, life on plantations up to their escape and freedom in the New World.

The objective of this paper is to shed light on the different places involved in the process of capture, buying, selling and use of slaves experienced in the Americas from 1500 to 1870. Historicism theory together with qualitative and quantitative methods are used to decipher the toponymic perspective related to this dramatic traffic of Africans for the economic development of the New World.

Amari, a 15-year-old young woman from the Ewe tribe in Western Africa, is captured, shipped, sold and bought as a birthday present by M. Derby, the white master of Derbyshire Farms located in Charles Town, a South Carolina Colony. Named Myna by her master, Amari has escaped and toiled to join Fort Mose, the Spanish settlement at St. Augustine, Florida, where runaway slaves were offered liberty and religious sanctuary. The different places where Amari has stayed in are the main points of this study: it goes from the Gold Coast in West Africa to Florida in America where Amari has become free.

1 - Africa: a slave providing tool

Generally, people consider the sale of about 20 Africans in Jamestown, Virginia, in 1619 the beginning of African slavery in what became the United States. American Indians and, later, Africans also were enslaved in Spanish colonies such as today's Florida and California and the islands of the Caribbean.

In early to mid-17th-century colonial North America, slavery developed slowly, beginning in Maryland and Virginia and spreading to the Carolinas in the 1670s. Southern colonists originally relied on white European servants. But many of these servants had signed contracts to work only for a certain number of years, often to pay for their passage to North America. They became free when these contracts expired. Other servants rebelled or escaped. When fewer Europeans were available as servants, the servants were more expensive. In order to find a more easily controlled and cheaper labor supply, European slave traders captured and imported more Africans. Soon, American plantations became strong markets for enslaved Africans. Tobacco plantation owners in the colonies around Chesapeake Bay (Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina) and rice growers in South Carolina pressured slave traders to supply more slaves. In time, more and more slaves were kidnapped from their homes in Africa and taken to the colonies in chains to cultivate crops on the growing number of Southern plantations. Slaves were also taken to the Northern colonies to be farm workers, household servants, and artisans. Similar circumstances transformed the Caribbean and South American societies and economies into plantation economies. There was a high demand for sugar in Europe, so British, French, Spanish, Portuguese, and other European colonists tried to fill that need. Brazil, a Portuguese colony, also became a thriving coffee-producing region. As the sugar and coffee planters became successful, they increased the size of their plantations and therefore needed more slaves to do the work.

Without any doubt, the fiction of Sharon Mills Draper entitled *Copper Sun* has taken its origins from the above mentioned circumstances. Sharon's novel has provided a chronological description of the whole system of slavery from African Coasts up to the New World. The novel opens with a capture of slaves section.

2- Capture of slaves on and the march to the coasts: case of Amari

Amari is one of the novel's protagonists; she is a 15-year-old young girl from the Ewe tribe in Western Africa, in Gold Coast, today's Ghana. A good fiancée to Besa, and a happy girl in her village (Ziavi), Amari is abducted by white men and Ashanti warriors. She sees her mother, father, and brother Kwasi murdered. Amari is sold into slavery. Sharon's description goes like this:

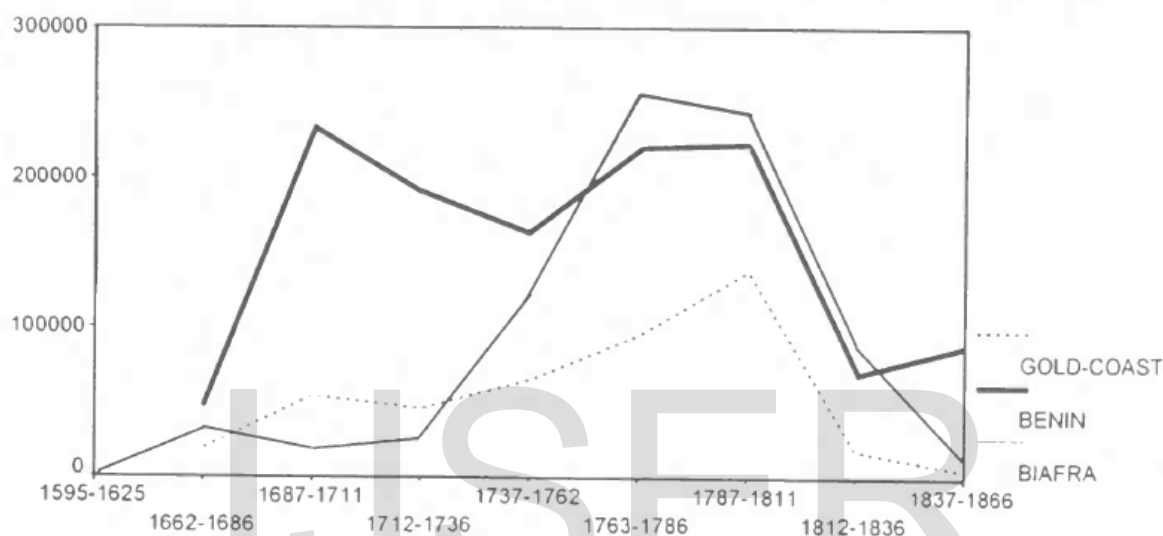
The drumbeats rippled in the darkness, the dancers swayed and stomped on the hard-packed earth, and Amari's people clapped and laughed as the firelight glimmered in the night.

The first explosion came from the end of one of the unusual weapon sticks the strangers carried. Louder than any beat of even the largest drum, it was followed by a cry of horror. The chief had fallen off his seat, a huge red bleeding hole in the center of his chest. More explosions followed in rapid succession, then everyone was screaming. Confusion and dust swirled throughout the village. Amari watched, aghast, as a mother with her baby wrapped on her back tried to flee, but both mother and child were clubbed down into the dirt by one of the Ashanti warriors. (*Copper Sun*, p.21)

In fact, European traders captured some Africans in raids along the coast, but bought most of them from local African or African-European dealers. These dealers had a sophisticated network of trading alliances collecting groups of people together for sale. Generally speaking, most of the Africans who were enslaved were captured in battles or were kidnapped, though some were sold into slavery for debt or as punishment.

For hundreds of years, an important number of Africans were victims of this trade. The following diagram¹ gives an idea of the volume of the traffic in West Africa from 1595-1866:

FIGURE 1
SLAVES LEAVING WEST AFRICA, 1595-1866



Source: All diagrams and tables in this study have been compiled from information in the Du Bois Institute slave ship data set.

From the diagram it can be inferred that departures from the Bight of Benin exceeded 10,000 people per year over a period of 125 years from 1687 to 1811.

The traffic was centered on three main regions in Africa according to David Eltis; David Richardson (1997, 24):

On the African side, three regions - the Gold Coast, the Bight of Benin and Bight of Biafra - dominate the historiography. These areas tend to be seen as the centre of gravity of the traffic not just from West Africa but from the whole of sub-Saharan Africa, a situation captured by the description of a section of the Bight of Benin as 'the Slave Coast' on most maps printed before 1820.

Each region mentioned above represents a certain number of places:

- Gold Coast: Assinie, Axim, Quaqua, Kormantine, Elmina, Cape Coast Castle, Anomabu, Apam, Tantomquerry, Wiamba, Accra, Christiansborg, Alampo;
- Bight of Benin: Keta, Little Popo, Grand Popo, Popo, Whydah, Jaquin, Apa, Porto Novo, Badagry, Lagos, Costa da Mina, Benin;
- Bight of Biafra: Rio Nun, Formosa, Rio Brass, New Calabar, Bonny, Andony, Calabar (or Old Calabar), Bimbria, Cameroons, Cameroons River, Corisco, Gabon, Cape Lopez.

¹ David Eltis; David Richardson. *Routes to Slavery: Direction, Ethnicity and Mortality in the Transatlantic Slave Trade*, 1997, p. 18.

An analysis of the diagram above shows that “departures from the Bight of Benin exceeded 10,000 per year over a period of 125 years from 1687 to 1811”. (Eltis & Richardson 1997, 18)

By fictionalizing these historical facts, Sharon Mills Draper is criticizing the phenomenon of human trafficking connected to the advent of the New World. The Ziavi village from where comes Amari is any African village where slaves originated from before they were sold. The long way to the coast after captivity is part of Sharon’s attention in her novel.

As a matter of fact, before captives reach African coasts and being shipped for the middle passage, they should endure a number of prolonged hardship. They should walk days and nights for weeks. Though some should march just a few miles to the coast, others have to forcibly march hundreds of miles. It is a journey that takes its toll on the African men, women, and children bound together by ropes, chains, or wooden yokes. Sharon Mills Draper has painted vividly these horrors in *Copper Sun*.

The first path they traveled was the long road that led from their village to the big river several miles away. It seemed as if even the trees bowed their heads as they passed. The birds, normally full of chatter, were silent as the group marched past them for the last time. ... Day after day the captives walked, saying very little to one another or to their captors. ... The captives were never unshackled. Each set of six ate together, slept together, and had to urinate and defecate together. They were given just a little food each morning and very little water. Each group was forced into a rhythm, keeping a pace that was difficult for the slowest and weakest of them as they marched. (*Copper Sun*, p.25)

Captives die during this march. Tirza, Kwadzo, Esi and her baby together with seven other captives die before they have reach Cape Coast Castle, a prison where captives are held until slavers capture enough of people. Ibo, Ga, and Mandinka are the languages spoken in the castle. There, death is a daily reality up to the moment they are embarked for the middle passage.

3- The middle passage

The Middle Passage, term used to describe the transatlantic slave voyages between Africa and the Americas that claimed the lives of approximately 1.8 million slaves over a period of about 350 years. It was one of the worst experiences in human history, where hundreds of traumatized men, women and children were sent in tightly packed, foul-smelling ships on a four-to-six-week journey across the Atlantic. Henry Smeathman’s description is more convincing than this tentative definition. He wrote:

Alas! What a scene of misery and distress is a full slaved ship in the rains. The clanking of chains, the groans of the sick and the stench of the whole is scarce supportable ... two or three slaves thrown over board every day dying of fever, flux, measles, worms all together. All the day the chains rattling or the sound of the armourer riveting some poor devil just arrived in galling heavy irons. (*The Routledge History of Slavery*, 2011, p. 87)

Amari has noticed when she enters the ship that “On narrow shelves made of wood, hundreds of naked men and boys lay chained together, wrists, necks, and legs held tightly by iron shackles. Only a few inches separated one man from another”. (*Copper Sun*, p.40) They should live in these conditions for many weeks. They have become food for rats. They, “now

grown huge and healthy, chewed on the emaciated bodies of some of the men chained there. Too weak or too tightly chained to shake them off, the men suffered in silent agony". (*Copper Sun*, p.51) Draper has depicted in detail just an aspects of the human tragedy witnessed by the Atlantic Ocean with thousands of ships for hundreds of years. Olaudah Equiano has provided the following description to raise the reader's exasperation about the tragedy:

The closeness of the place, and the heat of the climate, added to the number in the ship, which was so crowded that each had scarcely room to turn himself, almost suffocated us. This produced copious perspirations, so that the air soon became unfit for respiration, from a variety of loathsome smells, and brought on a sickness among the slaves, of which many died, thus falling victims to the improvident avarice, as I may call it, of their purchasers. This wretched situation was again aggravated by the galling of the chains, now become insupportable; and the filth of the necessary tubs, into which the children often fell, and were almost suffocated. The shrieks of the women, and the groans of the dying, rendered the whole a scene of horror almost inconceivable. (Equiano, 2007, p. 27)

Nobody can give account of all the havocs, Draper's fiction is but a sample of the horrors committed by the white people who believe that "all men are created equal".

Women and girls on the ships receive different treatments. In *Copper Sun*, they are asked to dance for the entertainment of the crew members. More dramatically they are raped every night by these men who happen to take turns at will. The narrator of *Cooper Sun* describes the fact in the following words:

Every morning the women were fed, doused with salt water, and made to dance. Oh, how Amari hated that drum! The men were then pulled from the hold, squinting in the bright sunlight—filthy, weak, and almost crippled from being tied down for almost twenty hours each day. More and more bodies were tossed overboard, where the huge gray fish waited hungrily for their meal.

Every evening the sailors prepared greedily for their night of pleasure. Sometimes Amari was rescued by the redheaded sailor, but on most nights she was just another female body to be used by one of the forty or so sailors on board that awful ship. (*Copper Sun*, p.49)

Both physical and moral maltreatments inflicted on the captives take them to die in large numbers. In *Copper Sun* it is a fiction but the realities are closer. In *Routes to Slavery Direction, Ethnicity and Mortality in the Transatlantic Slave Trade*, the following can be read:

over the three and a half centuries of the transatlantic slave trade, perhaps 15 per cent (or over 1.5 million) of those who embarked at the African coast died during the Atlantic crossing. At the peak of the trade in 1760-1810 losses of slaves on the Atlantic voyage perhaps averaged 6,000-8,000 a year. Clearly, for a large number of those bound for sale in the Americas - the great majority, it should be noted, aged under twenty-five - the route to slavery ended either before leaving the African coast or in mid-ocean. (Eltis & Richardson, 1997, p.9)

In short, words are too weak to depict the reality behind the most tragic of all human tragedies of history black people have suffered. So in this very context, the Atlantic Ocean is specifically important though it is a passive and innocent actor of the tragedy. Black men, women, children, all have fed for centuries the voracious sharks that followed along countless slave ships. Unfortunately, the middle passage is simply a second leg of the three-legged system: slaves are to be prepared for sale in slave markets. In this toponymic study, it is important to refer to such places where black people are traded.

4- The slave market: Charles Town

The final part of the triangular trade is the sale of captives in the Americas. The arrival of a slave ship in an American port is hard to escape: slave vessels are notorious for their stench. Most ships disembark captives at a pre-arranged port, but if the port seem glutted with slaves, they might try to sail to another port within the same imperial jurisdiction. After duties are paid and sick slaves are unloaded and sold at taverns, the rest of the cargo is sold by auction. The likely purchasers are either planters or merchants.

In *Copper Sun*, the slave market is Charles Town in South Carolina. But before the sale, slaves are packed at Sullivan's Island for ten days until they are sure they have no disease especially Smallpox. There, they are prepared: they are given more food and water, their wounds are patched or covered, and they are oiled and prepared for some days before the auction sale. Amari and the other slaves have gone through the process. When the day for sale comes, captives are shackled and taken to the market for auction sale:

By the time the sun had begun to shine brightly, the sale had started. Besa and a coffle of men were taken as the first to be auctioned off. As he and the others were led from the holding area, a great cry of enthusiasm could be heard from the crowd outside. Amari could hear loud, excited words tossed back and forth, much like the tones of bargaining her mother had used on market days. She heard someone say the word "Sold!" and she knew she would never see Besa again.

The rest of the men, some in sets of two or three, some singly, were sold as the morning went on. By midday it was time for the women. ...More buyers had arrived. Afi and Amari and the other women were stripped naked. (*Copper Sun*, p.58)

Amari is bought by Mr. Derby for his son as birthday present. But before the purchase is concluded and as it usually happens in such an odd market where captives are sold, Mr. Derby puts his fingers in her mouth, runs his hands down her legs, and offers 10 pounds for her. Finally, Mr. Derby purchases the girl for 60 pounds. Amari is given a new name by her master: Myna. She belongs to Clay Derby, Mr. Derby's 16-year-old son, she is his property for life. Events in *Copper Sun* took place in 1738, 38 years before the declaration of independence in 1776. The colonists refused to be submitted to the authority of Great Britain because they believed in natural rights for every human creature. However, they could sell and buy black people simply for economic purpose. The greed of the colonists led to dehumanization and crime. The treatments of slaves in the colonies actually go beyond imagination.

5- On the plantation: Charles Town, South Carolina Colony

In her inventory, Sharon M. Draper has used her pen to scrutinize inch by inch all the aspects put together to frame the human disaster in the Americas. Amari, nicknamed Myna, should face new trials on Mr. Derby's farm in Charles Town where she is Clay Derby's sex toy and the mule of her masters. Slavery embodies both physical and psychological violence. In *The Routledge History of Slavery*, it is written:

Masters had regular recourse to the lash, and the records of slave societies abound in stories of stomach turning physical and emotional violence that masters, overseers, and other whites visited on the enslaved when "mere" whipping did not accomplish all that they hoped. Slaves were decapitated for running away, they were tortured for disobedience, they were raped for their oppressors' pleasure, and they were publicly and symbolically dishonored in ways that offer disturbing testimony to mankind's capacity for senseless cruelty. (Heuman & Burnard, 2011, p.213)

This citation has not detailed the atrocities perpetrated by slave masters. Some could defecate in a slave's mouth for example. Amari or Myna together with other slaves have undergone

atrocities only Draper can find the right words to depict. The rice cultivation on Mr. Derby's farm is a risky job. Slaves are always at risk, death is a common reality:

"She be dead?" Amari asked, her voice barely a whisper.
..."Not yet," Cato replied quietly. "Just passed out. But the poison likely to kill her by sunset. Copperhead don't play." Cato looked directly at Amari as he spoke again.
"Two dead of snakebite this season. Two more died of the malaria. One gator bite. One drown. (*Copper Sun*, p.98)

Slaves, not only are they working in very bad conditions, but also they are whipped regularly by masters. Amari is whipped too:

Coiled like a snake, the whip was made of leather. The tip of the lash was laced with wire. Polly inhaled and held her breath.
Mr. Derby grasped the handle, drew his arm back, and fiercely brought the braided lash of it across Amari's back. She screamed, twisting with pain at his feet.
Again he beat her. And again. Seven times he thrashed her. Ten. Twelve. The back of her new housemaid uniform was ripped to shreds, stained with her blood. (*Copper Sun*, p.104)

Masters resort to whipping slaves, hanging them, burning them at the stake, or disfiguring or branding them to discipline the other slaves. Corporal punishment is designed to deter rebellious behavior, instill fear to prevent defiance from becoming exemplary, regulate sexual conduct in order to prevent miscegenation and preserve clear-cut socioracial hierarchies. In short, nothing is left aside to play with the life of slaves. On Mr. Derby's farm, a four-year-old boy called Tidbit is used as bait to hunt alligators. The boy is tied with a rope that the master holds, then he tosses him into the water. Alligators appear and the white people fire them. The boy is lucky enough because 'Twice more Tidbit was tossed into the bloody water, and twice more he barely escaped the jaws of the hungry alligators. (*Copper Sun*, p.115) It is suffocating to read *Copper Sun* up to the end because descriptions go beyond imagination. Tidbit is Teenie's son, the slave cook at Derbyshire Farms. One can imagine her state of mind when her son is being used as alligator bait and the fear of the boy when he is being tossed into the water. Sure, nobody is able to know all that slaves suffered in the hands of white masters in the Americas. As a consequence, slaves resort to solutions such as death or absconding. Amari, Polly and Tidbit have run away to reach Fort Mose in Florida to become free. They have left with Dr. Hoskins, the white medical local doctor, who is sent for when Mr. Derby's wife is in labor. The deliverance has created a dramatic situation because the baby is black. Noah, the slave suspected to have fathered the infant and the newborn are all fired to death by Mr. Derby. Disappointed, Dr. Hoskins helps the three slaves to abscond. He hates slavery.

6- Slave absconding: Fort Mose in Florida

Fort Mose is so called by the English, Spanish refer to the Fort as 'Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose'. (*Cooper Sun*, p. 186) Slaves ran there for freedom. In fact, slaves did not control their own lives. Most men and women worked in the fields. Some women and children did chores in the master's home. A slave usually worked from sunrise to sunset. Slave owners made slaves work by beating or starving them. Certain workers called overseers rode through the fields on horseback and whipped slaves who seemed slow or lazy. Slaves were punished by whipping, shackling, hanging, beating, and burning. Punishment was most often meted out in response to disobedience or perceived infractions. Many slaves tried to sneak away to Canada or one of the free states. In *Cooper Sun*, Amari, Polly and Tidbit have

run away from Mr. Derby's plantation to join Fort Mose in Florida where freedom is a guaranty. Mrs. Isabelle Derby, Mr. Derby's second wife's newborn is the last straw. As a matter of fact, the newborn is black. Both the infant and the suspected black father murdered by Mr. Derby who has secluded the female slaves who have worked to secure the baby. Dr. Hoskins has witnessed the tragedy and offered a helping hand to Amari, Polly and Tidbit to leave the plantation for freedom purpose. According to Nathan, a red-haired young man whom Polly, Amari, and Tidbit meet on their journey, Fort Mose 'is a small place but different from most. From what I could tell, it is run by Spanish soldiers and priests. Runaways are welcome and given their freedom, as long as they promise to swear allegiance to the Spanish king.' (*Cooper Sun*, p. 167) This atypical route to freedom is suggested by Cato, the oldest slave on Mr. Derby's plantations. Generally most routes led from the South to the Northern states or Canada. Some routes led to Mexico and the Caribbean islands. However Fort Mose is another reality. As early as 1687, the Spanish government in St. Augustine, Florida provided an asylum for African slaves who successfully escaped British plantations in South Carolina. The Florida government offered these slaves freedom not as a humanitarian gesture, but with the hope that this policy could both protect their own colony and unsettle the British government of the Carolinas. By 1740, the former British slaves moved into a military fortification called Fort Mose and became soldiers in the Spanish army. This fort thus became the first free black community in what is now the United States. Getting to the place is a great challenge. On the long and difficult journey runaways often had trouble finding food and water. They hid during the day and traveled through unfamiliar areas by night. If caught, the punishment would be severe. Polly, Amari, and Tidbit have taken the risk with success. They are joined by Hushpuppy, Tidbit's dog Mr. Derby used to ill-treat. Dr. Hoskins who should sell the three slaves offers them to escape. He provides advice and gives Polly a weapon with a single ammunition. He asks them to head to the north, but they finally follow Cato's direction toward Florida in the South. They should walk days and nights in shadowy forests. They should follow swampy lanes in darkness without knowing where they are going. They should walk with empty stomach and swollen feet under rains. They feel dizzy. They should eat leaves, roots, raw fish, earthworms and insects. They should find shelters in termite mounds and taverns. They are covered with dirt, they drink dirty water and get accustomed to the bite of insects and mosquitos. They should starve, however they stick to it. They are determined to reach Fort Mose. The following passage is illustrative:

Night after night they walked, afraid of every hoot of the owl and howl of the coyote. Some nights they crossed small streams, which gave them a chance to refresh themselves, quench their thirst, and soothe their aching feet. Sometimes they found small water creatures like crabs or clams to eat. By day they tried to sleep- under logs, in caves, in thickets. Their faces, arms, and legs became hardened with insect bites and scratches. Amazingly, however, they had heard no voices, met no other humans in the woods, nor were chased by patrollers who were looking for runaways. (*Cooper Sun*, p. 152)

Fortunately they come across people who have helped them. One of them is called Nathan, a boy about their age not far from Savannah in Georgia. He is a red-haired young man who agrees to help the runaways, though he is ultimately unsuccessful in keeping his alcoholic father from finding them. After hiding them in the barn, he offers them bread, cheese, dried venison, and apples. He shows them the way and trickily he lets them run away from the barn. Fiona O'Reilly, another woman helps the three runaways. Fiona is a white woman who discovers Amari, Polly, and Tidbit sleeping in one of her husband's hunting shacks. She agrees to help them though she and her husband own slaves. She offers them clothes, a small wagon and an old horse for the journey. She confirms they can ride on the road and adds: "If anyone stops you, tell them these two are your slaves. If you think there is danger, hide them

under the straw.” (*Cooper Sun*, p.179) The journey is perilous but easier and rapid, they cross a river, then reach Fort Mose where Inez, a Black woman, is the first to welcome them to Fort Mose. A former slave from Georgia Colony, she and her husband have escaped to Fort Mose about a year before but while Inez has her freedom, her husband is serving in the Spanish military in order to earn his. A kind and generous woman, Inez feeds the travelers when they arrive in Fort Mose and takes it upon herself to show them around. And they are free!

Conclusion

Amari, one of the protagonists of *Copper Sun* (2006) by Sharon M. Draper, has been forced to leave the Ewe tribe in Western Africa. She has been chained and submitted to a long walk up to the coast where she is embarked on a slave ship for weeks. Raped every night by one or more members of the crew, she is purchased by Mr. Derby as a birthday present for his son. On the farm where Mr. Derby specialized in rice cultivation, slaves are submitted to humiliation, inhuman treatments. On marshy farms, slaves are regularly bitten by snakes, they are often flogged and raped at will. With the help of Dr. Hoskins, Amari, Polly and tidbit run away from South Carolina to reach Fort Mose in Florida where they become free. The different places mentioned in *Cooper Sun* are significant because the transatlantic slave trade was organized into steps or legs to be followed from the deep African villages up to the masters' farms in the New World. Activities carried out differ from one step to another. African coasts provided slaves through raids, tribal wars. Captives were packed then shipped with the help of boats. The Atlantic Ocean plays a key role in the process because of the use of ships for transportation. Ships were the only means of transportation likely to take a large quantity of goods from Africa to the rest of the world. Ships played a central role and witnessed ghastly and unthinkable scenes of human tragedies. Ports of destination in the Americas and the auction markets took over for the last debasing stages before captives were taken to their masters. Life on the plantations was a hellish one masters and overseers sketched out. Naturally followed resistance and absconding. All in all, black people were the only victims of the economic greed of the whites living in the Americas and in Europe. Their races for material goods took them to transform black people into goods to sell and purchase in market to be resold, given, raped, injured, lynched, roast, thrown to alligators or simply murdered without due prosecutions. Sharon's sharp pen has taken Amari to go through all the various sections of the most hideous black people trafficking in the history of mankind.

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