

“I’ll Tell”—The Function and Meaning of L in Toni Morrison’s *Love*^{*}

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Abstract

Composed of five sections, this paper attempts to investigate the identity and singularity of L in Toni Morrison’s latest work *Love* and addresses the various roles she plays in this complex narrative. Besides appropriating some of Wayne C. Booth’s ideas about narration, my investigation will also draw on Morrison’s new “Foreword” to *Love*, Morrison’s critical work “Rootedness: The Ancestor as Foundation,” as well as on Faulkner’s discussion of his own narrative strategy in *Absalom, Absalom!*, which shares some of the narrative techniques used in *Love*. I argue that as a character L is an

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object of Bill Cosey's affection, and that as she is the narrative conduit, understanding L is key to understanding the novel because she is a vital component of its plot development, narrative structure, and perspective. As a character, L plays several vital roles in the Cosey family; similarly, as an insider-narrator, L provides the missing link to information unavailable to other characters. Moreover, she also takes on the function of the chorus in a Greek tragedy. Finally, in giving voice to "Love" as the "I" narrator-cum-character, Morrison has constructed a distinctively African American form of narration, which in turn links the content back to the narrative.

Key Words: Toni Morrison, *Love*, L, chorus, ancestor