

“Love Rages”: Emotion, Agency, and the Superpositioning of Narrative in *Tours of the Black
Clock*

by

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History, like all narratives, has a variety of possible outcomes. While feasible, their prediction is unlikely; we know too few of the variables and understand too little of how circumstances interact. What at first seems insignificant can cause catastrophe; human action is fundamentally erratic with potentially far-reaching and unforeseeable consequences. To process and assuage this profound uncertainty, we treat history as a story, and a postmodern view of history illuminates this instinct to narrativize events. Historicism claims that these narratives are essentially perspectives, based in their spatiotemporal context and lacking in objective truth. Still, at some point, we assume a particular narrative ends; World War II was devastating, Western history textbooks say, but finite. While the war's effects reverberate forward in time, we latently accept that the narrative of the war, proper, is contained within temporal parameters: 1939 to 1945. That is, once Japan officially surrendered in September 1945, the war ended. Steve Erickson, in his 1989 novel *Tours of the Black Clock*, shatters this assumption.

Erickson does not do so literally; he makes no claims that history recorded incorrect dates. Rather, he creates a Twentieth Century in which constructed and lived narratives bleed into one another, with neither narrative kind taking precedence. The creative constructs of idealization, fantasy, and fiction are as "real" as lived reality for Erickson's characters; *Tours'* overall story is intricately – though not totally inextricably – woven between the two. The majority of the novel centers on Banning Jainlight, the Third Reich's private pornographer, and his fixation on Dania, an adolescent girl he sees in a Vienna window in 1937. This sighting inspires a character in Jainlight's erotic fiction with whom Client Z (Hitler) becomes madly obsessed, to the point of suspending Operation Barbarossa and therefore never losing World War II; the war persists, won in Europe and in a stalemate with the United States, for decades. Jainlight seeing Dania, then, effectively splits the course of history – but the book does not

merely amount to the historical fiction of an alternate timeline. References to Einstein and special relativity pepper the novel, hinting that the ambiguity of both human morality and modern physics holds narrative relevance.

In this paper, I explore the complex relationship between lived and constructed narrative in Erickson's novel. I define lived narrative as external and verifiable by other sources, while constructed narrative is internal and particular to the constructor. I propose that these two narratives occur in spite of one another, and that the link between them occurs in moments of profound emotional agency. To do so, I diverge from the postmodernist framework through which Erickson's work is typically viewed. I instead propose that the novel, with its multiple references to twentieth-century physics, lends itself to a blend of scientific and literary criticism. Particularly, I suggest that an application of quantum theory, specifically the concepts of superposition, the observer effect, and wavefunction collapse, can effectively highlight the complexities of the narrative(s). First, I outline the present research on Steve Erickson, identifying the common (sociopolitical and postmodern) threads, as well as gaps in the scholarship. I follow this with a brief explanation of the pertinent physics concepts employed as a theoretical framework. Second, I parse the formal organization of the novel, examining how the lived and constructed narratives therein structurally operate. I then more thoroughly define the terms of "lived" and "constructed" narrative using relevant examples from *Tours*. Third, I explore the concepts of superpositioning and observing (in a quantum sense) within the novel, with particular attention to the act of naming and the recurrence of windows within the narrative. Here I focus mainly on Jainlight's constructed narrative, demonstrating its relationship to superpositioning and measurement. Fourth, however, I suggest that *Tours* is not Jainlight's story at all – that rather all narratives lead to Dania's act of emotional agency. In an act of love, in the

face of hate, Dania gives birth to Marc rather than a monstrous vehicle for Jainlight's revenge. In this, she collapses the superpositioned narratives and takes back her story, refuting imposed structure, almost paradoxically, as Jainlight does in his superpositioned narrative. The key to this, I argue, is the strength of her emotion – a theme essential to, though critically underexplored in, Erickson's work. Finally, I propose that this application of quantum concepts highlights the role of emotional agency within Erickson's narrative, ultimately suggesting that in the context of the novel, emotion defines the course of history.

It's Not *All* About America: A Review of Erickson Scholarship

Almost every critical piece treating Erickson's work begins with a complaint about how little criticism exists. It is worth mentioning again, not necessarily because it appears to consistently surprise those who write on him, but because for an author as socially conscious and conceptually complex as Erickson, interpretive criticism is essential. After all, "any formal analysis of his work," Lee Spinks writes, must "consider the intersection of a number of different narrative planes and surfaces" (226). Erickson writes intricately layered labyrinths, or rather, mazes – novels that manipulate space, time, and our assumptions of history and selfhood, and that have multiple points of entry and exit. They are difficult and underrepresented in literary scholarship, critics and reviewers note, but nonetheless receive critical acclaim. What criticism exists focuses largely on the sociopolitical implications of Erickson's larger oeuvre, with a particular emphasis on his novel *Arc D'X*. At present, there is no published work that exclusively considers *Tours of the Black Clock*; any critical commentary on the novel is peppered through more general exploration of Erickson's body of work. Paul Kincaid, Lee Spinks, Jim Murphy, and other critics somewhat one-sidedly put forth said oeuvre as an "often paradoxical treatment

of American national identity” (Duffy 42). The essential Ericksonian question, according to most of his critics, is political: given its complicated history, what defines America? While I agree that the question of American identity is central to Erickson’s work, not enough has been said about the question of *paradox* – crucial, I believe, to Ericksonian narrative and character construction, and to unpacking the non-political themes within his books.

Paradox fits neatly into a postmodernist framework, and though Erickson’s literary genre is notoriously difficult to pin down, most critics do frame his work through postmodernism. Brett Paice, for example, examines Erickson through a postmodern gothic lens; Amy Elias, when treating postmodern novels that consider the Enlightenment, focuses particularly on *Arc D’X* and its “jarring” treatment of Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings. Elias argues that these postmodern-Enlightenment novels are “centered on an occurrence that...exceeds the parameters of Western logic and reason that [act as] cognitive boundaries for apprehending the real” (546). That is, the central event(s) in the book paradoxically “jar” with the historical context. This kind of paradox occurs in many of Erickson’s other works, including *Tours*. The historical Hitler’s narrative is profoundly altered by Jainlight’s erotic fiction, itself inspired by the century-splitting event of Jainlight seeing Dania. Yet the two centuries then coexist, indeed “exceed[ing] the parameters of Western logic and reason” in their interplay. However, none of the brief readings of *Tours* have thus far explored the relationship between these centuries in any detail, particularly not as they relate to concepts of narrative-making; this, given the value Erickson places on the stories of history, is a marked oversight I will here address.

Regarding another Erickson novel, however, Mikage Kuroki notes that *Amnesiascope* contains no “modernist desire to control time and manage information” and thus absents “a grand narrative to give meaning” to this information, instead favouring “a multiplicity that is often

contradictory” (120). Multiplicity permeates Erickson’s work at large, with directly impossible events occurring without narrative concern for their feasibility. This rejection of a logical larger narrative suggests a more fluid understanding of story (particularly, as I will show, as relates to interior life). Erickson is aware of, and to some extent preoccupied with, the inherent ambiguities and contradictions that occur in the Twentieth Century (Kincaid, “Secret Maps” 46); his work allows for the simultaneous expression of these contradictions in a manner befitting the unstructured reality of life.¹ The postmodernist bent to Erickson’s work is, at its core, a question of “unresolved tensions” in character, form, and content (Hutcheon 100) – questions we are easily capable of entertaining in our daily life, but from which we often demand answers in our fiction, specifically in the reason and logic of the story. Erickson’s seemingly illogical fiction, however, works to expand and play within these tensions. Moreover, according to Kincaid, it aims to see the “interconnections” of theme, character, and story rather than “where these interconnections lead” (“Secret Maps” 30). The intent is not to resolve, but to explore.

Spinks, however, suggests that it isn’t that Erickson provides *no* resolution, and that there is in fact a “clear pathway indicated into the dense and enigmatic corpus” (215). He, like most, argues that this pathway can be found via sociohistorical readings which attend to postmodernist features. Indeed, all commentary thus far published on *Tours* exists in this critical vein and can be effectively summarized by Robert J. Hansen: “*Tours* revises the coordinates of known history in order to open the space for ambitious architectural projects like the “redemption” of the national historical imagination” (23). While unquestionably a valid approach to reading Erickson, mazes have more than one pathway. In this paper, I assert that there is more to *Tours* (and indeed Erickson’s oeuvre at large) than a “recognition of the failure” of historical

¹ This, I will argue, is most obvious in his treatment and frequent equivalency of lived vs constructed narrative.

nationalism (Hansen 155). Indeed, Erickson's narrative structures themselves are simultaneously and paradoxically fractured and whole, and so any structure is necessarily multifaceted; his rewriting of history indicates as much. Erickson himself proclaims that he sees "politics as a manifestation of psychology and sexuality" (McCaffery 405), but critical focus tends to the 'politics' side. That is, sociohistorically-focused political readings of Erickson's novels that do not treat the emotional side of things are missing half the equation. For the most part, readings treating both sides do not exist.

That said, psychology particularly is never outright ignored; questions of identity and emotion are broached throughout the criticism. Indeed, Kincaid, in the first academic comment on Erickson's work, writes that he "uses emotions as a pivot about which to shift viewpoints," in the same sentence suggesting that in Erickson's shifting realities, "emotions are only real if they are shared" (31). McCaffery writes that Erickson writes with an "emphasis on passion and psychology at the expense of rationality and science" (396). Jim Murphy writes that the "Ericksonian" has mainly to do with "love and freedom" (474). But the key word regarding these comments on emotional value is that they are *broached*: none of this scholarship elaborates on this intense value Erickson supposedly places on internal states. If emotion, for Erickson, is a "pivot," an "emphasis," and the cornerstone of the "Ericksonian," there need be more than a sentence or two of critical exploration thereof.

Presently, Rebecca Litchfield offers the only sustained comment on how emotion functions within Erickson's novels. Her dissertation essentially suggests that emotion acts as a catalyst for his characters and narratives, often resulting in a "loss of control [and] shifts in (or unreliable) memory, and the action or movement towards things" (226). Emotion sets the plot to its various action, and is thus requisite to the operation of Erickson's "psychotopography."

Litchfield, however, does not explore the implications of this action, and there is no explanation of how or why it occurs. This is not to say Litchfield's treatment of emotion is flawed; emotion in Erickson, I agree, is catalytic and kinetic. However, given the broad strokes of her argument, it is a first (albeit necessary) step. What are the implications of Erickson treating emotion as a catalyst? How do these catalytic instances function within each novel, and where do they lead? Aside from advancing the plot, what narrative and thematic purpose do they serve? Does a comment exist regarding the relationship between emotion and narrative? No critical answers to these questions yet exist (and moreover, Litchfield's explication of emotion does not refer in any detail to *Tours*, a book defined by a moment of love). In treating them, my work here will – among other things – attempt to fill some of these gaps in the scholarship.

So, essential as the concept of history would be to most explications of *Tours*, the spatiotemporally-rooted nature of sociopolitical criticism can distract from these questions of emotion (and, thus far, has). The maze of Erickson's fiction allows for multiple entrance points, however, and an untrodden one begins with twentieth century theoretical physics. His novels are rife with references to physics, including the title of *Tours of the Black Clock*. The "black clock" harks back to Einstein's theory of special relativity, which posits that the viewpoint of an observer defines what measurements can be made. Or, in Erickson's words, Einstein "has written away with his new wild poetry every Absolute...[and] the black clock of the century is stripped of hands and numbers" (168). While other Erickson novels also treat mathematics and physics, only one critic has so far used physics to explicate Erickson. In his reading of *Arc D'X*, Jim Murphy considers chaos theory to make sense of the novel's structure; he writes that Erickson "relocates the tensions of *Arc D'X* to...a universe that operates according to its own system of rules" which do not include Newtonian physics (464). The universe of *Tours* has different

particulars than that of *Arc D'X*, but both eschew classical physics in their conceptualization of space and time. *Tours'* split timelines which bleed into one another are classically impossible, yet an application of post-Newtonian physics can, to some extent, decipher their narrative complexity.

Quantum physics, while not explicitly referenced in *Tours*, is the most apposite science for this task. Special relativity informs *Tours*, but the paradoxes and supposed impossibilities of quantum theory mirror its narrative structure, providing a unique map for any interpretive journey. A quantum lens can clarify not only the permeable, interlocking narratives of the novel, but their reliance on moments of personal agency and emotional magnitude. While physics and emotion are uncommon bedfellows, there is matching resonance in the paradoxes both express, such as the impossibility of measuring two states at once and the possibility of loving and hating the same person. Erickson plays at the boundaries of paradox, pulling worlds together and timelines apart. It's tricky and particular work, but not merely for the glory of form or style; in the end, "much more is at stake in Erickson's fiction than...technical or formal virtuosity" (Spinks 228). At stake, particularly in *Tours*, is the definition of emotional process, agency over one's own narrative, and the influence of both on history. Connecting the three, via quantum theory, lights this particular path into *Tours'* maze.

Quantum Theory: Almost Weird Enough to Explain Erickson

By examining the behaviour of subatomic matter and energy, quantum theory accounts for and predicts bizarre occurrences which classical physics cannot explain. Famously, quantum physics proves that depending on the experiment, a scientist may end up working with and measuring either a wave *or* a particle (Heisenberg 9); that the 'event' can be conceptualized as

‘both at once’. The key here is “depending on the experiment”: the conditions and instruments of the experiment fundamentally affect how subatomic objects behave.² Concepts proposed by quantum theory tend to be notably counterintuitive, and while mathematically consistent, the proofs thereof can be articulated in various ways. Stephen Hawking reminds us that because quantum physics is proved mathematically, or non-visually, we work intuitively to create ‘models’ of these proofs. He calls this “model-dependent realism,” based on the idea that “our brains interpret the input from our sensory organs by making a model of the world” (Hawking 16). However, these models can manifest differently from interpretation to interpretation, and “if two such physical theories or models accurately predict the same events, one cannot be said to be more real than the other” (*ibid*). That is, identical math can produce fundamentally differing but equally valid theoretical models.

These models, which conceptualize the mathematics, are what literary critics draw upon when engaging in quantum literary criticism. Jennifer Burwell notes that quantum literary criticism emerged in the 1980s, influenced particularly by poststructuralism and interdisciplinary studies. However, because literary critics rarely have mathematical training, models are essential for their interpretations. To successfully engage in quantum criticism, Burwell writes, one must “be scrupulous in describing the concept” and “then apply it to the text in a precise and delimited manner” (166), which I hope to do here. I argue that the narrative structuring in *Tours* can be illuminated by the interplay of two quantum concepts: superposition and the observer effect

² “Object,” however, along with “thing” or “entity”, is technically a misnomer. Quantum physics is about *events* rather than *objects*; we cannot describe or delineate entities because in practice, there are none. There are instead *moments of measuring behaviour*, such as a photon behaving as a wave or a particle. Insofar as objects can exist, they do so “only as a tendency toward the knowledge of being” (Burwell 36), or as instances of measured potential. Indeed, the discipline revolves around measurement: how we observe and experiment affects the results, and more crucially, the resulting behaviour.

(particularly wavefunction collapse). Before examining their relationship to *Tours*, I will attempt to clearly describe both concepts.

Superposition, put simply, is the capacity of a system to be in two or more possible states (positions, in a broad sense) at once. Effectively, the “two distinct possibilities we would have in classical mechanics” are “superpositioned” into both at once – or, as physicist Sean Carroll writes, “it’s not even that they are both true at once; it’s that there is no true place where the [system] is” (232). That is, until we observe (or, more specifically, measure) the system, all possible states can exist and all possible paths can be taken. Indeed, in quantum mathematics, the probabilities necessary for predicting physical behaviour can only be worked out “if we insist that the atom is in this superposition of states” (Al-Khalili 193). This counters our intuitive understanding of lived experience; in the macroscopic world, in our day to day, we do not experience more than one state simultaneously. Rather, superposition exists on a subatomic level; the famous Schrödinger’s cat, who is both alive and dead in a box with radioactive materials, is not an example of superposition but a criticism of the concept’s manipulation. A better example might be quantum physicist Jim Al-Khalili’s description of how a single electron moves when “forced” to take one of two distinct paths. Eschewing our common sense, the electron goes down both paths at once. Essentially, “when we aren’t looking, [quantum events] can do two or more things at once” (189). Those “things” include taking paths of movement, particular positions, and general states of being; superposition allows for all possibilities without paradox.

Superposition works in conjunction with what is called a “wavefunction.” Carroll describes a wavefunction as the collection of numbers which tell us the probability of a certain state occurring. In quantum theory, when measuring for position, “there is a small but non-zero

chance that a particle on one side of a seemingly impenetrable barrier is actually located on the other side” (Levin 66). On a quantum scale, we cannot definitively *know* where anything actually is or will go. So, for calculating probabilities, “to every possible outcome of an observation,” Carroll writes, “the wave function assigns a number, which we call the amplitude” (233). Mathematics aside, this essentially means that a wavefunction represents a particular state’s probability (or potential) of occurring. On the macro level, of course, we don’t see all of these possibilities in practice: the cat is alive *or* dead, says Schrodinger, not both at once. Even on a subatomic level, there is ultimately what’s called a “wavefunction collapse” – a moment at which all possible states “collapse” into one specific potentiality; one specific wavefunction.

The observer effect, or the act of observing/measuring the quantum system, collapses the wavefunction. As Werner Heisenberg puts it, “the transition from the ‘possible’ to the ‘actual’ takes place during the act of observation” (28). Consider the fact that light, as aforementioned, can act as both a wave and a particle. Very simply, wave and particle are superpositioned possibilities of how “light” might physically behave. A light-measuring experiment would *collapse* these possibilities, and based on the measuring instrument and parameters, one or the other state would then be steadily measured. Importantly, it isn’t the subjective mind of the observer that enacts this effect; consciousness does not influence physical reality. Rather, “the discontinuous change in the probability function takes place with the act of registration” (Heisenberg 29) – and that registration requires an instrument. Use of the measuring instrument pulls one particular outcome into what is called an “eigenstate,” wherein “you can keep making the same kind of observation, and you’ll keep getting the same answer” (Carroll 239). That is, once all the probabilities have collapsed into a single eigenstate, we can observe the event with consistent results. The act of measurement causes that initial collapse. Without instrumental

interference external to the system in question, said system persists in a state of superposition: possible, potential, probable, but never actualized. The instrument of observation is essential to the observation itself, and it is through its use that the system shifts into an eigenstate. Moreover, Al-Khalili writes that “a measurement is deemed to have taken place when an “event” or “phenomenon” is recorded, in the sense that a trace of the event has been left that we could perceive, if we wished to do so, at a later time” (196). Measuring effects event, and that event endures.

Superposition and wavefunction collapse help to articulate the systems at play within our subatomic world. Regardless of how counterintuitive these concepts appear, experiments and math show the same results again and again. Wavefunction collapse is real; light can present as a wave or a particle. Superposition is all that explains the multiple paths a single electron can take. It confounds common sense, but the function of quantum systems forms – and formulates – reality. Similarly, applying these concepts illuminates the interconnecting paths and systems of *Tours of the Black Clock*. Jainlight’s narrative makes the most sense if it is superpositioned, and Dania’s agency-claiming moment is one of wavefunction collapse. Using these quantum concepts as a lens for a close reading of *Tours* allows for a unique perspective on the book’s relationship between emotion, agency, and narrative. However, an unpacking of *Tours*’ narrative functioning is first essential.

Black Paths Lit Up: The Functioning of Lived vs Constructed Narrative in Tours

Tours kicks off with a heavily “elliptical” excerpt from William L. Shirer’s *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*. The passage details Hitler’s relationship with his niece Geli Raubal, who

he claims to have reverently and passionately loved. Brett Paice comments that the function of this epigraph

tacitly suggest[s], first, that Raubal's death might not have been a suicide, rather, linked to her refusal to stay with Hitler, and, second, that Hitler's state of mind was forever distorted by her suicide... By commencing his text in this way, Erickson introduces the subject of the novel: the precarious and arbitrary nature of events that could alter the course of history in fundamental ways. (Paice 201)

Certainly, this subject is thematically essential to *Tours*, a novel that effectively rips open the Twentieth Century as the result of a chance window sighting. However, there's more at play in this epigraph than the highlighting of "precarious and arbitrary" events. The doctored passage focuses explicitly on the intensity of Hitler's emotions – both 'positive' and 'negative' – for Geli. The sentences Erickson selects paint Hitler as deeply passionate, with his love of Geli "stand[ing] out as one of the mysteries of his strange life" (Erickson 10). If we base our understanding of Hitler's love for Geli, and how it affected his politics, on Erickson's selection, that feeling is not arbitrary, not precarious: rather, it defined him. The passage does not set up the theme of random happenstance, but that of profound effect caused by emotional intensity. Both themes are essential to unpacking Erickson's text, but the impact of emotion on the narrative arises immediately and cannot be overlooked.

So, with intense, passionate, and potentially devastating emotion in mind, Erickson begins his own narrative, which in typical Ericksonian style consists of a few threads. First, there is the story of Marc, a young man who ferries tourists across a river to and from Davenhall Island, where his mother Dania lives in the island's sole hotel. Second is the posthumous first-person narrative of Banning Jainlight, which blends Jainlight's quotidian life with elements and

characters from his erotic fiction. The self-professed central event in Jainlight's life is seeing Dania in a Vienna apartment window; this shifts the course of the twentieth century by inspiring a character in his erotica fashioned in her image. His clients, powerhouses of the Third Reich, eventually request changes to this nameless character so as to reconstruct her in the image of Geli Raubal. We follow Jainlight from his 1917 birth in Pennsylvania to New York City, to Austria, to Italy, and back to the U.S., as an alternate version of World War II rages interminably. The third narrative is, finally, Dania's. Her story, too, spans continents: from Africa to Europe to North America, she dances "in relationship to the moment" (Erickson 194) – strangely, unprofessionally, but utterly compellingly – and men watch. Her version of the Twentieth Century is ours; that is, she lives through the World War II recorded in history textbooks.

At play, then, are two separate Twentieth Centuries: Jainlight's and Dania's. Dania's is 'real,' coincident with the recorded experience; Jainlight's is (more obviously) fictional, split off as a direct result of Hitler's reaction to Jainlight's own erotic fiction. The two centuries are narratively incompatible – events, centering particularly on the happenings of WWII, contradict one another – but elements of Jainlight and Dania's narratives still, somehow, overlap. This has not yet been parsed in the criticism, or at least not separate from comments about the sociohistorical narrative effect of two differing centuries. The alternate history, according to Paice, "allegorizes the similarities that [Erickson] perceives between the Nazis and US conservatism in the 1980s" and emphasizes individual culpability *vis à vis* Jainlight's influence on Hitler (206). This may be; certainly Jainlight's personal guilt plays a massive narrative role. Yet while the differences between centuries are ultimately sociohistorical, the moments of *overlap* occur particularly within the ("imaginary") sexual relationship between Dania and

Jainlight. Dania loses her physical virginity to Jainlight's imaginings (Erickson 208), and Jainlight's powerful fictional hand can somehow reach across the divide to verbally impregnate her. Marc, the fruit of this century-crossing, is real; he interacts with countless people within the confines of the 'real' Twentieth Century. The split itself, moreover, stems from Jainlight seeing Dania for the first time and experiencing profound emotion:

I happen to look up and, in a window above the street, watching me, I see you.

You remember me. This is, after all the moment that razors the Twentieth Century down its middle, this simple afternoon you're leaning out your window...And when you look up and raise your eyes across the street, and mine meet them, we follow each other's look as I make my way past the shard of history; and you say you don't remember. I don't believe you. Fifty years later I don't believe you.

Seeing you haunts and binds me...Something drunker than blood courses through me. (Erickson 122-23)

Jainlight, and his Twentieth Century, is never the same. History splits at a moment of supposedly interpersonal intensity. Whether the moment is actually interpersonal – that is, whether Dania reciprocates – is another story.

The thing about this sighting, initially, is that Jainlight is *adamant* that Dania saw him. He refuses her saying she “doesn't remember” the window-sighting when describing their subsequent interaction in the Davenhall Island hotel. For Jainlight, it seems impossible that Dania could forget something that so profoundly affected the course of both his life and his version of history. He recognizes, though, the possibility: “maybe,” he says, posthumously, to Dania in the hotel, “you forgot me immediately after I left your sight as surely as I continued to remember you for the rest of my life” (42). Yet this contradicts his later reminiscing; when

actually revisiting the event in his narrative, that forgetting is unfathomable. At his core, Jainlight believes the sighting must have had some value to Dania as well as to himself; that it was an exchange rather than a vampiring. Yet when the perspective shifts to Dania, she remembers only a “riot in the street outside her window” and the stone that almost – in her own timeline – hit her; there is no mention of seeing a man outside (199). Abruptly, she then becomes aware of a huge, unrecognizable presence in the room, which turns out to be Jainlight on his first erotic excursion to her. The timelines sync; Jainlight imagining/writing his first sexual encounter with Dania occurs concurrently with Dania losing her virginity after the street riot.

To Dania, however, Jainlight is unrecognizable. Even if she did see him, she does not remember him enough to make the connection when he appears in her bedroom that night. The subjectivity of the two perspectives on this narrative lynchpin prevents any concrete or objective knowledge of what took place that day in 1937. Moreover, the bleedthrough between the two Centuries, which will be explored in more detail shortly, seems to suggest there may be no objective space at all. Dania’s historically lived reality and Jainlight’s fantastically constructed one form an uneasy tryst at the moment he sees her in the window. For the rest of the narrative, subjectivity – in the subjectivist sense – is critical. Regardless of lived narrative’s external verifiability, *truth* cannot be defined externally or objectively; Jainlight’s story is as “real” to him (and the reader) as Dania’s is to her. Questions of who is looking – or “telling” the story – and who receives resulting power imbue the novel. Moreover emotion, in both narrative kind, is paramount to the supposed ‘reality’ thereof; for Jainlight it splits the stories and for Dania it pulls them together. All this, however, stems from a single fact: lived and constructed narrative at first share the same space.

So: what, then, is the difference between constructed and lived narrative? I previously defined the two as essentially dichotomous – internally experienced vs externally verifiable, respectively. Furthermore, in *Tours*, constructed narrative also clearly and evidently differs from recorded objective experience. In that sense, Jainlight’s alternate Century appears as constructed narrative, at least metafictionally – but by that logic, so is Dania’s, and so is any work of fiction. There is more than dichotomy occurring here, particularly when considering that the world of the novel blends and bleeds together. Indeed, part of Erickson’s point is that constructed narrative is notoriously difficult to identify, even when comparing clear fiction to clear reality. In *Tours*, those distinctions are not at all clear. What fundamental difference exists between Jainlight’s erotic fictions and his supposedly-real interactions with his clients? For Jainlight, virtually none. His fictional girls “Amanda” and “Molly” are as real to him as Client X and Peter, to say nothing of the extended, imagined relationship with Dania he places on equal footing with that of Megan, his wife (251). Jainlight constructs and lives narrative simultaneously: fiction, to him, is as real as lived experience. This likely permits the (psycho-)creation of his own Twentieth Century in the first place; objective reality has no bearing on him. Yet Dania’s story, while obviously fictional as far as the reader is concerned, contrasts Jainlight’s in its apparent objectivity. That is, Dania has no world other than the one in which she lives. While fantastical things occur in her lived reality (such as her immaculate post-menopausal conception), her narrative is structured with singular intent; there is no fictional narrative bubbling at the corners of her awareness. Moreover, Dania more or less follows the course of the recorded Twentieth Century. What other people project onto her, of course, is another story – but Dania lives her narrative, she does not fabricate it.

In this sense, then, I define “lived narrative” as a story that is externally verifiable, and “constructed narrative” as an internal creation. Importantly, however, neither is less ‘real’ than the other. Essential, too, is that these narratives occur *in spite of* one another. An internal, constructed narrative occurs despite the supposed veracity of lived experience, and lived narrative occurs despite another person’s subjective, projected constructed narrative. The latter tension is essential to understanding Dania’s act of love. No matter the number of Jainlight’s stories or their eerie manifestation into physical reality, Dania’s lived narrative ultimately rejects, and occurs despite, this internal construction. As aforementioned, though, constructed narrative need not be considered less real than lived narrative. While this is particularly true in *Tours*, it extends to the world of the reader; we interpret, imagine, and construct our own fantasies that can be as real, at times, as our physical and supposedly objective world. Jainlight’s character construction may appear completely nonsensical; he may come off either magical or insane; but in effect, he engages in the same constructive processes as we do with a daydream. Jainlight merely pulls these dreams to reality.

In *Tours*, Dania acts as our exemplar of lived narrative: she holds to the Twentieth Century with which the reader is familiar, but more importantly, she maintains a singular storyline *regardless* of how many men attempt to insert themselves therein. This comes to a head with Marc’s birth, which I will discuss in more detail shortly. For now, what matters is the active flouting Dania employs in the face of all subjective perspectives: Jainlight’s writing away of her virginity; Client Z’s renaming and recolouring of her eyes; the countless men who watch her dance for “the resurrection of...certain possibilities precluded forever” (227). Throughout the narrative, these men aim to write Dania’s story on their terms, but she ultimately eschews their constructed narratives in an act of defiant love. The interplay of all the *Tours* narratives, then, is

tied up inextricably with Ericksonian emotion. In fact, within the structure of the novel, emotion seems essential to the functioning, proper, of reality itself.

Constructing Reality: Superpositioning, Measurement, and Jainlight's Narrative

“Damn the consequences of my acts, it’s the consequences of my words I love and loathe.”
- Banning Jainlight, *Tours* (79)

To get into the effect of emotion on Ericksonian reality requires unpacking the psychoswirling world of Jainlight’s constructed narrative(s). We cannot, after all, understand the value of Dania’s act without understanding what she has rejected. The following section will examine Jainlight’s constructed narrative in detail, with particular attention to moments that suggest some kind of measurement or “forcing” into reality. Generally speaking, Jainlight’s Twentieth Century consists of multiple possibilities working in tandem to create an overarching subjective vision. This vision sometimes, somehow, extends to and envelops those around him, most frequently as a result of his erotica. Specifically, Jainlight’s stories transfix those of particular persuasions, chief among them Clients “X” and “Z” – iterations of Joseph Goebbels and Adolf Hitler, respectively. The deep-rooted interest of X pulls Jainlight from his small-fry gangster life in New York City to Vienna, the seat of the Third Reich. Once there, and once the window-sighting inspires a character in which Z sees Geli, Jainlight’s constructed narrative increasingly entwines with Z’s. Z appears in a corner of the bedroom with Jainlight while he and Dania are together (read: while Jainlight is writing). It’s possible, and indeed hinted that, as a result of this apparition Jainlight might be mad, particularly when Holtz outright questions his sanity (173). Unreliable narrator or not, his story needs untangling, and we can do so with the help of quantum theory.

Put simply, Jainlight's entire narrative is superpositioned. By virtue of his blend of reality and construction, Jainlight has multiple paths split in multiple directions at once. As Mikage Kuroki puts it, Jainlight's "moments collide but at the same time collaborate" (135); impossible in their coincidence, they nonetheless work together to fill in the story. In the application of this paradox, Jainlight takes what was concrete in history, in an accepted lived narrative, and ignores it in favour of his own constructions. Importantly, he does not destroy it; the historical Twentieth Century continues in tandem with the constructed one. Structurally speaking, the two Centuries work concurrently and inseparably to tell *Tours*' overall story. However, particularly through his fiction and fantasy, Jainlight offers a somehow physical alternative to lived history. That is not only true in his constructed Century; Jainlight can even manipulate the physical reality of the historical Century via his "secret mission[s]" inside Dania's womb (Erickson 262). The failure of his particular intent aside, Dania is not impregnated by someone in her own timeline. In an act of pure construction and from across unfathomable space, Jainlight *writes* her pregnancy into being. Like the single electron going down multiple paths simultaneously, Jainlight experiences (and influences) both timelines as befits his personal creative, constructive interest.

While seeing Dania in the window actually splits the Twentieth Century, signs of a superpositioned narrative follow Jainlight from the start. As Jainlight introduces himself, he mentions having two mothers (42), which is not exceptionally unordinary, but this reference to his secret adoption by his father's wife instantly sets up his tendency towards split paths. It's followed by a description of the chaos of both the early 20th century and the theory of special relativity, which Jainlight purports to have somehow 'seen' firsthand before being born. "They've come to disassemble and then reconstruct," Jainlight says about those who, like Einstein, fundamentally shaped the Twentieth Century, "from some blind spot in the middle of

the room that's always obstructed by something no matter where you stand, the clock" (43).

While not an example of superposition, it is a reminder that in a post-Einsteinian world, the parameters of perspective define reality. Jainlight is built from this base, which assumes that if no objective clock matters, then measurement itself is suspect. Since superposition is the state of subatomic affairs *pre*-measurement, when all exists at once, Jainlight's measurement-eschewed narrative slips neatly in to this framework. That is, it's not the relativity (or subjectivism) of Jainlight's narrative that causes its superpositioned state, but rather that he does not *delimit* – or *measure* – that subjective narrative. Delimiting would require selecting an outcome, measuring a wavefunction, and Jainlight exists in perpetual possibility. That, I argue, is why the doubles and multiples throughout Jainlight's life matter: the two mothers, the two women (Megan and Dania), the two Centuries. These doubles do not quite imply that, as Paice argues, "multiple, parallel temporalities promote the concept of individual culpability within broader social movements" (206). Rather, they comment that essentially anything is possible; Jainlight effects these possibilities into being *without* delimiting or measuring and therefore collapsing the wavefunction. He can, in fact, have it all: a constructed reality that flouts lived narrative, while simultaneously retaining the power to affect lived history.

Erickson frequently incorporates windows into moments that reflect superpositioning; the first example occurs in Jainlight's childhood bedroom. The room has nine windows, and through them Jainlight sees across time: "In one I see the year of my birth and in one I see the year of my death, though I see neither my birth nor my death precisely...I see the seventy or so years that are my time. Not my life, but my time" (50). He continues: "I'm watching the Twentieth Century through my windows, though I have no way of knowing yet if it's my Twentieth Century or another, if [the years I see] are the ones I know or have known or will know" (*ibid*). Through his

windows, filtered through his personal experience, Jainlight sees all the potential of the twentieth century simultaneously. Importantly, he has no definitive knowledge of *which* century he is watching. This again indicates the superpositioning of Jainlight's narrative vantage point; he recognizes multiple possibilities existing at once, and furthermore can potentially access more than one. It adds, too, to the thematic interplay of lived and constructed narrative. Note Jainlight's rejection of the term "life" in favour of "time." *Life*, after all, is by definition a linear narrative that begins and ends, and Jainlight has nothing of the sort. Born in 1917, he persists past his death in 1989 via the first-person monologue that amounts to his story in *Tours*. He tells his story posthumously, a reminder that narratives can persist when physical forms fail. Moreover Jainlight cannot see his "life" because his existence has been mainly in constructions rather than physical reality, *self-consciously* spent in a Century that split from recorded history. Thus he sees his "time" – keeping in mind that "time" in the context of *Tours* is decidedly Einsteinian and therefore much more relativistic. So for Jainlight to see his "time" is to see, simply, the subjective distortion of his life. Jainlight's subjectivity rests in the multiple possibilities offered by constructed narrative, and the windows offer him the potential of his life – all the while telling him exactly how it will turn out, and exactly how it won't (depending what century he ends up having watched). He "writes the first thing [he's] ever written" (50) after staring out the windows, pulling constructed narrative to the forefront of his life where it will remain. Superpositioning in practice: everything at once, with no single decision coming into play (even once Jainlight dies, the reader never finds out which Century he saw).

Symbolically speaking, Paul Kincaid writes, "a window provides a frame...[in *Tours*] they reveal the measure against which the self-made world is to be judged" ("Rational Chronology" 37). In other words, a window allows for and implies a distanced perspective. Yet

people are repeatedly thrown through windows in the book, usually to fatal consequence:

Jainlight's father (63), his wife Megan and daughter Courtney (178), and Dania's two lovers Paul and Joaquin (230). Something much more direct than framing is at play. To that end, there is a comment being made on who has access to windows and, therefore, sight. Notably, when these events take place, Jainlight is actively watching (or tossing), while Dania adamantly "doesn't look at the window" (*ibid*). Windows, and seeing, are Jainlight's domain rather than Dania's; he gets to do the looking because, at first, he holds the power. Even Dania notes this when she wonders if "the savage century was unleashed not by the act of standing in a Vienna window, but by the act of being seen there" (221). Agency in *Tours* initially comes from seeing and observing, and the windows offer an avenue to do so. This fits neatly into quantum theory; observation is, ultimately, agency in that it effects a permanent eigenstate. Without measurement and observation, everything remains in superpositioned flux.

However, any agency Jainlight possesses, narratively speaking, derives from his constructions and not any lived narrative. Put another way, it is only in the act of superpositioning his story that Jainlight has any power whatsoever. This is most obvious in the way Jainlight and Dania interact across Centuries; they both have an affair and do not, with no eigenstate at play. It's Jainlight's *created* version of Dania who says, regarding Z's obsession with the erotica, that "history serves at the pleasure of us" (142). The 'real' Dania is not speaking: she doesn't have the same perception of whatever relationship between them exists in her own timeline. Especially at first, her experience of the affair is one of violation rather than love: "she isn't sure she's ready for him. He tears into her" (199). Despite ample opportunity to 'get to know her' as their cross-Century affair rages on, Jainlight never asks. It isn't necessary. She is everything at once, for Jainlight, because she is an essentially superpositioned character

within the context of his constructed narrative: whatever he needs her to be, at any given moment, she can be. Dania is never delimited in the constructed narratives; she is more of a blank slate than a person. The reader only learns her skills, concerns, and backstory once the narrative shifts to her perspective. Jainlight's Dania, moreover, is constructed almost exclusively from his sexual desire and her appearance. In fact, his obsession with her matters more, even, than her *actual* physical appearance. He admits: "I cannot recollect your beauty. I recollect the memory of your beauty, which we both know is not the same, because my memory made you beautiful" (123). Jainlight is aware of his inability (and perhaps lack of desire) to accurately remember her, as well as the purely constructed nature of the Dania he knows. Ultimately this is an admission, too, of his *lack of actual contact* with Dania across Centuries. If he was visiting her in real life, he would not need to recollect her beauty as she would be physically present; paradoxically, though, in Dania's own Century she encounters Jainlight regularly. Not only is Dania's character superpositioned within his narrative, but so is their relationship itself; they interact and do not, they communicate and do not. All between them happens and does not happen at once.

It's apparent, then, that the superpositioned, constructed Dania is a vehicle or receptacle for Jainlight's erotic fantasy – though not *solely* his. Client Z wants her character customized and restructured in the image of his niece, but obstinately desires it to still be Dania, or perhaps conflates the two. "We're talking about the same girl," Holtz, the intermediary, says to Jainlight when requesting some minor descriptive changes (148); pointedly, Z does not want an entirely specified commission. Holtz even claims that Dania is Z's "myth" altogether (177). To that end, I argue, what Z responds to in Jainlight's writing is not the character of Dania, but the mirroring of a passionate obsession with a constructed woman. Erickson, via Shirer, reminds us that

“whether [Geli] reciprocated her uncle’s love is not known; probably not, and in the end certainly not” (9). Z’s love of Geli, and Jainlight’s of Dania, has little to do with the women and the relationships themselves and immensely more to do with male fantasy. That male fantasy is expressed, in *Tours*, by the initial superpositioning of Dania: because she has no distinct characteristics (aside from apparently-mutable physical ones), she contains all possibilities at once. This is why Z is able to project his own “myth” onto Dania; her superpositioned identity allows for her to be Geli as well as Dania, simultaneously. The impossibly-melded realization of these women further sets *Tours*’ treatment of fantasy apart. The constructed Dania and Geli are made effectively extant by Jainlight’s writing: “She’s back,” Holtz says, referencing Z’s rekindled passion, but also implying the physical presence, in present tense, of a dead woman (148). Geli *is* back, insofar as Z and Jainlight have constructed her. The constructions extend beyond fantasy to the narrative of the novel itself. In a particularly telling coital moment, the women and the men are, respectively, conflated. Jainlight sees his Dania as if he is Z, noting her “hair spun like sunlight” and “eyes of blue” as Z requested. “Call me anything you like,” Dania says (161). Jainlight, or Z, or both, calls her Geli. She may as well be.

Naming, like observing, is both measurement and agency in *Tours*. To name is to define parameters, which is effectively linguistic measurement: limiting terms and ideas to *one* possibility – an eigenstate. To that end, Dania asserts that “any name...would have been wrong. She meant the presumption of naming it at all, what [she and Jainlight] did together” (245). To name their affair, simultaneously constructed and lived, is both impossible and presumptuous. In its superpositioned state, no measuring word can convey, delimit, or define the experience; this is essential to understanding not only the affair itself, but how the two narratives relate to one another. Practically conceptualizing the bleedthrough of the Centuries is impossible; it only

makes sense if the reader accepts the superpositioning and does not attempt to collapse the wavefunction to an eigenstate (at least, before Dania does). Still, instances of naming as measurement recur throughout the novel. Pertinently, Marc questions the use value thereof when he encounters Kara and wonders at the “frequency of destiny” she transmits to him: “He knew by now these frequencies were unnamable, in a century that tried to name everything that was particularly unfathomable” (33). The note, here, has to do again with measurement, with attempting to parse and define those “unfathomable” post-Einsteinian things. It is also a jab at Twentieth Century hubris in the face of relativistic physics; the attempt to name and the attempt to measure are here correlated as equally futile.

Also at play is Davenhall Island’s tradition of naming corpses, wherein to avoid a “nether between place,” the dying person must claim their identity by speaking their own name. Witnesses are “called forth to verify that, before dying, the dead one had established without doubt his memory of himself” (18). This is an act of verbal measurement; the name measures and defines, and without that measuring, the corpse persists in a shifting flux between life and death. In this superpositioned state, the reader first encounters Jainlight. He tells his entire narrative after dying at Dania’s feet, and is then hung on a tree until she verifies his identity by proclaiming him “Banning Jainlight” (314). If Jainlight has not been named, “his memory of himself” and therefore his life is in doubt, perhaps a result (or cause) of his superpositioned narrative. Dania’s naming, then, is the instrument of wavefunction collapse for Jainlight’s narrative, pulling it finally to an end. Moreover, naming Jainlight affords Dania power over him and his narrative, as he cannot move on until she measures him with a name. Thus in *Tours*, the act of naming is not solely an act of measuring (or limiting), but of claiming power.

Paul Kincaid, summing up the functioning of Jainlight's fantasy world, writes:

"Individuals need to step into their own imagination as a way of providing certainty, of taking charge of their own lives. It is lack of this courage...which opens the way to control by those who can furnish [it], as the Nazis did" ("Secret Maps" 42). Constructed narrative ("imagination") certainly allows Jainlight to "take charge of [his] own life" insofar as he formulates his own superpositioned reality. Yet this reading is problematic in its assumption of Jainlight as heroic protagonist – that is, as a character who bravely uses internal creation and construction to refute Nazi control. Firstly, Jainlight's imagination is in fact, self-admittedly, the *cause* of the endless war. For that and for the death of his wife and daughter, Jainlight is filled with havoc and regret, and while his journey with Z is framed redemptively, it is pointedly not about redeeming *himself*. His quest is for a Twentieth Century in which Hitler is crushed, so as to open up the hope that evil can be vanquished. Jainlight goes in search of lived narrative, the history the reader experienced: he goes in search of Dania's Century. In the end, Kincaid's assertion that constructed narrative is a means of gaining control applies more readily to Dania's story than Jainlight's. By virtue of its superpositioned nature, Jainlight's narrative cannot provide certainty or control; that must come from the single event of wavefunction collapse. Jainlight is inexorably uncertain, hanging on a tree until Dania measures him with a name. Whatever seeming power Jainlight has in his constructed narrative, I argue that all genuine narrative agency is hers.

All Paths Lead to Dania: Taking Control and Collapsing the Wavefunction

"She's inventing her own structures, can't you see?"

- *Tours* (201)

Men do not, I have argued, fall in love with the real Dania. Jainlight, Blaine, Z, and countless more might claim that they do, but their obsessions are with a constructed,

superpositioned myth, not *her*. Whether as an erotica character or a contemporary dancer, she is observed, and thus projected onto, rather than known. As Erickson himself says, “the real point of Dania’s dancing has to do with voyeurism and obsession and men transforming women into their fantasies” (McCaffery 417). To understand this comment requires an examination of her dancing, with two major points to consider. The first is *how* Dania dances, with “no particular grace [or] rhythm;” she moves not “in relationship to the ground, she move[s] in relationship to the moment” (194). And, importantly, “she danced against history...she danced her moments so as to own them for herself” (201). The dance itself is a personal affirmation, a reclamation of her time and her self *in the face of* an external narrative (“history”). As she dances, Dania defines her own terms, separate from standard forms and structures, and entirely her own rhythm. Symbolically, her chaotic dance represents the power she holds over her own narrative.

Yet the second consideration is the *effect* of her dancing, which directly opposes the meaning the dance has for *her*. Men obsess; while they do not “consciously understand” this, the narration explains: “she dances to the resurrection of his memories and certain possibilities precluded forever” (227). Essentially, by resurrecting past and potential at once, her dancing superpositions the lives of the men who watch her. It effectively constructs a narrative for them, allowing them, like Jainlight, to experience multiple paths simultaneously. Thus there is a stark distinction between her act of dancing and her being watched. The first is a claiming of her own narrative, while the latter is an opening up of other people’s. This constructive observation, it’s implied, is what kills the men who watch her: ““You thought someone was dying every time I danced. But...maybe...someone was dying every time you watched me dance”” (241).

Something fatal exists in the *observation* of Dania’s dancing, specifically regarding the

construction of her character and the subsequent superpositioning of narrative she inspires.

Attempts to define and create her ultimately fail.

Notably, Dania's narrative starts out about as superpositioned as Jainlight's. She, after all, has the one *explicit* moment of superpositioning in the novel; that is, she experiences multiple states and positions simultaneously. After the silver buffalo stampede which kills her mother and brother, Dania hides:

Lying here in this particular burial, she is at once in three separate moments.

She's lying beneath the leaves of the Sudanese forest, she's lying in her bed in

Vienna, she's lying in the bottom of a rowboat on the shores of Davenhall Island.

She's not asleep or dreaming, she's perfectly wakefully aware and conscious. She

remembers. ... In each of these moments she's waiting for a lover. [And] it's the

same rain in three different moments, all of which she lives in at once. (Erickson

198)

Erickson makes clear that Dania is conscious; crucially, she is remembering and experiencing

three very real states. This, however, is a clear indication that her experience is *not* one of

constructed narrative. Unlike Jainlight's superpositioning, Dania's is not based in fantasy.

Rather, she somehow physically exists in all of these at once, experiencing her lived reality in the

way the men around her experience theirs when she dances. Dania seems to catalyze the

superpositioned states: she inspires it in Jainlight and the men who watch her dance, and she

alone can experience it in her lived narrative. She lives superposition, but these men require her

if they wish to do the same (that is, to gain multiple possibilities). However, these instances all

relate back to the men who "love" her, conflating the men and her moments with them. For

Dania, superpositioning is not about controlling her own story (as it is for Jainlight), but a

reminder of the way she exists in other people's minds even as she lives her own experience.

While they are patently not interchangeable, by existing simultaneously in this superpositioned moment, the men essentially represent various potential iterations of a single wavefunction. As Dania waits for them, she experiences the same possibility, still not in control of her own narrative. To finally gain agency, Dania must collapse the wavefunction.

This collapse occurs at the climax of the novel, the most pivotal moment of both Dania and Jainlight's narratives: when Dania gives birth. The creature Jainlight attempts to build inside her is a vehicle for his personal revenge against Z, who wants nothing more than a flawless Aryan son. Despite Jainlight's best efforts, he receives it. Against Jainlight's wishes, no bug, no conglomerate of revolting viscera arrives; Marc is born absent of dark colour, pure white. Jainlight is foiled; Z thrilled. One could almost be forgiven for thinking this event was, narratively speaking, a snub towards Jainlight, in his angry, pseudo-redemptive, anti-hero quest – even, perhaps, a comment on his personally vindictive revenge, in virtual ignorance of the rest of millions harmed by the Third Reich – but one would be mistaken. This is where it all clicks into place: construction and reality, agency, and emotion. This is Dania's moment.

Up to this point, Dania's narrative has been to one extent or another superpositioned, insofar as the various constructed iterations of herself exist in the reader's mind. There are also significant elements of bleedthrough between the Centuries, such as the scar above Dania's lip. A distinguishing characteristic, it marks the split of the Centuries; she receives it after being hit in the face with a rock when Jainlight sees her at the window. However, the strike only occurs in Jainlight's Century, not her own; she even reflects on how the rock *almost* hit her that day. Yet, when we meet her in her own Century, after she has raised Marc, she sports the scar: "Nothing about her came to characterize her for [Marc] so much as this small scar. He came to measure

what she felt by it, or what he supposed the scar told him that she felt” (14). This measurement, based on a physical trait, foreshadows how Dania functions in the constructed narratives to follow, known and judged by her appearance rather than any internal state or agency. Indeed Jainlight, too, measures her by her scar; in some respects, as it conceptually separates that version of her as strictly “his” Century’s Dania, it’s a mark of possession. Throughout her own story, though, she has no scar; only once Marc is born does she takes it on. This, I argue, indicates a wavefunction collapse. The scar is no longer a mark of possession, but a sign of Dania having reclaimed her story from the influence of Jainlight; there is now no discernible difference between the Danias, because she takes back her constructed self. In refuting his revenge (for which she is *literally* a vehicle), she exerts agency over her story. Marc’s birth, then, is the event which collapses the narratives – and the Centuries.

However, as quantum theory dictates, to collapse a wavefunction requires intervention. To consolidate the Centuries into an eigenstate, Dania needs a measuring instrument; some kind of tool that can interfere with the superpositioned system in play. That superposition is embodied, of course, by Jainlight’s ability to control aspects of her own reality. To collapse the constructed narratives and take back her lived narrative, though, is not for Dania a hypothetical question of quantum physics (even if it helps elucidate the functioning thereof). She is declaring her independence from a system that has forced her into possibilities constructed without her consent or knowledge, a system that used her appearance to define her worth. She formulates this collapse as a fight, and her instrument as a weapon:

She screams, and in the pit of this scream, as what’s being born travels
into the light of the world, because she’s stripped of any other weapon... she’s
left with only a single choice; and that is to love it. Whatever comes from her, in

all its monstrousness, she can only love it. It's such a pitiful weapon. Later, she'll wonder if there was really such a weapon....Later she'll think it's only a theoretical love, and she'll wonder if loving it so deeply was ever really possible. But for the moment it's not only possible but inescapable, one measly love.

(Erickson 276)

Her weapon, her instrument of collapse, is love. In the face of the “steaming evil” (276) of what Z has wrought in the Twentieth Century, Dania does not fall. She chooses to encompass that evil and reshape it; she chooses to face Jainlight's narratives and influence, both on her and on Z (and therefore on the war itself), with the only thing at her disposal. She could have sat back, succumbed to the construction growing within her, but she does not: she fights. Faced with this act, with her defiance, Jainlight “drop[s] the pen” (279), incapable, now, of controlling her. From this point on, Jainlight does not write of Dania; instead, he seeks her out. His superpositioned constructed narrative is now insufficient, and so he embarks with Z on his redemptive quest, to “pull up the evil” planting in America.

However, this quest is not in effect about Jainlight redeeming the evil he has perpetuated with Z, but rather about him facing Dania and failing before her: to die, and to return her power to her. With his death, the centuries “flow back into one” (311), and it is then that Dania gains agency over Jainlight: in death, she names him. Naming, as aforementioned, is a symbol of control and power; moreover, it implies that Dania, now, can construct Jainlight as she will. Her bestowing a name upon him effectively suggests another interpretation, as well – that *she* has been constructing this narrative, entirely, all along. We meet Jainlight only *after*, in the timeline of the narrative, she has named him. Perhaps this entire posthumous monologue acts as her *own* construction, trying to make sense of events and trauma over which she had no control. Dania, in

the end, might be the one constructing everything. The wavefunction collapse thereby holds even more narrative value; it not only creates an eigenstate-Century, but also allows Dania to reclaim the narrative on her own terms.

Regardless, however, her agency reclamation has a larger narrative effect than her own edification. With her wavefunction collapse, she pulls the Century back to the eigenstate with which the reader is familiar; the Twentieth Century returns to what it was. Her love, in its collapse of Jainlight's constructed superposition, thus changes the nature of the century. Notably, at the start of her labour, Jainlight says that "the Twentieth Century is being born from her in a wash of steaming evil" (275). Ostensibly, as I have mentioned, his revenge plan is to show Z that evil begets evil. If it had been successful, Z would have recognized what he spawned not as perfect and white, but ugly, revolting, and evil. The 'spawn,' for Jainlight and the reader, symbolizes the Twentieth Century insofar as Z has affected it with his war, or in other words, how Z has morally blackened history. However, Dania's love stymies the process: "The century, in confusion, stops in its own time. Caught inside her, it devours its own time, which is to say it devours itself, and then begins to grow again from its inside out. Evil thunders past it like a river" (276). The evil that was meant to be loses purchase, and the century is born as a human child. Marc, this child of defiance, thus assumes the symbolic significance of the Twentieth Century. This process, of evil reformulating itself, thematically echoes the central metaphor of the novel: the relativity of the black clock. Yet Dania's act is not to show the reader that morality is always relative. Rather, it is to present another option of resistance, even when none seem to suffice, to a Century wracked with pain and war.

So Marc's narrative, then, is as essential as those of his mother and pen-father. Marc's birth, after all, is the "small secret room" (275) in her father's blueprint that represents the

conscience of the Twentieth Century. It is not a strictly “good” conscience because Marc is not strictly good; among other vices, he abandons his mother and rapes a woman. However, he reflects – and confirms – the *potential* of the century to step away from evil via an act of love. When Marc first sees Kara, it mirrors Jainlight’s sighting of Dania: “On that day he rediscovered not the hope of feeling life, but life itself. This was the day his life split in two. Her name was Kara” (31). She “mitigates” the guilt he has felt for decades in her presence and by virtue of his love, and then, impossibly, disappears. He eventually finds her working in the Arctic, “alone and happy” and so: “He didn’t go to her, accepting that she had chosen to live by herself” (319). He spends the rest of her life watching her, as the men watched Dania, but he does not construct a narrative for her. Marc does not dramatically superposition his “life split in two” as Jainlight does with Dania; rather, he subtly collapses his own wavefunction by allowing only one possible outcome. That is, he does not interfere in Kara’s lived narrative; she maintains her agency and her choices, and Marc experiences his love as unrequited. Yet love, of a kind, is irrefutably influential for the rest of his life.

Further, it is this love that brings Marc north to migrate with the same silver buffalo that recur through the narrative. The beginning of the novel tells the reader that “herds of short-haired silver buffalo had begun appearing out of nowhere at the turn of the century’s final decade” (21). In Africa, years before Marc finds them again, Dania stumbles across a cave “from which c[o]me[s] an inexplicable blast of arctic cold” and, eventually, “a hundred herds” of the buffalo (196), which kill Dania’s mother and brother and spur her superpositioned moment; the one where she experiences three lovers at once. Crucially, however, Marc is left behind as they “disappear into the dark of [an arctic] cave,” presumably to exit in Dania’s Africa, as “an inexplicable blast of jungle heat” hits him (320). The moments are obviously linked, but what is

key is that Marc then keeps going: “Having exited the century at one end and entered it again at the other, the year was 1901 when he finally came to a village in northern Asia” (*ibid*). He has circled the globe and restarted the century with a quest for love and hope. While imperfect, he reconfigures the structure of the Twentieth Century and allows for a new eigenstate, one inspired not by evil but by hope. Redemptive potential, for Marc as well as Dania, comes in the shape of love.

Love, Physics, and History: The Functioning of Ericksonian Emotion

“It’s unthinkable that one small act of will has defied the soul of a century bent on finding its true dark literal form.”

- Banning Jainlight, *Tours* (277)

Dania choosing love catalyzes her agency, confirms her lived narrative, and thereby effects a wavefunction collapse. Love is the measuring instrument, and this, then, sheds light on the function of emotion within Erickson – that question alluded to, but left largely unanswered, by his critics. I here extend Rebecca Litchfield’s assertion that, in Erickson, “the shifts in emotion directly result in chronologic, topographic, or narrative shifts within the plot” (226). In the interplay of Z’s obsession with Geli, the splitting of the Centuries, and Dania’s act of defiant love, there is more at play than correlative shifting. Specifically, I suggest that in Erickson, emotion is not merely a catalyst, but structurally integral to the functioning of history.

The first hint of this in *Tours* is, as aforementioned, the lengthy excerpt of Shirer’s historical narrative. The implication with this epigraph is that Geli profoundly influenced Hitler’s life – or, more particularly, that Hitler’s feelings for Geli profoundly influenced his life. The distinction matters. As I have shown, in Erickson the emotion that infuses constructed narrative can create full internal, superpositioned realities, intensely powerful to the people who

experience them. In *Tours*, Z and Jainlight act as examples thereof. I reiterate Paul Kincaid's comment that Erickson "uses emotions as a pivot about which to shift viewpoints," but that "emotions are only real if they are shared" ("Secret Maps" 31). Like Litchfield, he notes the catalytic potential of Ericksonian emotion, but his assertion regarding a requisite sharing of it does not hold. No character in *Tours* genuinely shares their emotions in any sense of the word. Love is never reciprocated. Conversations about feeling do not occur. Characters experience their emotional states in solitude, sometimes, as with Marc, quite intentionally so. I suggest instead that, particularly given Erickson's shifting landscapes, emotion is an agent and inspirer of *interior* reality. It is, moreover, a clear indication that interior reality as spurred by emotion can affect the outside world.

This claim holds for Dania, who loves something vile into flawed, but hopeful, human form and reclaims her narrative. It holds for Z, whose consuming obsession with Geli shapes the course of World War II. It holds for Jainlight, whose constructed but emotive interpretation of a girl he sees in a window splits the Twentieth Century in two. It holds for Marc, whose search for Kara brings him back in time to recreate a century. It holds for Blaine, for Zeno, and for the men who die when they watch Dania "dance against history" (201). In all these cases, emotion shifts not only the plot of the novel, but history itself. Indeed, each of these emotive circumstances has drastic consequences for time and space – unsurprising, given the recurring motif of special relativity. Jainlight suggests as much, describing the sight he sees from yet another window:

This Twentieth Century I saw from my own window today was the one
in which I never saw you at all. In which I never saw you and never wrote of you,
and your invention never came to the attention of special clients. In which no evil
mind was ever distracted by the reincarnation of a past obsession, no Barbarossas

were suspended and therefore evil came to rule the world...I also knew such a version of the Twentieth century was utterly counterfeit. That neither the rule of evil nor its collapse could be anything but an aberration in such a century, because this is the century in which another German, small with wild white hair, has written away with his new wild poetry every Absolute...It just couldn't have been, that's all. It's nice to think so, to think evil remains collapsible. But I saw you in that window and the true Twentieth Century found itself. (Erickson 168)

This passage, in its allegiance to a Twentieth Century that never existed in the history books of the reader, dismantles objective truth – and yet, Jainlight is not altogether wrong. The constructed century, built with blocks of intense emotion, is real. Its veracity can only stem from his constructions, to be sure, but our concept of veracity itself has been thrown into question by the physics of the Twentieth Century. Quantum theory tells us everything happens at once until a collapse occurs and an eigenstate is measured. This has been verifiably tested, and the fundamentals of our subatomic reality rest on these ideas. Moreover, a superpositioned, constructed *narrative* is not only possible, but perpetual. Historicism, as aforementioned, suggests that even supposedly objective history can fall to questioning. Multiple narratives are in play, all at once, until an individual claims one for themselves. Ultimately, the narratives of *Tours* are the physics of the era put into conceptual practice – and while there are no absolutes, there can be measurement.

In Erickson, emotion is that measuring instrument. The collapses and shifts it effects in *Tours* are, to be sure, surreal in their shaping of spatiotemporal reality. Nonetheless, the point is not for these events to be realistic, but to exhibit the drastic effects of feeling. The complicated interplay of constructed and lived narrative, in the end, is best parsed by emotion, through the

lens of quantum theory. From the start, we are told that the lynchpin moment of the Twentieth Century is Dania being observed from a Vienna window; this is simultaneously true and untrue. True: it shifts Jainlight's century; it legitimizes constructed narrative; it allows for a superpositioned reality. Yet, of course, in that sense it could have been any moment. The real lynchpin, I have argued, is Dania's choice to love. The collapse of potential states relates, inextricably, to her agency as she chooses an emotional weapon. After all it is, somehow, the only one available to her in a century rife with war. The essential connection between history and emotion blazes out from the page: Dania's "pitiful" love shapes the morality of the Twentieth Century. If Erickson's "stated purpose in writing [*Tours*] was to "experiment by relativizing" those moral absolutes" (Hansen 168), then the paradoxical complexity of love is essential to the experiment. Hitler's for Geli; Jainlight's for Dania; Dania's for Marc – all are in some respects dark, twisted, or imperfect. Love's effect on personal narrative creates moral relativity.

That said, it is not solely love, complex as it is, at work in *Tours*. The characters, particularly Jainlight and Dania, experience a broad range of feeling, all of which contribute to how they structure their realities and timelines. These personal structures are essential, in fiction and in life more generally. Lee Spinks writes that "if, as Paul Kincaid has argued, "the strongest emotional drives in Erickson's work are guilt and betrayal," this is so because Erickson's fiction insists that we take responsibility for the way we are shaped by the past" (238). Perhaps. But the question may not be one of responsibility, nor of guilt, nor of how our pasts define us. Rather, I put forth, at the core of Ericksonian emotion is a cry for self-definition. Dania's agency and Jainlight's constructions are two sides of the same question: not how history defines us, but how we define history.

Conclusion

“1939. Love rages,” Erickson writes, “It cries out from you, seething and red; I come back for more and more” (163). With these words, he defines the parameters of his novel: the intensity of emotion at the crucial timepoints of history; the essential paradox of love in practice; the question of agency and the inescapability of passionate obsession; the underlying lava of emotion in a narrative, constructed or lived. The crux of *Tours* is the raging power of love, in its various forms and possibilities, and how profoundly this can affect our experience of reality. Like superposition and wavefunction collapse, emotion is confounding, defining, and essentially based in event. There are no real nouns in emotion, as there are no nouns in quantum theory: what we feel is particular and shifts, with no set limitations and with infinite possibility, as we do. Our narratives, personal and historical, follow.

In this paper, I have examined Erickson scholarship to define a gap in the research, specifically a close reading of *Tours* that would illuminate the questions of Ericksonian emotion thus far overshadowed by sociopolitical and postmodernist criticism. I outlined the quantum physics concepts that best reflect the function of emotion and narrative structure in *Tours*. I defined the terms of constructed and lived narrative so as to distinguish between the various Twentieth Centuries at play in the novel. Using superposition as a theoretical framework, I analyzed Jainlight’s constructed narratives, the effect thereof on the other characters in the novel, and the symbolism of windows and naming therein. This analysis set up my argument that Dania, in an act of emotional agency, effectively collapses the Centuries and reclaims her narrative. I finally proposed that, as a result of this analysis, Erickson’s work suggests that emotion is not merely a catalyst for narrative movement, but the fundamental lynchpin thereof – and thus for history itself.

Questions remain. Is agency in Erickson *inextricably* tied to emotional decision, and what other factors are at play? Is defiance somehow integral to a shift away from constructed narrative, or can these shifts take place – as in quantum events – without intent? Are we able to identify moments of emotional ‘wavefunction collapse’ in historical narratives as well as fictional ones? In its interplay of emotion, narrative, theoretical physics, and history, the answers *Tours* may have to these questions are worth exploring. For now, however, the final words – as Erickson would intend – are Dania’s: “No, she says; the lover of all these years, who came to me unseen when he chose, will not have this victory. What’s in me is mine, and though I might have chosen never to have it in me at all, I won’t relinquish anything else anymore” (Erickson 264). Erickson tells us that ultimately, the narratives we claim are the ones that matter; the ones that are most real. Against history, against superpositioning, against time, space, and morality: the fight to claim them can best – can only – be fought with raging love.

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