



# **Burnin' Down the House: Home in African American Literature**

*Valerie Sweeney Prince*

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Home is a powerful metaphor guiding the literature of African Americans throughout the twentieth century. While scholars have given considerable attention to the Great Migration and the role of the northern city as well as to the place of the South in African American literature, few have given specific notice to the site of "home." And in the twenty years since Houston A. Baker Jr.'s *Blues, Ideology, and Afro-American Literature* appeared, no one has offered a substantial challenge to his reading of the blues matrix.

*Burnin' Down the House* creates new and sophisticated possibilities for a critical engagement with African American literature by presenting both a meaningful critique of the blues matrix and a careful examination of the place of home in five classic novels: *Native Son* by Richard Wright, *Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison, *The Bluest Eye* and *Song of Solomon* by Toni Morrison, and *Corregidora* by Gayl Jones.

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