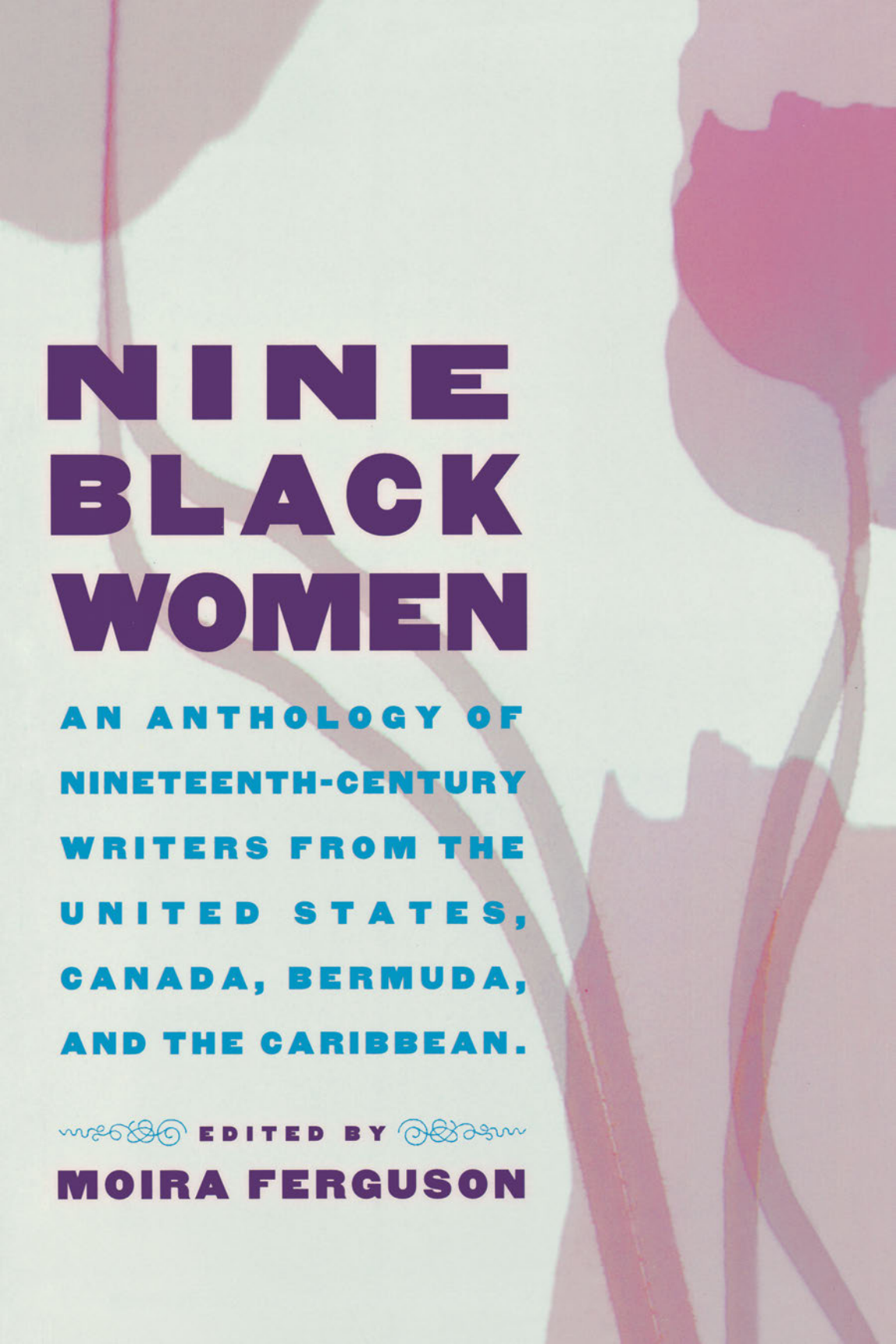

NINE BLACK WOMEN

AN ANTHOLOGY OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY WRITERS FROM THE UNITED STATES, CANADA, BERMUDA, AND THE CARIBBEAN.

EDITED BY

MOIRA FERGUSON

Nine Black Women

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NINETEENTH-CENTURY WRITERS
FROM THE
UNITED STATES, CANADA, BERMUDA,
AND THE CARIBBEAN

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Edited and Introduced by

Moira Ferguson

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Introduction

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THIS COLLECTION DOCUMENTS the writings of nine of the earliest black women writers in the East and West Caribbean, Bermuda, Canada, the United States, and England. What links these diverse writers is a commitment to intellectual, spiritual, and physical freedom. Using their texts as tools of resistance, they use bold, double-voiced articulations about race and gender to question and undermine traditional concepts of inferiority and superiority. Their often firsthand accounts of bigotry and brutality constitute a politics of opposition. The text of each woman contributes to a collectively stunning list of "firsts."

As a whole, these nine African American and African Caribbean women established a new black female cultural politics that spans oceans and eras. Active agents in their own destiny, these intrepid pioneers led slave rebellions, traveled extensively, served as healers in war, raised families, evangelized, broke ground as journalists, taught school, and founded numerous societies—for political refugees, the infirm, children, and homeless people. Additionally, their knowledge of the Scriptures, religious conversion, and personal selflessness bestowed upon them an ineradicable dignity as they strove toward freedom and self-empowerment. They wrote energetically in a wide range of genres, from anti-slavery polemic, autobiography, religious testimony and history to editorials, biography, hymns, meditations, poems, travel, narrative, and a novel.

The collection opens with the texts of two sisters, Anne and Elizabeth Hart, who lived and worked as educators on the island of Antigua in the East Caribbean. They wrote in a variety of prose forms: history, letters, memoirs, and hymns. Born the same decade that Phillis Wheatley published her first volume of poems in 1773, and a quarter-century before Lucy Terry published the first known African American writing discovered to date, these sisters became the first black women in the Caribbean to write in English, to open Sunday schools, and to teach children and adults collectively, both free and enslaved.

In the following decades, many distinguished black women writers in North America, Bermuda, and the West Caribbean joined the Hart sisters in recording their diverse responses to a cross-cultural world turning upside down.

■ Having grown up in Bermuda in the late eighteenth century, Mary Prince penned the first anti-slavery autobiography by a black woman in English after she "walked away" from slavery in London.

■ Mary Seacole, born in Jamaica in 1805, traveled extensively around the world as a "doctress," crossing the Isthmus of Panama in the 1840s and nursing the wounded in the 1850s on the battlefields of the Crimean War. (She was the only black woman to record such experiences.)

■ Mary Ann Shadd Cary, born in Delaware in 1824, was the first black female newspaper editor in North America; she advocated emigration to Canada from the United States as a response to slavery and the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850.

■ Originally from New Jersey, Jarena Lee wrote a spiritual autobiography and became the first female preacher of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

■ Nancy Prince, born in 1799 in Massachusetts of mixed African and Indian ancestry, published a fascinating account of her momentous travels in Russia during the era of the Decembrist uprising and then in post-emancipation Jamaica.

■ Harriet Wilson, born in New Hampshire some time in the early 1800s, was probably the first African American to publish fiction written in English that coded personal experiences with hypocritical white abolitionists.

■ Last, Harriet Jacobs from Edenton, North Carolina, wrote a unique, self-affirming autobiography that recorded the life of a fearless slave who avoided capture and finally escaped to a freedom often in jeopardy.

Having won the right to speak through necessary compromises with white editors and friends, all nine writers locate themselves in opposition to their societies. They adopt multiple strategies of resistance that include omission, displacement, false naiveté, evasion, and accommodation. For the most part, they had to conceal the unspeakable and subvert what might prove dangerous or unprofitable to reveal. Let me mention a couple of examples.

With their informally circulating texts, the Hart sisters counter racist mythologies about black inferiority. Through cultural representations of themselves as propagandists and educators, they display both intellect and altruism.

Since Mary Prince's brutalizing sexual experiences would be unacceptable reading for an evangelical (or any) audience, she can talk only of a master who forced her to wash him naked. In another case, asterisks pepper an

unacceptably explicit anecdote. But, surprisingly, those lacunae are partially filled when Prince speaks in court. Like Harriet Jacobs, Prince forces her readers to learn the truth about black bodies and brutalization.

Moreover, Harriet Wilson and Harriet Jacobs had to resort to a title page and a pseudonym, respectively, to conceal their identities. Countering false representations and fragmentation, giving voice individually and in unison to the silent, the silenced, and themselves, they scripted a global resistance to slavery and an expanding colonial order.

Together, all nine women used their writing to carve out a place for themselves in an entrenched patriarchal society. Struggling to sound themselves and above all to be heard, they transformed marginalization into a site of power and agency. But not only were their personal experiences, their professions, and their generic span protean, their cultural identities and their roles as travelers were equally and unprecedentedly expansive. Some of them repeatedly voyaged across the Atlantic to London, Russia, and the Crimea, down to Jamaica from the United States, down to South America from Jamaica, across the United States itself, down the North Atlantic to Turks Island and the East Caribbean, and north to Canada. Hence they were sturdy forerunners of what Paul Gilroy has brilliantly characterized as the "Black Atlantic World," that vast arena of black culture that encompasses Africa, Europe, the Americas, and the Caribbean. Even Harriet Wilson, who never left the United States, and Anne Hart Gilbert, who always lived in Antigua (as far as we know), were engaged with international cultures and ideas, their lives rich, challenging, and politically, often physically global. In their exceptional mobility, furthermore, these writers suggest the lives of displaced or dispossessed peoples. They exemplify Carole Boyce Davies's superb phrase "migratory subjectivities." Collectively, these narratives about constant movement form a transcontinental, textual diaspora.

Through their collective endeavors, these writers constructed insurrectionary texts that offered alternative visions and oppositional vantage points, that exposed white duplicity and varied forms of colonial violence. They shared a vista on the future. In doing so, they often voiced subjugated communities' as well as individuals' experiences. Their texts spoke and still speak to one another across continents, forming a diasporic cultural interchange that bespeaks a collective refusal in the face of injustice.

■ ■ ■

Although this volume stands firmly on its own as a collection, it also doubles as a classroom text with multiple uses. For example, I sketch the

comparative historical backgrounds of each writer and her text in the various countries where the women lived. I suggest correspondences and differences among the women that might be helpful in a number of courses in women's studies, black studies, history, English, sociology, and any course concerned with cultural diversity. Certain pairings of writers could work for distinct teaching units: for example, spiritual writers, featuring Elizabeth and Anne Hart together with evangelist Jarena Lee. The adventures of Mary Seacole and Nancy Prince, on the one hand, and the slave narratives of Mary Prince and Harriet Jacobs, on the other, are two further potential pairings. These four, moreover, were either voluntary or politically coerced travelers, as were Jarena Lee and Mary Ann Shadd Cary. In tackling journalism and fiction, respectively, for the first time, Mary Ann Shadd Cary and Harriet Wilson could also work as a classroom segment on black women writers as professional standard-bearers.

Finally, I want to mention my principle of selection. It was primarily but not exclusively based on a concentrated number of texts written by black female pioneers addressing a panorama of subjects, primarily in prose. For reasons of space, I had to omit such crucial pioneers as Zilpha Elaw, Charlotte L. Forten Grimké, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, Ann Plato, Sarah Parker Remond, Maria W. Stewart, Lucy Terry, Sojourner Truth, and Phillis Wheatley.[1] The nine writers selected, however, are strongly representative of this long cultural epoch in their genre, geographical region, professional diversity, political perspective, and psychological depth, their social condition as free or enslaved women, and their economic status, which ranged from poverty to self-subsistence. Using their own words, I want to suggest the rich, cumulative cultural history that the first one hundred years of black women's writings embodied.

The Hart Sisters

■

INTRODUCTION

ANNE HART GILBERT AND ELIZABETH HART THWAITES lived their lives in Antigua, at the southern end of the East Caribbean. Sisters born a year apart to a black slaveholder father, Anne Hart Gilbert (1768–1834) and Elizabeth Hart Thwaites (1771–1833) were the first educators of slaves and free blacks in Antigua and among the first African Caribbean female writers.[2] Elizabeth Hart, moreover, was one of the first women in the Caribbean to agitate and write against slavery. Related to distinguished Wesleyan Methodist families, the Hart Sisters were prominent members of the religious and cultural intelligentsia in Antigua during the late slave period there, when the institution was under attack and the character of society was changing.[3]

For the most part, whites viewed the free colored (as the population of African Caribbean former slaves was known) as too insignificant numerically to make trouble. The Hart sisters were part of this free colored community. Unlike other islands, Antigua had given free colored men and women the rights of citizenship in the 1770s. This freedom to vote angered many whites, who tried to perpetuate ideas about racial superiority and maintain political hegemony. Voting rights, moreover, suggested how much the power of free coloreds was on the increase.[4]

For African Caribbeans in a slave society, becoming free men and women was a difficult process and usually came about through reward or purchase. Another factor in the anxiety the plantocracy manifested about the ascendancy of free colored men and women was the dilution of its own power. Members of the white professional class in Antigua,

> merchants, lawyers, doctors, government officials, and even clergymen made up some part of the membership of the Assemblies. This group was well represented in the Assembly at Antigua. At the general election of 1788, for instance, 12 professionals were returned out of a total of 25 members of the Assembly. St. Johns, the capital town, returned as its four representatives an attorney and three merchants; and the new Assembly also counted among its members five doctors and three lawyers—one of them the Solicitor-General of the Leeward Islands. At least some of this group were proprietors of

> land; most were probably substantial men of property. They combined with the planters to give the political system of Antigua its reputation for superiority to the other governments of the Leeward Islands, which lacked Antigua's advantages of settled population and property.[5]

The more slaves were freed, the more whites worried about their control and sought ways to keep the society divided. The subjugation of the free colored community guaranteed white supremacy. During the Napoleonic War, which offered opportunities for freedom, the plantocracy was very much afraid for its power. Yet slaveowners, caught in their own political contradictions, began granting civil rights to white men of little property and allowing Roman Catholics to serve on juries. Primarily, they wanted as many white representatives as possible among the ruling class.[6] The Hart sisters' Methodism was another tool of empowerment that angered the plantocracy.

Not surprisingly, becoming as "white" as possible was a goal for many free coloreds because only by crossing the racial line ("passing") could they achieve upward mobility. Increasing fairness of complexion through miscegenous relations was an almost guaranteed way of moving up the social ladder.[7] Free colored men thus sought free colored women; for social advantages, however, free colored women often sought out white men. Free colored men, then, often ended up marrying slaves, in turn augmenting the potential proportion of the free colored population.

Discrimination against free colored people provoked them to such dissatisfaction that in 1823 they presented a petition of their grievances; hence the desire of many African Caribbean women to associate with or (much less commonly) marry white men. This vigorous system of racial disparity meant that the most poverty-stricken and subjugated group consisted of black slaves. Clement Caines, one of the elected representatives of the general legislature of the Leeward Islands, encapsulates the abominable condition of field slaves as opposed even to house slaves: "They are also the most miserable creatures that we own, the most corrupt and the most dangerous."[8]

In such a society, Anne Hart Gilbert and Elizabeth Hart Thwaites occupied a special niche, both because they were respectable members of the free colored community and because, as members of a Methodist family, their religion and by extension their political values were opposed to nominally Anglican ruling-class values.

The Antiguan Methodist church to which the Hart family belonged was dominated in its early days by several households: the Clarkleys (also called

Clearkleys), the Cables, the Lynches, and the Gilberts, the last related to Nathaniel Gilbert, who introduced Methodism to the West Indies.[9] The Hart sisters were connected to all four families.

Their maternal grandmother, for example, was Frances Clarkley, an African Caribbean convert to Methodism under the ministry of Francis Gilbert, Nathaniel Gilbert's brother. "My grandmother," states Anne Hart Gilbert, "receiv'd her first [admission] Ticket [to a Methodist meeting] pinned in the rules of the Society."[10] Frances Clarkley must have been a free colored; otherwise her daughter would have been a slave. (In slave society the mother's status determined the children's.) The original membership of the Hart family within the free colored community may, then, have come from this marriage. The Harts' maternal grandfather was Timothy Clarkley. Their mother was Anne Clarkley, the daughter of Frances Clarkley, an African Caribbean Methodist convert. Their father was Barry Conyers Hart, an African Caribbean planter and slaveholder with an estate at Popeshead near St. Johns, Antigua, where Elizabeth wrote her early correspondence.[11] The sisters grew up in a racially divided society within a sophisticated family of evangelical Methodists who were respected members of the so-called free colored community, but who were nonetheless used to being in the political opposition, specifically against slavery. Their father rendered slaves free service in preparing their manumission papers.

After the death of her mother in 1785, twelve-year-old Anne Hart had staunchly acted as surrogate mother to her many siblings. When Anne married in 1798, her sister Elizabeth took over the responsibility for the next three years. Not content with instructing their siblings, both sisters also offered religious instruction to slaves and taught them to read, a courageous and conspicuous decision for any woman to make when slavery was being attacked on both sides of the Atlantic and societal values were shifting. Having been raised in homes where religion and culture—Methodist principles as well as the writings of John Milton, Edward Young, and William Cowper—were prized, they habitually involved themselves in philanthropic work.

Such remarkable pursuits, especially in women so young, discomfited the white Antiguan population, who politically feared the spread of nonconformity.[12] Successful conversions not only flouted religious hegemony but suggested manipulation of the vulnerable that could lead to social unrest, if not rebellion. Besides, at a social level non-Methodists looked down on the Methodist Society for its orientation toward the disadvantaged. Even more critically for the island elite, Elizabeth Hart's forthright views on abolition

were repugnant. The idea that marginalized members of society were to be embraced as spiritual equals was deemed scandalous as well as injurious to white safety.

Any instruction of blacks challenged traditional views and indirectly undermined white authority. Thomas Coke, for example, was unequivocal in his view of African Caribbeans as people in a state of "heathenish and savage darkness," living in "all manner of uncleanness with greediness."[13] Black Antiguans had to be converted before they could be "civilized" and hence moral.

The Hart sisters had their work cut out for them with "fallen" slaves because their social order—let alone the much-bandied about assertion of "loose" sexual practices—made monogamy almost impossible. Husbands had no legal rights as family men. Males vastly outnumbered females. White men in diverse positions of power kept black women as concubines.[14]

By the time the Hart sisters began teaching, the slave system was expensive and becoming even more so as slaves got wind of efforts in London to pass an emancipation law. Sugar production had become much less profitable to planters and required a large slave population density, three hundred slaves to a square mile. The upkeep of such a population was enormous, especially after 1807, when no more slaves could legally be imported. Contrary to William Wilberforce's expectations, this led not to improved but to deteriorating conditions, a psychological as well as a financial consequence of abolition. The publicizing of atrocities intensified, helped by the establishment of the *Anti-Slavery Reporter* in 1816. One argument goes that only the sugar boom of the 1790s saved the plantocracy from financial disaster. But the writing was on the wall.[15]

Wesleyan Methodism was critical to the Hart sisters' spiritual and political development. John Wesley's encouragement of women preachers and teachers, coupled with his message of redemption for all, deeply attracted them. These tenets seem to have matched their own political vision.[16]

The church activities in which the Hart sisters and other women engaged removed them from an exclusively domestic sphere, physically and emotionally. But whether they viewed themselves as God's instrument rather than as individual writers is hard to say. Certainly, they were keenly concerned about salvation by grace and bearing witness.

1

Elizabeth Hart Thwaites
(1771–1833)

■

Biographical Narrative

Born in May 1771 in Antigua, Elizabeth Hart, a committed, publicly vocal abolitionist and educator, wrote the first known prose in English by a black woman in the Americas.[17] She is the first known black woman in the Caribbean to write against slavery in English. Her grandmother was Frances Clarkley, probably a free woman of color and an African Caribbean convert to Methodism under the ministry of Francis Gilbert, Nathaniel Gilbert's brother. Her mother was Frances Clarkley's daughter Anne, who married Barry Conyers Hart in 1766, a local black plantation owner, poet, and trouble-shooter who died in 1808.

After several bids in her youth to join religious communities and some painful backsliding, Elizabeth Hart was "convinced" or converted to Methodism in 1786 by the Reverend Thomas Coke, having finally discovered "the Sinfulness of my nature and deeply to feel the plague of my own heart" (p. 93). After that conversion, Elizabeth Hart dedicated herself to lifelong spiritual and political pursuits. Following her mother's death in 1780, she and her elder sister, Anne Hart, gave religious instruction to their siblings but soon expanded their teachings to slaves. At the turn of the century, after Barry Conyers Hart's plantation began to fail and he moved to Trinidad, the family gradually split up.

Elizabeth Hart's long early letter to a male friend in 1794 condemns slavery. This bold polemic was unprecedented since slavery was virtually a taboo subject in the colonies—particularly for women—where plantocratic feelings understandably ran high.[18] Writing from her father's slave plantation, she decries the institution of slavery as "the will and work of corrupt, fallen men" (p. 109). Africans, she argues, "are not so depraved as the generality of the Europeans, but more especially the West Indians" (p. 109; white understood.)

In Elizabeth Hart's short *History of Methodism* (1804) a decade later, written in response to a request by the Reverend Richard Pattison, a new Methodist missionary, she reiterates her abolitionist views. She compares the impact of religious ideas to explosive natural disasters and acts: they have "the same effect upon my mind as Earthquakes, Thunder and lightning" (p. 91). Parallel to *The History*, Hart wrote hymns and verse that express her religious convictions. She cries to Jesus for help, regrets worldly corruption, and craves redemption: "Let me love my God and die" (p. 98). Dedicated to the conversion of laboring and enslaved people, she aims to live honestly and decently and help others, especially disadvantaged people, to do likewise. Sparing no personal pain, she gives up meat to be able to distribute more funds to the needy, laying out "upwards of twenty dollars cash from my own pocket since Christmas" for children who need clothes (p. 113).

Elizabeth Hart married a white evangelical educator named Charles Thwaites, who had a similar selfless commitment. In 1805, they moved from St. Johns to English Harbour to be near her sister Anne, who had married John Gilbert.

Four years later Elizabeth Hart Thwaites and Anne Hart Gilbert co-founded the first Caribbean Sunday school for boys and girls, open to any class or race. Their defiant commitment to the education of slaves suggests how unprecedented a space the sisters were creating for themselves as educators in Antiguan society, far beyond just the establishment of Sunday schools. Their actions also stressed both the necessity and the importance of educating all black Antiguans. To improve her educational skills, Thwaites visited the island of Montserrat, where the well-known Lancastrian teaching system was in effect. Using a self-progressing monitoring system, pupils could become instructors and teach one another. Still known in the Caribbean and throughout the world to this day, the motto of the system sums up its practice: "Each One Teach One."

After seven years, Thwaites co-founded another society, this time for the orphans and children of "fallen and depraved relatives"; it was later called the Female Refuge Society. Over the years, she became a familiar figure in the Antiguan educational system, at one point teaching two to three hundred children daily in a schoolroom built by slave volunteers (p. 15).[19] One of her goals was to help slaves become productive salaried citizens. In her view, "Enlightenment is next to religion for the prevention of crime." Slavery allows the "indulgence of every diabolical disposition" (p. 109). Distinguishing between negative and worthwhile work, she opposes the "work of instituting slavery," but advocates work in general as a means to

keep the "devil" at bay. Always advocating conversion and literacy, she sought to right the wrongs perpetrated against black women by attacking forced concubinage and other abusive practices.

Alongside this spiritual-educational program, her political struggles continued; her busy domestic missionary schedule included battling against slavery at diverse levels. British abolitionists had already organized a campaign on behalf of Antiguan slaves, a fact that infuriated island legislators. This situation precipitated one of the major crises of Thwaites's life. Because she had disbursed funds to the needy, Elizabeth Hart Thwaites was called to testify before a committee of the House of Assembly. Unafraid of controversy and personal calumny, she refused to name "the estates, the proprietors, the slaves, the kind of relief, whether money, clothes, or food." In testifying before the investigating committee, that is, she intrepidly followed what she called her "path of duty" and refused to "name names" (p. 21).[20] In Britain she was the target of a notorious plantocrat, James Macqueen, editor of the *Glasgow Courier.* He referred to Thwaites as the "bosom crony" and "tool of anti-colonial faction and rancor" (p. 22). The attacks on her in the British press also included attacks on Mary Prince, whose memoirs had just been published. Macqueen, notoriously pro-slavery, cast serious aspersions on both Joseph Phillips and Elizabeth Thwaites in the famous *Blackwood's Magazine.* His attack shows that Elizabeth Thwaites's opposition to slavery scandalized those favoring slavery on both sides of the Atlantic:

> In his [Joseph Phillips's] capacity as second secretary to the deluding society entitled, "The Society for the Relief of Old Worn-out and Diseased Slaves," the Assembly of Antigua, in the name of the colony he had unjustly attacked and basely calumniated, thus speak of him in the Report of their Committee appointed to examine into his charges against the colony:—"Previously to dismissing his evidence, your committee cannot help remarking upon the character of this second secretary of the Society, which unfortunately ranks equally low with that of the former one, so much so, as scarcely to leave a worse in the whole community!!"
>
> Time, space, and circumstances, compel me to quit this miserable tool of anti-colonial faction and rancor, and his bosom crony, Mrs. Thwaites. . . .
>
> By tools like Mary Prince, and Joseph Phillips, Pringle, and the band of which Pringle is the tool and the organ, mislead and irritate this country, browbeat the Government, and trample upon, as they

> are permitted to trample upon, our most important transmarine possessions, the value and importance of which I am bound to shew to your Lordship and the public.[21]

In fact, Thwaites's vigorous anti-slavery perspective was no longer championed in Methodist circles, as it had been when Wesley was alive. Hence her interrogation in the House of Assembly amounted to punishment for suspected pro-emancipation talk and actions, however concealed. The economic situation in North America figured large in this policy shift against emancipation in Methodist circles, which further marginalized Thwaites and her views. In defiance of the fierce attack against her lifelong commitment to education and social justice, many Antigua residents paid warm respects to her political vision and courage after her death at Willoughby Bay, Antigua, in 1833, on the eve of the emancipation that she had championed for decades.

■

Chronology

1771	Born in St. Johns, Antigua, to Barry Conyers Hart and Anne Clarkley Hart, who married 1766. Introduced to Moravianism by an aunt, Grace Clarkley Cable, at a young age.
1780	Mother, Anne Clarkley Hart, dies.
1786	Converted to Methodism.
1794	Writes letter to a male friend attacking slavery.
1798	Her first classes instructing slaves and siblings begin, following her sister Anne's need to give up these responsibilities after her marriage.
1804	*History of Methodism.*
1805?	Marries Charles Thwaites, a white Antiguan educator; they move to English Harbour.
1809	Establishes, with her sister Anne, the first Sunday schools in the the Caribbean for boys and girls, without regard to class or race.
1809–1813	After she visits Montserrat to study the Lancastrian system of education, she and her husband introduce that innovative system in the English Harbour educational venues where they teach.

1813	By this year, the couple institute a plan to teach five hundred children from neighboring plantations to read. Slaves voluntarily build a schoolroom for the purpose; Thwaites names it Bethesda. She teaches two to three hundred children and adults daily.
1815	Co-founds, with her sister Anne, the Female Refugee Society.
1831?	Refuses to give testimony before a committee of the House of Assembly about disbursing funds to the needy in Antigua; refuses to name names.
1831	Attacked by James Macqueen in *Blackwood's* Magazine.
1833	Dies at Willoughby Bay, Antigua, on the eve of emancipation.

■ ■ ■

From *History of Methodism*

St Johns, May 5th 1804

The Reverend Richard Pattison
My Dear Sir,

I am induced by two considerations to a compliance with your request, one is, that I would be obedient, and the other, that in so doing in this case, I afford myself a fresh opportunity of making mention of that goodness and mercy which have followed me, the most unworthy, all my days.

Knowing the interest you take in the concerns of Immortal Souls, I would give you a more circumstantial detail of my spiritual course, and for your satisfaction, add some account of others with whom I am acquainted, but time will not at present admit, I hope to write you again on the subject.

I am as you know, a native of Antigua. My deceased Grandmother, who was converted to God by the ministry of the Rev. Francis Gilbert and who died in the Faith, with my Dear Mother (gone to Glory) were united to the Methodists and trained up the younger branches of the Family, myself among them, in the fear of God and the observance of religious duties. I was also blest with an affectionate Father who ever watched with the tenderest solicitude over the morals of his Children, as did others of our near Relations, who by their kind attention prevented our feeling the want of Mother's care after her death.

Having soon imbibed a great regard to the Duty of Prayer, and believing

in its efficacy, I never omitted the performance of it without feeling some compunction, and upon all occasions of danger or difficulty, I would either retire to prayer, or at the moment, lift up my heart to Heaven for assistance or direction, notwithstanding this, I was from my earliest days, subject to many painful temptations concerning the being of a God and of a future state, and would often be led into such labyrinths of inward reasonings on some parts of scripture and things that I could not comprehend as have made me wretched.

After my Mother's death, I principally attended the Preaching of the United Brethren at St Johns; the retirement of their situation, together with the simplicity of their manners and Preaching, greatly pleased me, and their Preachers used to dwell in such a pathetical manner on the sufferings and death of the Savior, has never failed to affect my heart. I thought they were happy, and in the midst of my Childish follies, often wish'd that I was of their communion. About this time, one night several severe Earthquakes were felt all over the Island. . . . [Fervid fears and praying; reassured by atonement given by Savior.]

Some time after this, Mr. Lambert, a Methodist Preacher came here from America; curiosity led me to go and hear him, his preaching was alarming and impressive, and always had the same effect upon my mind as Earthquakes, Thunder and lightning, rousing me to greater seriousness, to pray and read my Bible more, and it operated in like manner on some of my relations, yet did we not submit to the truth, but contrived after all, to hold fast our own Righteousness. Mr. Lambert returned to America, and I remained destitute of the power of Godliness, and for the most part, content with the form, Yea, a Lover of pleasure more than a lover of God. I continued my attendance at the Methodist Chapel, the Established Church of that of the Brethren, experiencing more or less of the strivings of the Spirit and the restraints of conscience, but none of all the preaching which I had heard produced any lasting or saving effects upon me, 'till the arrival of the Rev. Doctor Coke and the Missionaries which accompanied him. I heard the Doctor's first sermon with a sort of delight, yet, because it was Christmas, I went into the country for the purpose of amusement, and spent the evening in dancing. The next day, I was restless and very desirous to get back to Town, to attend the Preaching. I did so, and was made really ashamed of my conduct by the sermon which the Doctor Preached on my return, and in which he mentioned the evil consequences of Dancing in particular. I heard him eagerly and all his Brethren in turn, and my heart was now powerfully attracted to the truth. . . . [Temporarily resists the religious Society.] Every

Sermon which Mr. Warrener preached, that I heard, entered my heart, enlighten'd my darkness, and showed me the path of Life. I was at last stript of my fancied goodness, beat out of every false refuge, made willing to be saved on the terms of the Gospel and brought humbly to seek for Pardon and Salvation. In this state, I joined the Society, and some months after, one night, in private Prayer my Soul was set at liberty, my prayer was suddenly turned into Praise, and with the eye of Faith I viewed a smiling Savior. It is not possible for me to describe the transports of my Soul on that glad hour, and so much the more did I rejoice in this clear manifestation of his favor, because I had so often been told that I was not to expect it, nor any who had lived morally.

My beloved sister Anne Gilbert, joined the Methodists at the same time that I did. She was brought to God in the same way, and first found peace. This was a Providential circumstance for me. She was the only Person to whom I could communicate my Joys and Griefs. . . . [Acceptance, grace of Society, distracted by skeptics; conversion.] I now began to discover the Sinfulness of my nature and deeply to feel the plague of my own heart; though I think I had power over Sin for more than three years. The doctrine of Sanctification was not preached and enforced as I have since heard it, but happy would it have been for me had I gone on to perfection and obtain'd a complete victory, but alas! I loitered, and almost imperceptibly lost ground. Company, conversation and Books which did not tend to the Glory of God, together with Music's charms and Worldly attachments, bewitched, and in a measure stole my heart from God. . . . [Variously tempted, she thinks, away from God.]

While in a comfortless and discouraging situation, that chosen messenger of the Lord Mr. McDonald arrived here, his first Sermon came with indescribable power to my heart. I was, as it were broken to pieces and all my bones were out of Joint. My ingratitude stared me in the face and every instance of my unfaithfulness; the anguish of my spirit was very great, and I could have wept my Life away for having grieved his Love. A few nights after Mr. McD's arrival we had our Covenant meeting, and while all around me were repeating the solemn words after the Minister, the language of my desponding heart was:

My solemn engagements are in vain,
    My promises empty as air,
My vows I shall break them again
    And Plunge in eternal despair.

Mr. McDonald preached soon after. I really thought that someone had told him my case, or that he could discern spirits and this made me ashamed to look toward the Pulpit. The word Preached by this servant of God, to my diseased and helpless soul brought life and liberty. It seized on all my powers. I was again enabled to venture on the Sinners friend, my bands were burst; the Captive was Delivered, and I could once more say, "O Lord, I will praise Thee! tho' thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away and thou comfortedst me.". . . [Continues praising McDonald until his death; personal experience of goodness of preachers/salvation abstracted to congregation.]

Having to meet upwards of 160 in Class, affords me an opportunity of knowing several who have a hearing ear, and understanding heart, two of them are Whites who have a saving knowledge of the truth, the others are Black and Coloured from 13 to 60 years of Age. Some of the poor Africans can particularize such parts of a Sermon as they felt most, and one of them told me a few Sundays ago, after Preaching, "Massa open me poor sinner heart. He tell me every thing me do," with many of such expressions. I rejoice in the certainty that there are many real converts in St. Johns, both of young and Old. I am inclined to think, that one reason why so many of the poor Slaves upon the Estates, cause you trouble and discouragement is, that they are in general received into the Society, as Catechumens, and not convinced Sinners, and if a genuine work of Grace does not take place, they soon relapse into those Sins, which habit and custom have rendered as their meat and drink, particularly Quarreling and Unchastity.

You know, Sir, that very, very few are brought up with any sense of decency or regard to reputation, with respect to the forming of their connections they are obliged to be governed more by convenience than affection and being bound by no Laws human or divine, their engagements are easily broken. It is mostly the case that when Female Slaves are raised to wealth, and consequence (may I not say respectability) it is by entering into that way of Life, that cause women in another sphere to fall into disgrace and contempt, I mean concubinage. Of this you have many Instances. Truly labour and want are not the evils of Slavery (horrid system!) though these, as well as the Oppressor's Yoke, cause many still to groan.

In my late visits to Parham, I have been very glad to see the prospect brightens there, and that it wears a very different face to what it did a year ago.

May the good hand of Our God, who brought you and your Dear Partner among us, enable you with patience and perseverance to continue

your Labours of Love, among the Outcast of Men, and crown the same with abundant success, prays.

My Dear Sir,; your affectionate and respectful,
Sister and Servant Elizabeth Hart

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Hymns[22]

[Untitled]

Weary world, when will it end,
    Destined to be purging fire?
Fain I would to heaven ascend;
    Thitherward I still aspire.
Saviour, this is not my place:
Let me die, to see Thy face.

O cut short Thy work in me;
    Make a speedy end of sin;
Set my heart at liberty;
    Bring the heavenly nature in:
Seal me to redemption's day,
Bear my new-born soul away.

For this only thing I wait,
    This for which I here was born:
Raise me to my first estate,
    Bid me to Thine arms return.
Let me to Thine images rise:
Give me back my Paradise.
For Thine only love I pant:
    God of love, Thyself reveal.
Love, Thou know'st, is all I want:
    Now my only want fulfil.
Answer now Thy spirit's cry:
Let me love my God and die!

Thy nature I long to put on,
    Thine image on earth to regain.