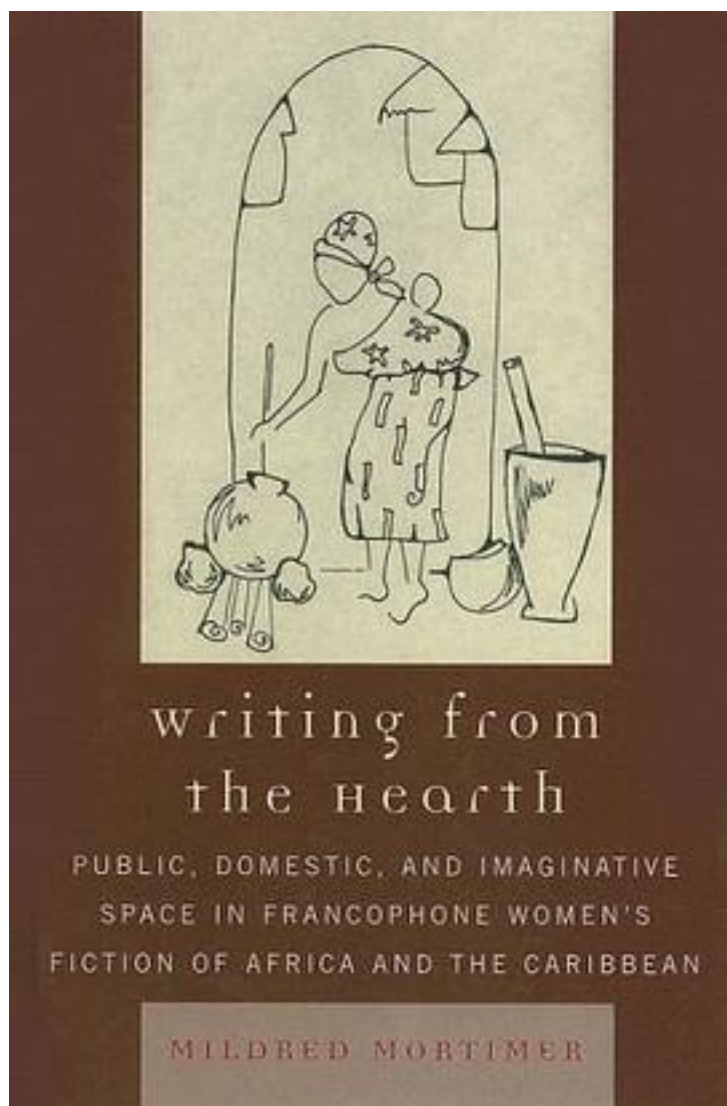


Writing from the Hearth



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If space is important in the realm of imagination and a key theme in feminist theory, cross-cultural studies of social maps reveal that men and women's spatial experiences differ; women rarely control physical or social space directly. Positing the thesis that women's writing of Francophone Africa and the Caribbean offers important perspectives on the relationship of gender to space, *Writing from the Hearth* proposes close readings of Francophone women writers of Africa (Aoua KZita, Mariama B%, Ken Bugul, Calixthe Beyala, and Aminata Sow Fall) and the Caribbean (Marie Chauvet, Simon Schwarz-Bart, Maryse CondZ, and Edwidge Danticat). As critical readings of postcolonial African and Caribbean literature show that tropes of confinement appear frequently in female-authored texts_where home is often depicted as a place of alienation_this critical study examines ambiguities associated with domestic space as enclosure as it explores the relationship between the female protagonist and the inner and outer spaces of her world: domestic, imaginative, and public space. *Writing from the Hearth* probes the hypothesis that the female protagonist can move toward empowerment by entering public space from which she has been excluded by indigenous patriarchs and European colonizers and by establishing a new relationship to domestic space or securing a liberating alternative space within it. Flexible and multipurpose, alternative space is a place of possibilities that can function as a refuge for meditation, recollection, or fantasy, an antechamber for action, and a site of resistance and performance. Here, by telling the tale, writing the creative work, a woman can affirm her sense of self.

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