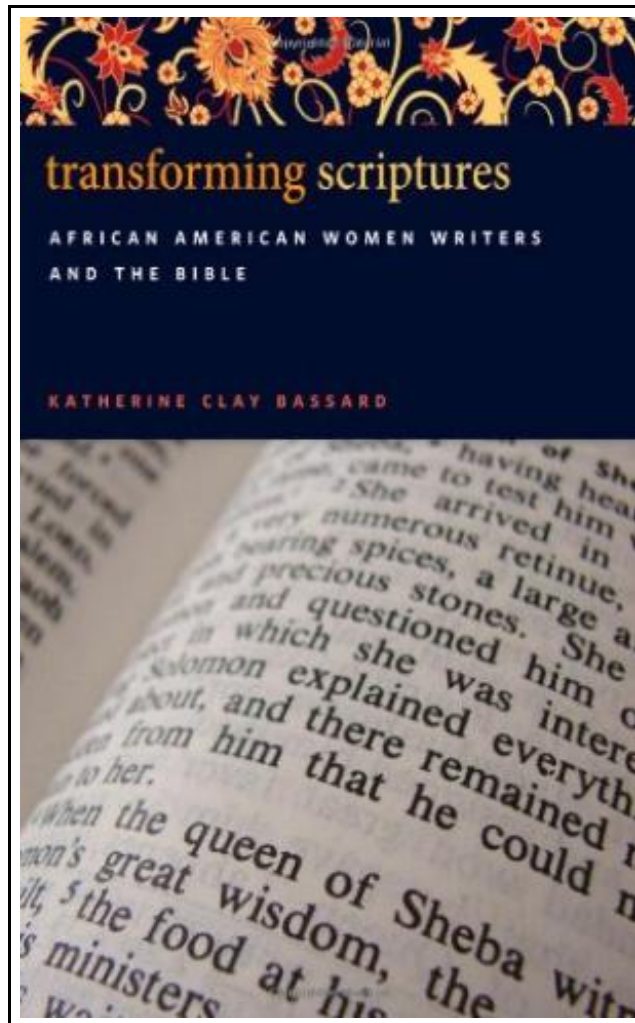# Transforming Scriptures: African American Women Writers and the Bible

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Reviews

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TRANSFORMING SCRIPTURES: AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN WRITERS AND THE BIBLE

University of Georgia Press. Hardback. Book Condition: new. BRAND NEW, Transforming Scriptures: African American Women Writers and the Bible, Katherine Clay Bassard, Black women writers reclaim the sacred text. "Transforming Scriptures" is the first sustained treatment of African American women writers' intellectual, even theological, engagements with the book "Northrup Frye" referred to as the 'great code' of Western civilization. Katherine Clay Bassard looks at poetry, novels, speeches, sermons, and prayers by Maria W. Stewart, Frances Harper, Hannah Crafts, Harriet E. Wilson, Harriet Jacobs, Zora Neale Hurston, Toni Morrison, and Sherley Anne Williams and discusses how such texts respond as a collective 'literary witness' to the use of the Bible for purposes of social domination. Black women's historic encounters with the Bible were, indeed, transformational; in the process of 'turning cursing into blessing' these women were both shaped and reshaped by the scriptures they appropriated for their own self-representation. Two important biblical figures emerge as key tropes around which women fashioned a counter narrative to the dominant culture's 'curse' on black female identity: the 'talking mule' from "Numbers 22" and the 'black but comely' Shulamite of "Song of Songs", the Queen of Sheba. "Transforming Scriptures" analyzes these tropes within a range of contexts, from biblical justifications of slavery and the second-class status of women to hermeneutical and post-structural critiques of the Bible. African American women's appropriations of scripture occur within a continuum of African American Bible-reading practices and religious or ideological commitments, argues Bassard. There is thus no single 'black women's hermeneutic'; rather, theories of African American women and the Bible must account for historical and social change and difference.

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