Vortices On “Rail Road Track”:
A Possible Realization of Random Matrix Ensemble

Yang Chen and Henrik Jeldtoft Jensen
Department of Mathematics
Imperial College
180 Queen’s Gate, London SW7 2BZ, U. K.
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Abstract

The thermodynamics of interacting vortices constricted to move in one-dimensional tracks carved out on superconducting films in the extreme type-II limit is mapped into the Coulomb gas model of random matrices. Application of the Selberg Integral supply exact expressions for the constitutive relation for two configurations of tracks.

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In the present paper we derive an exact expression for the constitutive relation between the external magnetic field, $H$, and the magnetic induction, $B$, inside a type II superconductor, i.e., we determine the relationship $B = B(H)$. The induction inside the superconductor is determined by the density, $n$, of magnetic vortices. Each vortex carries one flux quantum $\Phi_0$, hence $B = \Phi_0 n$. In order to be able to find an exact expression for $B(H)$ we restrict ourselves to thin superconducting films. The interaction energy of two vortices depends in this case logarithmically on the distance of separation of the two vortices. Furthermore, we assume that the vortices are confined to move on tracks engraved into the superconducting film, see Fig. 1. This experimental situation has in fact been studied by Pruymboom et al.\cite{Pruymboom2002}. The thickness of the film is reduced in the track. Since there is a loss of condensation energy in the core of a vortex, it will be energetically favourable to position a vortex with the core on the track rather than outside the track, where the core would have to drill its way through a thicker layer of superfluid.

The combined simplification of logarithmic interaction and restriction on the configurational degrees of freedom allow us to map the problem onto the Coulomb gas model of random matrices.\cite{Stephan2003} The partition function is known exactly for this model and the constitutive relation readily derived.

Let us now describe the derivation of the relation between $H$ and $B$. The partition function for a fixed number of $N$ two dimensional vortices on a track is given by:

$$Z_N = \left( \prod_{a=1}^{N} \int_0^L \frac{dx_a}{l} \right) \exp \left(-\beta E[x_1, \ldots, x_N] \right), \quad (1)$$

where

$$E[x_1, \ldots, x_N] = NE_c - E_1 \sum_{1 \leq a < b \leq N} \ln \left( \frac{|x_a - x_b|}{\lambda_{\text{eff}}} \right), \quad (2)$$

where $E_c(>0)$ is the energy of the vortex core and $E_1(>0)$ sets the scale of the vortex interaction.\cite{Stephan2003} Both $E_c$ and $E_1$ are temperature dependent.\cite{Stephan2003} The length of a the tracks are denoted by $L$, see Fig. 1. The scale of the logarithmic interaction is set by the effective magnetic penetration depth, $\lambda_{\text{eff}}$, of the film. Expressed in terms of the bulk penetration depth $\lambda$ and the film thickness $d$ one has $\lambda_{\text{eff}} = \lambda^2/2d$.\cite{Stephan2003} $\beta = 1/T$ is the inverse temperature. $N$ is related to the magnetic induction $B$ through $BLR = N\Phi_0$, where $R$ is the distance between the individual tracks, see Fig. 1. $l$ the length scale of the configuration space and may be taken to be equal to $\xi(0)$, the coherence length at zero temperature. We assume that $L < \lambda_{\text{eff}}$ and $R \gg \lambda_{\text{eff}}$. 

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The condition $\lambda_{\text{eff}} \gg L$ ensures that the logarithmic interaction is valid for all possible separations of a pair of vortices on the same track. Beyond the distance $\lambda_{\text{eff}}$ the vortex interaction decays exponentially due to the diamagnetic screening currents. Consequently, we can neglect the interaction between vortices on different tracks if the condition $R \gg \lambda_{\text{eff}}$ is fulfilled.

It should be noticed that the vortices will stay in the tracks for magnetic fields less that a certain filed strength $H^*$. At $H^*$ the repulsion between the flux lines becomes so strong that it will be able to over come the pinning force exerted by the carved track. The actual value of $H^*$ will depend on the depth of the groove and in a first approximation will be equal to the $H_{c_1}$ of the bulk material. The partition function in Eq. 1 applies for fields $H < H^*$.

The partition function can be re-written as:

$$Z_N = e^{-N\bar{E}_c} \left( \frac{L}{l} \right)^N \left( \frac{L}{\lambda_{\text{eff}}} \right)^{N(N-1)} \bar{E}_1 \prod_{a=1}^{N} \int_0^1 dt_a \prod_{1 \leq a < b \leq N} |t_a - t_b|^2 \bar{E}_1,$$  

where we have introduced the following dimensionless energies:

$$\bar{E}_c = \frac{E_c}{T}, \quad \bar{E}_1 = \frac{E_1}{2T},$$

and the dimensionless integration variables $t_a$. The multiple integral in Eq. 3 is a special case of the Selberg integral, with its aid we obtain the partition function and the free energy of this system:

$$-\frac{F_N}{T} = \ln Z_N = N \left[ \ln(L/l) - \ln\Gamma(1 + \bar{E}_1) - \bar{E}_c \right] + N(N-1)\bar{E}_1 \ln(L/\lambda_{\text{eff}})$$

$$+ \sum_{j=0}^{N-1} \ln \left[ \frac{\Gamma(1 + (j + 1)\bar{E}_1)\Gamma^2(1 + j\bar{E}_1)}{\Gamma(2 + (N - 1 + j)\bar{E}_1)} \right].$$

An expression for the lower critical field $H_{c_1}$ is obtained from the condition that the Gibbs free energy of the state with a single vortex $F_1 - H_{c_1} BV/4\pi$ ($V = LD$ is the volume per track) is equal to the Gibbs free energy of the state without any vortices $F_0 = 0$. The result is

$$H_{c_1} = \frac{4\pi}{\Phi_0 d}(E_c - T \ln(L/l))$$

The constitutive relation is obtained in the following way which makes use of the fact that $H$ acts as the chemical potential for the vortices and $\frac{dG}{dN} = 0$, where $G$ is the Gibbs
free energy for the system:

$$\frac{\partial F_N}{\partial N} = \frac{1}{4\pi} \frac{\Phi_0}{LR} V$$  \hspace{1cm} (7)$$

We simplify the above expression in the large $N$ limit, by replacing the sum of the logarithms by an integral while discarding the differences between $N$ and $N \pm 1$. With the aid of $\Gamma(ax + b) \approx (2\pi)^{1/2} e^{-ax} (ax)^{ax+b-1/2}$, $a > 0$, $b > 0$, $x \gg 1$ we find

$$\frac{dH}{4\pi T} \Phi_o = 2X \ln(4\lambda_{\text{eff}}/L) + \ln X, \hspace{1cm} (8)$$

where $X := N\bar{E}_1 = (BLR/\Phi_o) \bar{E}_1$, and we have discarded the $N$ independent and $O(N^{-1})$ terms. The magnetic permeability $\mu$ in the high field limit, can be found by further discarding the $\ln X$ term

$$B = \mu_o H, \hspace{1cm} (9)$$

with

$$\mu_o = \frac{d\Phi_o^2}{4\pi E_1 LR \ln(4\lambda_{\text{eff}}/L)}. \hspace{1cm} (10)$$

The constitutive relation has a weak logarithmic correction for not too large $H$. This is found by the substitution $X = X_o + \delta X$, where

$$\frac{\delta X}{X_o} = - \ln \left( \frac{dH\Phi_o}{8\pi T \ln(4\lambda_{\text{eff}}/L)} \right), \hspace{1cm} (11)$$

which in turns supplies a non-linear permeability $\mu(H) = \mu_o (1 + \delta X/X_o)$. The permeability is slightly reduced from the its high field values which is to be expected.

So far we have considered the ensemble where the position of the vortices are restricted to a straight line of length $L$. Let us now consider a system in which the vortices are confined to a circular track of radius $R_o$. In this case we avoid edge effects. The thermodynamics of the the logarithmically interacting vortices on a ring are obtained from Dyson’s circular ensemble. The interaction energy of the vortices is given by

$$E^c[\theta_1 \ldots \theta_N] = NE_c - E_1 \sum_{1 \leq a < b \leq N} \ln \left( \frac{R_o}{\lambda_{\text{eff}}} |e^{i\theta_a} - e^{i\theta_b}| \right), \hspace{1cm} (12)$$

and the partition function

$$Z_N^c = \left( \prod_{a=1}^N \int_0^{2\pi} \frac{R_o}{2\pi l} d\theta_a \right) \exp (-\beta E^c[\theta_1 \ldots \theta_N]), \hspace{1cm} (13)$$
where $R_o(\ll \lambda_{\text{eff}})$ is the circumference of the circle. The constitutive relation is in this case easily obtained directly from the difference $F_{N+1} - F_N$ in free energy. We have

$$- \left( \frac{F_{N+1}^c - F_N^c}{T} \right) = 2N\bar{E}_1 \ln(R_o/\lambda_{\text{eff}}) + \ln \left[ \frac{\Gamma((N + 1)\bar{E}_1)}{\Gamma(N\bar{E}_1)} \right].$$  \hfill (14)

For large $N$ and with the aid of large $x$ behaviour of $\Gamma(ax+b)$, we find,

$$\frac{\Phi_o H}{8\pi^2 R_o dT} V = 2\ln(\lambda_{\text{eff}}/2\pi R_o) Y + \bar{E}_1 \ln Y,$$  \hfill (15)

where

$$Y := N\bar{E}_1,$$  \hfill (16)

The result for the permeability in the high field limit reads

$$\mu_o^C = \frac{1}{32\pi^2 E_1 R_o \ln(\lambda_{\text{eff}}/2\pi R_o)} \frac{\Phi_o^2}{Y}$$  \hfill (17)

a result similar to that of the straight track.

We have derive an exact expression for the constitutive relation for an artificially patterned superconducting thin film. The result should be directly experimentally accessible. Pinning along the engraved track may in principle influence the motion of the vortices. Although, it appears that for deep grooves pinning should effect the motion parallel to the track rather insignificantly.

Our future extension of the present calculation will be to apply random matrix theory to the dynamics of the vortices in the constricted geometry.
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Captions

Figure 1.
Sketch of a superconducting thin film with tracks engraved into the surface.

Figure 2.
The induction $B$ as function of the external magnetic field $H$ obtained from Eq. 8 for the following set of parameters: $L = 1\mu m = R/10$, $d = 10$ Å, and $\lambda = 1500$ Å. The temperature is supposed to be 10K.