Quantum impurities and angular momentum in a many-body system: analytical and numerical approaches

Giacomo Bighin April 15th, 2025 One particle (or a few particles) interacting with a many-body environment.

- Condensed matter
- Chemistry
- Ultracold atoms: tunable interaction with either bosons or fermions.

A prototype of a many-body system. How are the properties of the particle modified by the interaction?







Image from: F. Chevy, Physics 9, 86.



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Composite impurity, e.g. a diatomic molecule: translational and rotational degrees of freedom/linear and angular momentum exchange.





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In this talk

Rotating impurities as quasiparticles, and diagrammatics

Molecules in ⁴He nanodroplets Ultra-cold atoms: an impurity in a Bose-Bose mixture







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The angulon Hamiltonian

A composite impurity in a bosonic environment can be described by the angulon Hamiltonian¹²³⁴ (angular momentum basis: $\mathbf{k} \rightarrow \{k, \lambda, \mu\}$):

$$\hat{H} = \underbrace{B\hat{\mathbf{J}}^{2}}_{\text{molecule}} + \underbrace{\sum_{k\lambda\mu} \omega_{k} \hat{b}^{\dagger}_{k\lambda\mu} \hat{b}_{k\lambda\mu}}_{\text{phonons}} + \underbrace{\sum_{k\lambda\mu} U_{\lambda}(k) \left[Y^{*}_{\lambda\mu}(\hat{\theta}, \hat{\phi}) \hat{b}^{\dagger}_{k\lambda\mu} + Y_{\lambda\mu}(\hat{\theta}, \hat{\phi}) \hat{b}_{k\lambda\mu} \right]}_{\text{molecule-phonon interaction}}$$

- Linear molecule
- Derived rigorously for a molecule in a weakly-interacting BEC¹
- Phenomenological model for a molecule in any kind of bosonic bath³



- ¹R. Schmidt and M. Lemeshko, Phys. Rev. Lett. **114**, 203001 (2015).
- ²R. Schmidt and M. Lemeshko, Phys. Rev. X 6, 011012 (2016).
- ³M. Lemeshko, Phys. Rev Lett. **118**, 095301 (2017).

⁴Yu. Shchadilova, "Viewpoint: A New Angle on Quantum Impurities", Physics **10**, 20 (2017).

Variational Ansatz

Expansion in bath excitations (cfr. Chevy Ansatz for polarons):

$$\Psi\rangle\approx|\hspace{0.1cm} \bigodot \rangle_{\rm imp}\otimes|0\rangle_{\rm bos}+|\hspace{0.1cm} \bigodot \rangle_{\rm imp}\otimes|1\rangle_{\rm bos}+\ldots$$

plus some variational coefficients, to optimize by minimizing energy.

See for instance: R. Schmidt and M. Lemeshko, Phys. Rev. Lett. 114, 203001 (2015).

Feynman diagrams

Here I will show how the problem can be described in terms of Feynman diagrams, and how Feynman diagrams can be systematically summed to arbitrarily high order with diagrammatic Monte Carlo.





How do we describe **molecular rotations** with Feynman diagrams? How does angular momentum enter this picture?













Diagrammatic Monte Carlo

Numerical technique for sampling over all Feynman diagrams¹.



- **DiagMC idea**: set up a stochastic process sampling among all diagrams¹
- **Configuration space**: diagram topology, phonons internal variables, times, etc... Number of variables varies with the topology!
- How: ergodicity, detailed balance $w_1 p(1 \rightarrow 2) = w_2 p(2 \rightarrow 1)$
- Result: each configuration is visited with probability \propto its weight.

Up to now: structureless particles (Fröhlich polaron, Holstein polaron), or particles with a very simple internal structure (e.g. spin 1/2). Now: molecules.

¹N. V. Prokof'ev and B. V. Svistunov, Phys. Rev. Lett. **81**, 2514 (1998).

²GB, T.V. Tscherbul, M. Lemeshko, Phys. Rev. Lett. 121, 165301 (2018).

Diagrammatic Monte Carlo: results

The ground-state energy of the angulon Hamiltonian obtained using DiagMC¹ as a function of the dimensionless bath density, \tilde{n} , compared with the weak-coupling theory² and the strong-coupling theory³.

The energy and quasiparticle weight are obtained by fitting the long-imaginary-time behaviour of G_j as $G_j(\tau) = Z_j \exp(E_j \tau)$.

Inset: energy of the L = 0, 1, 2 states.



A numerically exact technique for studying molecules. Bridging different communities (solid state, chemistry) with far reaching consequences⁴.

¹GB, T.V. Tscherbul, M. Lemeshko, Phys. Rev. Lett. 121, 165301 (2018).

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Molecules in helium nanodroplets

A molecular impurity embedded into a helium nanodroplet: a controllable system to explore angular momentum redistribution in a many-body environment.



Image from: S. Grebenev et al., Science 279, 2083 (1998).

Rotational spectrum of molecules in He nanodroplets

Molecules embedded into helium nanodroplets: rotational spectrum



Images from: S. Grebenev *et al.*, Science **279**, 2083 (1998). and J.P. Toennies and A.F. Vilesov, Angew. Chem. Int. Ed. **43**, 2622 (2004).

Dynamical alignment of molecules in helium nanodroplets

Dynamical alignment experiments (Stapelfeldt group, Aarhus University):

- Kick pulse, aligning the molecule.
- Probe pulse, destroying the molecule.
- Fragments are imaged, reconstructing alignment as a function of time.
- Averaging over multiple realizations, and varying the time between the two pulses, one gets

 $\langle \cos^2 \hat{\theta}_{2D} \rangle(t)$

with

$$\cos^2\hat{\theta}_{\rm 2D} \equiv \frac{\cos^2\hat{\theta}}{\cos^2\hat{\theta} + \sin^2\hat{\theta}\sin^2\hat{\phi}}$$



Image from: B. Shepperson et al., Phys. Rev. Lett. **118**, 203203 (2017).

A.S. Chatterley, ..., GB, et al., Phys. Rev. Lett. 125, 013001 (2020).

Let's look at the alignment traces for CS₂ for different value of the fluence, as well as their Fourier transform.



- The Fourier transform $\langle \cos^2 \hat{\theta}_{2D} \rangle(t)$ is dominated $E_L E_{L-2}$ for all *L*'s.
- A new kind of "rotational spectroscopy". Investigating higher states than conventional IR spectroscopy.
- Unknown oscillation period of $\sim 50 {\rm ps}$, corresponding to a peak at around $20 {\rm ~GHz}$ in the power spectrum.
- The "renormalized rotational constant" picture here is not enough! Note that

$$E_L = B^* L(L+1) \implies E_L - E_{L-2} \propto BL$$

and this does not explain the 20 GHz peak.

¹A.S. Chatterley, ..., GB, et al., Phys. Rev. Lett. **125**, 013001 (2020).

Canonical transformation

A canonical transformation brings us to a frame of reference co-moving with the molecule (cfr. the Lee-Low-Pines transformation for the polaron).



To further simplify the problem we consider a single mode carrying energy ω , fixed at the roton energy, and carrying angular momentum λ . The molecule-solvent interaction strength u is kept as a phenomenological parameter to be adjusted.

$$\hat{H} = B(\hat{\mathbf{L}} - \hat{\Lambda})^2 + \omega \sum \hat{b}^{\dagger}_{\lambda\mu} \hat{b}_{\lambda\mu} + u(\hat{b}^{\dagger}_{\lambda0} + \hat{b}_{\lambda0})$$

¹I.N. Cherepanov, GB, et al., Phys. Rev. A **104**, L061303 (2021).⁴ ²I.N. Cherepanov, GB, et al., New J. Phys. **24**, 075004 (2022). ³R. Schmidt and M. Lemeshko, Phys. Rev. X **6**, 011012 (2016).

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15/30

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³R. Schmidt and M. Lemeshko, Phys. Rev. X 6, 011012 (2016).

Main results (1/2)

We diagonalize the Hamiltonian in the basis containing multiple excitations of the single bosonic mode:

$$\psi_{L[n_1n_2...n_m],M}^{(m)} = |LNM\rangle_{\rm mol} \otimes \left(b_{\lambda n_1}^{\dagger} b_{\lambda n_2}^{\dagger} ... b_{\lambda n_m}^{\dagger} |0\rangle_{\rm bos}\right)$$

• Spectrum now includes a centrifugal distortion term

$$E_J = B^* J(J+1) - D^* J^2 (J+1)^2$$

and now $E_L - E_{L-2} \propto \text{constant in some region and}$ can explain the observed spectrum.

• B^* and D^* are given in terms of simple analytical formulas

$$\frac{B^*}{B} \approx 1 - \frac{\tilde{u}^2}{(1+\tilde{\omega})^3}; \qquad \frac{D^*}{B} \approx \frac{\tilde{u}^2}{\lambda(\lambda+1)(1+\tilde{\omega})^5}$$

and the spectrum convincingly matches the experiments, up to high rotational states, for different molecules (CS_2 , I_2).

¹A.S. Chatterley, ..., GB, et al., Phys. Rev. Lett. **125**, 013001 (2020).
 ²I.N. Cherepanov, GB, et al., Phys. Rev. A **104**, L061303 (2021).



Empirical relationship

$$D^*/B \approx \xi (1 - B^*/B)^{5/3}$$

with $\xi = \tilde{u}^{-4/3}/[\lambda(\lambda+1)].$ This dependence is similar to the power law

$$D^* = 0.031 \times B^{*1.818}$$

found on empirical grounds, but gives the correct limit when $B^* \to B$.

- Environment-limited rotation: after a certain molecule-dependent value of *L*, the molecule loses energy to the environment very fast. Rotational analog of Landau's critical velocity?
- Timescales (a few ps vs. 450 fs).

^aA.S. Chatterley, ..., GB, et al., Phys. Rev. Lett. **125**, 013001 (2020).
 ^bI.N. Cherepanov, GB, et al., Phys. Rev. A **104**, L061303 (2021).
 ^cI.N. Cherepanov, GB, et al., New J. Phys. **24**, 075004 (2022).
 ^dA. Cappellaro, GB, et al., J. Chem. Phys. **162**, 074104 (2025).





17/30

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Images from S. Grebenev et al., Science 279, 2083 (1998) and from C.R. Cabrera's Ph.D. thesis.



C. D'Errico *et al.,* Phys. Rev. Research **1**, 033155 (2019).

A **Bose-Bose mixture** consists of a mixture of two different bosonic atomic species.

Quite involved phase diagram in the ultracold regime, including the remarkable **quantum droplet** state, i.e. a liquid-like self-bound state.

Quantum droplets have been observed in a homonuclear spin mixture of ${}^{39}K$, both in the presence of an external potential and in free space, as well as in a **heteronuclear mixture of** ${}^{41}K$ and ${}^{87}Rb$.

We consider this system, plus one (structureless, pointlike) impurity.



C. D'Errico *et al.,* Phys. Rev. Research **1** What makes a **liquid** a **liquid**?

Typically, it is a **balance** between repulsive and attractive interatomic forces!

How can one achieve this balance with **ultracold matter**?



A **Bose-Bose mixture** consists of a mixture of two

Image from: Wikibooks, "Molecular simulation". old regime, state, i.e. a

homonuclear f an external **1eteronuclear**

eless,

Interacting Bose-Bose mixture:

$$\hat{H}_{\mathsf{bb}} = \int \mathrm{d}^3 r \, \sum_{i=1,2} \hat{\phi}_i^{\dagger}(\mathbf{r}) (-\frac{\hbar^2 \nabla^2}{2m_i} + \frac{g_{ii}}{2} |\hat{\phi}_i(\mathbf{r})|^2) \hat{\phi}_i(\mathbf{r}) + g_{12} \int \mathrm{d}^3 r |\hat{\phi}_1(\mathbf{r})|^2 |\hat{\phi}_2(\mathbf{r})|^2$$

where $\hat{\phi}_i$, $\hat{\phi}_i^{\dagger}$ (i = 1, 2) are bosonic field operators acting on two different bosonic species, m_i are the masses of each species and g_{ij} is the contact interaction strength between species i and species j.

Impurity in the mixture:

$$\hat{H}_{\mathsf{I}} = rac{\hat{\mathbf{P}}^2}{2m_{\mathsf{I}}} + \sum_i g_{Ii} \int \mathrm{d}^3 r \,
ho(\mathbf{r}) \, \left| \hat{\phi}_i(\mathbf{r})
ight|^2$$

where g_{Ii} is the interaction between the impurity and the species i and $\rho(\mathbf{r}) = \delta^{(3)}(\mathbf{r} - \hat{\mathbf{R}})$.

Many parameters! Five different interaction strengths: g_{11} , g_{22} , g_{12} , g_{I1} , g_{I2} .

Mean-field description: one can obtain conditions for the stability of the mixture at T = 0 from a Gross-Pitaevskii approach¹ considering $g_{11}, g_{22} > 0$ and varying the sign of g_{12} :

- When $g_{12} > \sqrt{g_{11}g_{22}}$ phase separation occurs.
- When $-\sqrt{g_{11}g_{22}} < g_{12} < \sqrt{g_{11}g_{22}}$ the system is in a miscible state.
- When $-\sqrt{g_{11}g_{22}} > g_{12}$ the system undergoes collapse.



¹See for instance C. Pethick and H. Smith, *"Bose-Einstein condensation in dilute gases"*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, England, 2002).



Self-bound quantum droplets in a Bose-Bose mixture

Single-component Bose gas

$$\frac{E}{V} = \frac{gn^2}{2} \left(1 + \frac{128\sqrt{na^3}}{15\sqrt{\pi}} + \ldots \right)$$

with the LHY correction, which is the one-loop correction over the meanfield equation of state.

Two-component Bose mixture

$$\frac{E}{V} = \sum_{ij} \frac{g_{ij}n_in_j}{2} + \frac{8}{15\pi^2} m_1^{3/2} (g_{11}n_1)^{5/2} f(\frac{m_2}{m_1}, \frac{g_{12}^2}{g_{11}g_{22}}, \frac{g_{22}n_2}{g_{11}n_1})$$

and there can be competition between the mean-field attraction $\propto n^2$ and beyond mean-field repulsion $\propto n^{5/2}$, also in the weakly-interacting regime.



Self-bound quantum droplets in a Bose-Bose mixture



What about **dipolar droplets** (Dy in Stuttgart, Er in Innsbruck)? There are substantial differences, but the basic mechanism – mean-field attraction compensated by beyond-mean-field effects – is essentially the same.

Images from D.S. Petrov, Nat. Phys. 14, 211 (2018).

A closer look at the Bose-Bose mixture

We consider a **heteronuclear** 41 **K**- 87 **Rb Bose mixture**, on top of which which consider a dilute third component realized with a different hyperfine state of 41 K – which we shall dub the 'I' species. In the impurity limit for the third component, the system is described by five scattering lengths, namely a_{K-K} , a_{K-Rb} , a_{Rb-Rb} , a_{I-Rb} . The behaviour of a_{I-Rb} , and a_{K-Rb} as a function of the magnetic field *B* in the range between 60 and 105 G.



Scattering length calculations: A. Simoni.

The other three scattering lengths are almost constant in the range considered, i.e. $a_{\text{K-K}} \simeq a_{\text{l-K}} \simeq 62a_0$, $a_{\text{Rb-Rb}} \simeq 100.4a_0$.

The liquid-gas transition parameter $\delta g = g_{\text{K-Rb}} + \sqrt{g_{\text{K-K}}g_{\text{Rb-Rb}}}$, allows us to chart the Bose mixture phase diagram: as the magnetic field is varied in the aforementioned range, the mixture goes through the droplet, miscible and immiscible phases.

GB, A. Burchianti, F. Minardi, T. Macrì, Phys. Rev. A 106, 023301 (2022)

We study the effect of an impurity in the droplet phase within the Gross-Pitaevskii framework.



Quite a rich phenomenology arises, with three different regimes.

A: for B = 63.5~G the potential, even though it has a small attractive region, does not support bound states in three dimensions not allowing for an impurity to be bound to the droplet.

B: as the magnetic field is increased, for B = 65.1 G and for B = 66.0 G we observe that the impurity is localized at the surface of the droplet at a distance $r \approx 1 \mu m$ form the center.

C: finally, as the magnetic field is further increased we show that for B = 66.6 G the impurity is localized at the center of the self-bound droplet.

GB, A. Burchianti, F. Minardi, T. Macrì, Phys. Rev. A 106, 023301 (2022)

Rotational states: an impurity on the surface of a sphere?

Let us consider just the effective potential V_{eff} , for a fixed droplet profile. Which states can it support?



- a-b) Ground state of an impurity at B = 66.6 G and at B = 65.8 G.
- c) Excited state of an impurity at B = 65.8 G for $\ell = 10$ and m = 10.

d) Effective potential $V_{\text{eff}}(r)$ and density of the impurity $n_I(r)$ for the n = 0, ..., 3 s-wave bound states.

e) Spectrum of the impurity eigenstates in the presence of the effective potential.

GB, A. Burchianti, F. Minardi, T. Macrì, Phys. Rev. A 106, 023301 (2022)

A new perspective: **impurities on the surface of a sphere**. Experimental realization via a bubble trap in microgravity (fall tower, ISS)?

A new perspective: **impurities on the surface of a sphere**. Experimental realization via a bubble trap in microgravity (fall tower, ISS)?

How does the low-energy Hamiltonian look like?

$$\hat{H}_{\rm imp} = \frac{\hbar^2 \hat{L}^2}{2mR^2}$$

$$\hat{H}_{\rm bos} = \sum_{lm} \omega_l \; \hat{b}^{\dagger}_{lm} \hat{b}_{lm}$$

$$\hat{H}_{\text{imp-bos}} = \sum_{lm} \, U_{lm} Y^*_{lm}(\hat{\theta}_{\text{imp}}, \hat{\phi}_{\text{imp}}) b^{\dagger}_{lm} + h.c.$$

(Essentially) the same Hamiltonian as the one describing a rotating impurity in a 3D condensate. In one case the **topological information** is on the impurity, in the other case it is on the condensate, but the physics is the same!

Something more: multi-layer systems

Classic bilayer XY model: **BKT-paired phase**. $\mathcal{H}_0 = -J \sum_{\langle ij \rangle} \cos(\phi_i - \phi_j) - J \sum_{\langle ij \rangle} \cos(\psi_i - \psi_j)$ $\mathcal{H}_1 = -K \sum_i \cos(\phi_i - \psi_i)$

GB, N. Defenu, I. Nándori, L. Salasnich, A. Trombettoni, Phys. Rev. Lett. 123, 100601 (2019).

Exotic phases in multi-layer systems can be discovered and categorized via **machine learning**.

W. Rządkowski, N. Defenu, S. Chiacchiera, A. Trombettoni, GB, New J. Phys. 22, 093026 (2020).

Bond percolation on two-dimensional multilayers: p is the activation probability for intra-layer bonds, while p_{perp} is the activation probability for inter-layer bonds.

GB, A. Trombettoni, "Phase diagram of multilayer percolation", in preparation.







Diagrammatics and molecules in helium: Misha Lemeshko, Igor Cherepanov (IST Austria), Timur Tscherbul (U. Nevada, Reno), Alberto Cappellaro (Padova) and Henrik Stapelfeldt's group (Aarhus University).

Bose-Bose mixtures: Tommaso Macrì (Harvard, QuEra) Alessia Burchianti, Francesco Minardi (LENS, Florence).

Bilayers: Andrea Trombettoni (Trieste), Nicolò Defenu (ETH), Wojciech Rządkowski (Google).

Thank you for your attention.



Der Wissenschaftsfonds.







UNIVERSITÄ HEIDELBERG ZUKUNFT SEIT 1386 Parts of this work are supported by a Lise Meitner Fellowship of the Austrian Science Fund (FWF), project Nr. M2461-N27 and by the DFG (German Research Foundation) under Germany's Excellence Strategy — the Heidelberg STRUCTURES Excellence Cluster.

These slides at http://bigh.in



Variational Ansatz

Expansion in bath excitations: $|\Psi\rangle \approx | \bigcirc \rangle_{imp} \otimes |0\rangle_{bos} + | \bigcirc \rangle_{imp} \otimes |1\rangle_{bos} + \dots$

Or, better, as the total angular momentum *L*, *M* is a good quantum number: $|\Psi_{LM}\rangle \approx | \bigcirc_{LM} \rangle_{imp} \otimes |0\rangle_{bos} + C^{LM}_{j_1m_1j_2m_2} | \bigcirc_{j_1m_1} \rangle_{imp} \otimes |1_{j_2m_2}\rangle_{bos} + \dots$

plus some variational coefficients, to optimize by minimizing energy. See for instance: R. Schmidt and M. Lemeshko, Phys. Rev. Lett. **114**, 203001 (2015). To study the effect of an impurity in the droplet phase we assume that, within the Gross-Pitaevskii framework, the two components are described by a single complex field $\phi(\mathbf{r})$ with the associated energy functional

$$E_{bb}[\phi_i] = \int d^3 r \sum_{i=1,2} \left(\frac{\hbar^2 |\nabla \phi_i|^2}{2m_i} + \frac{g_{ii}}{2} |\phi_i|^4 \right) + g_{12} |\phi_1|^2 |\phi_2|^2 + \frac{8}{15\pi^2 \hbar^3} \left(m_1^{\frac{3}{5}} g_{11} |\phi_1|^2 + m_2^{\frac{3}{5}} g_{22} |\phi_2|^2 \right)^{\frac{5}{2}}$$

where the last term is the beyond mean-field interaction for a general two-component mixture. The impurity interaction with the Bose mixture is described by the energy functional

$$E_{I}[\phi_{i},\psi] = \int \mathrm{d}^{3}r \frac{\hbar^{2}|\nabla\psi|^{2}}{2m_{I}} + \left(g_{ID}|\phi(\mathbf{r})|^{2} + \mathscr{E}_{\mathsf{BMF}}(\mathbf{r})\right)|\psi(\mathbf{r})|^{2}$$

The last term $\mathscr{E}_{\text{BMF}}(\mathbf{r})$ is the beyond mean-field interaction for a general two-component mixture. Note that $\mathscr{E}_{\text{BMF}} \propto n^{3/2}$.

$$\begin{cases} j_{1} & j_{2} & j_{3} \\ j_{22} & j_{31} & j_{12} \end{cases} \sum_{m,m,m_{1}} \begin{pmatrix} j_{1} & j_{1} & j_{2} \\ m_{1} & m_{2} & m_{3} \end{pmatrix} D_{m,m'_{1}}^{j_{1}}(R_{2}) D_{m,m'_{1}}^{j_{2}}(R_{2}) D_{m,m'_{1}}^{j_{2}}(R_{2}) \\ = \sum_{\substack{m,m'_{1},m'_{1},m'_{1},m'_{2},m'_{2},m'_{2} \\ m'_{11},m'_{12}m'_{2}m'_{2}m'_{2}}} (-1)^{j_{1}-1} M_{1} + j_{2} - M_{1} +$$