

Stochastic Relaxation of the Electroweak Scale

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Based on 2210.01148, 2211.15694
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Outline of this talk

- Review of the **relaxion mechanism**
- Role of quantum **fluctuations** during relaxation
 - **Stochastic** dynamics
 - Can the relaxion explain **dark matter**?
 - Can the relaxion be a **QCD axion**?

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Scalar fields in cosmology

Wide range of applications

- Strong CP problem, dark matter, dark energy, inflation, ...

Weinberg,
PRL 40, 223.

Well-motivated example: **axion** (dynamical solution to the **strong CP problem**)

- The standard model Lagrangian allows for a term

$$\mathcal{L}_{\bar{\Theta}} = -\bar{\Theta} \frac{g_s^2}{32\pi^2} F_{a\mu\nu} \tilde{F}_a^{\mu\nu}$$

- Experiments constraint $\bar{\Theta} < 10^{-10}$, (no CP violation in the strong sector)
- The axion field φ couples to the QCD anomalous term

$$\mathcal{L} = -\frac{\varphi}{f} \frac{g_s^2}{32\pi^2} F_{a\mu\nu} \tilde{F}_a^{\mu\nu}$$

- The effective low-energy potential is minimized at the CP conserving value $\varphi = 0$.

Vafa, Witten,
Nucl.Phys. B234 (1984)

$$U(\varphi) = \Lambda_b^4 [1 - \cos(\varphi/f)]$$

In this work I focus on the **relaxion** and the **Higgs mass hierarchy problem**.

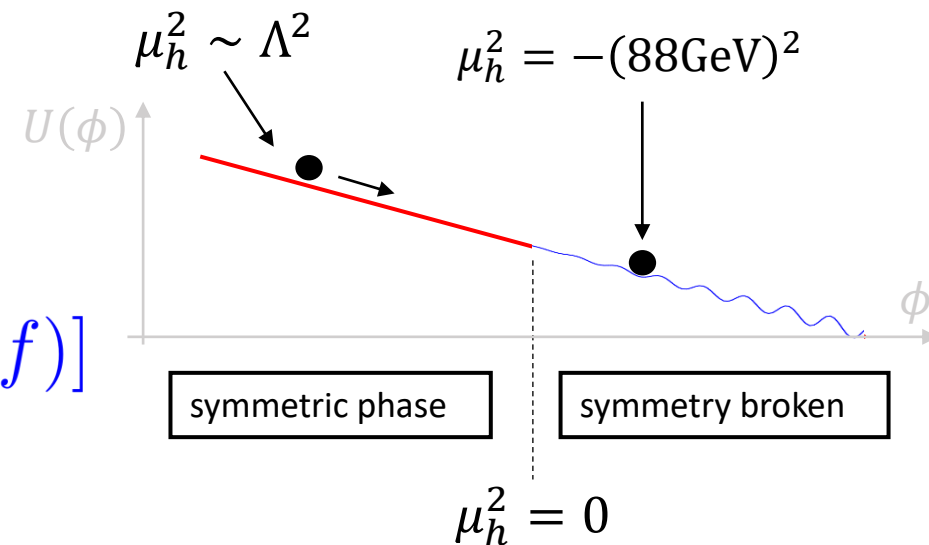
- **Dynamical Higgs mass**, controlled by vev of ϕ

$$\mu_h^2 \rightarrow \mu_h^2(\phi) = \Lambda^2 - g\Lambda\phi$$

- **Rolling potential** for ϕ

$$U(\phi) = -g\Lambda^3\phi + \Lambda_b^4(v_h)[1 - \cos(\phi/f)]$$

- Higgs-vev-dependent **relaxion barriers**.



Stopping mechanism

Slow-roll dynamics **during inflation**,

$$\dot{\phi}_{SR} = \frac{U'}{3H_I}$$



The relaxion stops near the first minimum: $\Lambda_b^4 \sim g\Lambda^3 f$.

The relaxion-Higgs potential

$$U(h, \phi) = \frac{1}{2} [\Lambda^2 - g\Lambda\phi] h^2 + \frac{\lambda_h}{4!} h^4 - g\Lambda^3\phi + \Lambda_b^4(v_h)[1 - \cos(\phi/f)]$$

The QCD and nonQCD models

The **QCD** relaxion model

- Higgs-dependent barriers from the **QCD anomaly**,

$$\Lambda_b^4(v_h) \approx \Lambda_{QCD}^3 m_u$$

- Problem: the relaxion no longer solves the **strong CP problem!**

$$\bar{\theta} = \arcsin\left(\frac{g\Lambda^3 f}{\Lambda_b^4}\right) \sim \mathcal{O}(1)$$

The **nonQCD** relaxion model

- Higgs-dependent barriers from a **hidden gauge group**

Parameter region: the nonQCD model

1) Vacuum energy

The **change of relaxion energy** much less compared to the **energy scale of inflation**

$$\Delta U \sim \Lambda^4 < H_I^2 M_{Pl}^2$$

2) Classical beats quantum

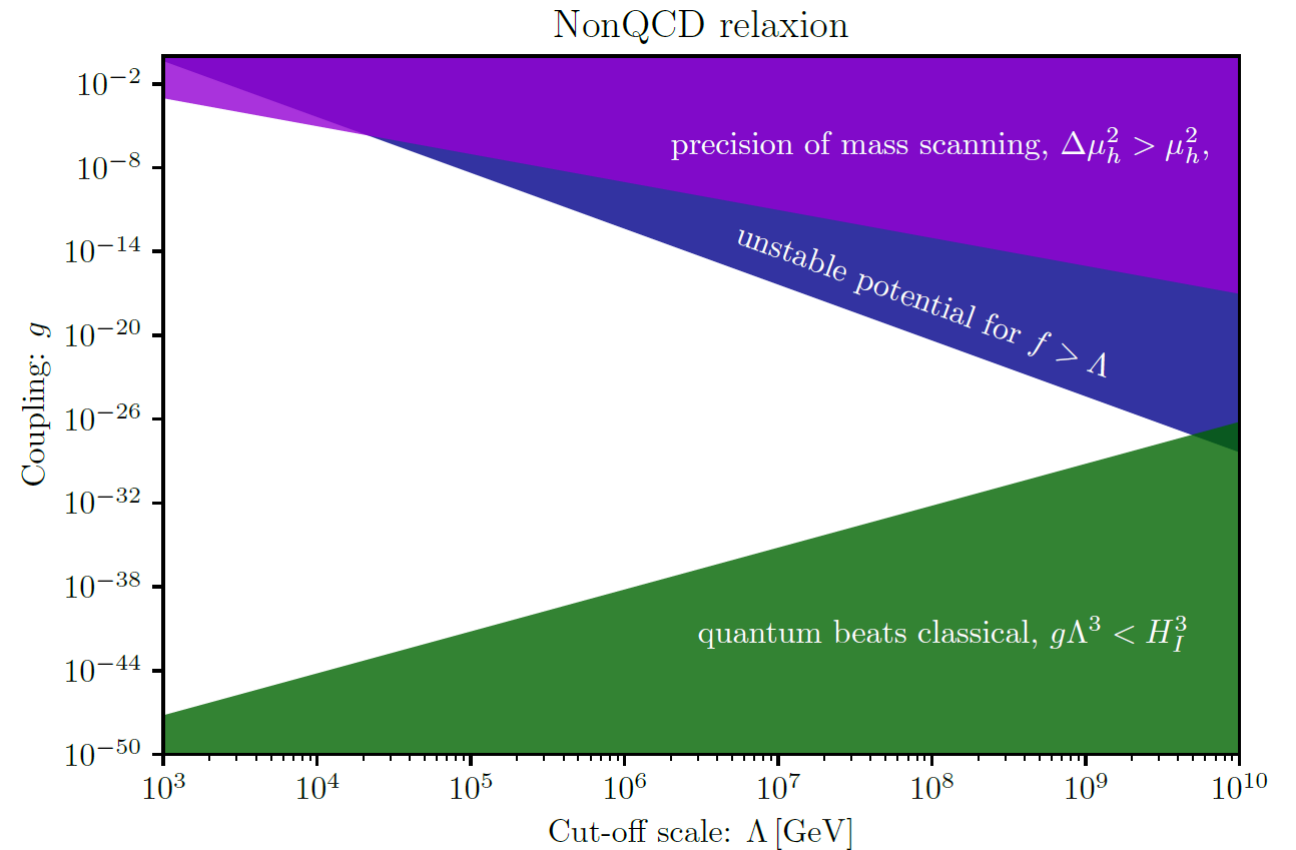
The **slow-roll** ($\dot{\phi} = g\Lambda^3/3H_I$) per unit Hubble time dominates over the random walk ($\Delta\phi \sim H_I$)

$$H_I < (g\Lambda^3)^{1/3}$$

1) + 2)



$$\frac{\Lambda^2}{M_{Pl}} < H_I < g^{1/3} \Lambda$$



$$\Lambda < 4 \times 10^9 \text{ GeV} \left(\frac{\Lambda_b}{\sqrt{4\pi v_h}} \right)^{4/7}$$

- Review of the **relaxion mechanism**
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 - **Stochastic** dynamics
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The stochastic formalism

- The relaxion vev receives **random kicks** from superhorizon fluctuations
- The dynamics can be described in terms of a **Fokker-Planck equation**

$$\rho(\phi, t) - \text{probability distribution} \quad \nearrow \quad \frac{d\rho}{dt} = \underbrace{\frac{1}{3H_I} \frac{\partial(\rho \partial_\phi U)}{\partial \phi}}_{\text{Drift term}} + \underbrace{\frac{H_I^3}{8\pi^2} \frac{\partial^2 \rho}{\partial \phi^2}}_{\text{Diffusion term}}$$

e.g. 9407016

Diffusion introduces new effects, such as

- the **broadening** of the distribution, $\sigma(t) = \sqrt{\frac{H_I^3}{4\pi^2} t}$
- **probability fluxes** between neighboring local minima,

Nelson et. al., 1708.00010

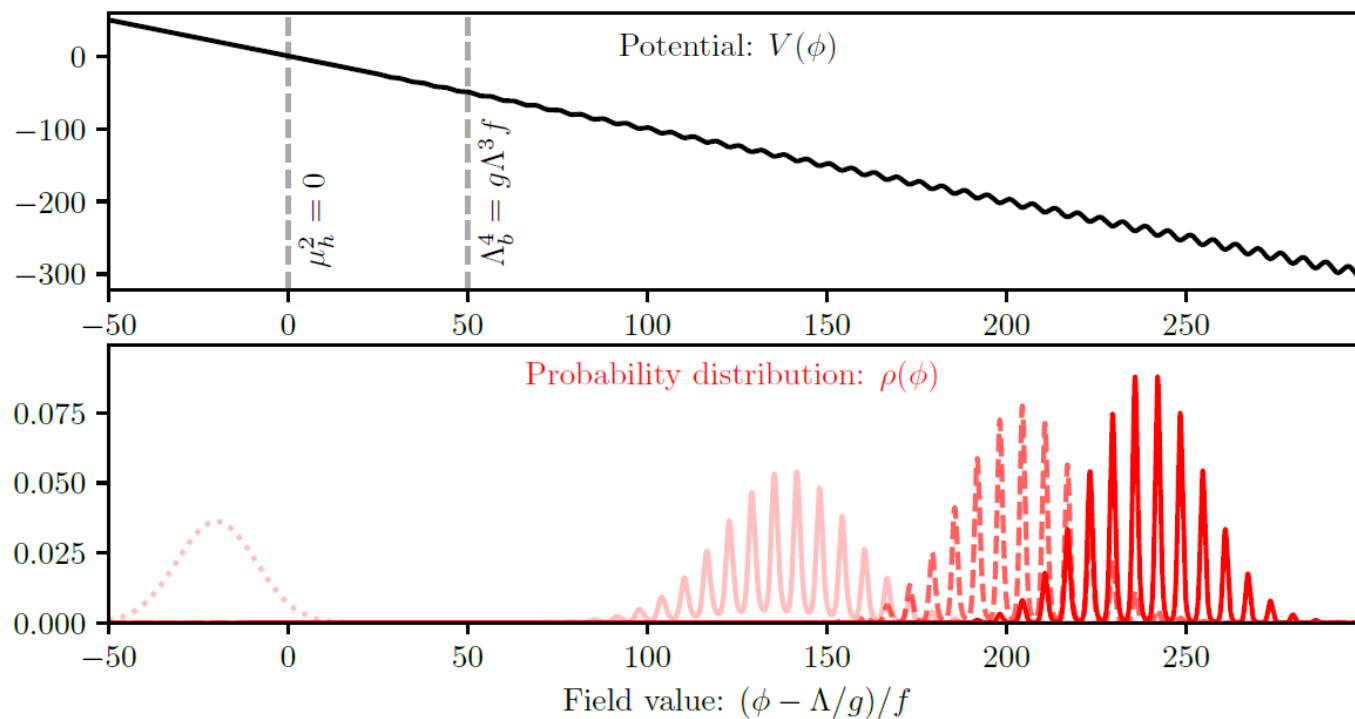
$$k \approx \frac{\sqrt{U_0'' |U_b''|}}{6\pi H_I} e^{-B},$$

$$B = \frac{8\pi^2 \Delta U_b}{3H_I^4}$$

Hawking-Moss instanton

PLB 110 (1982) 35.

Illustration of the dynamics & stopping



The relaxation slows down after

$$B = \frac{8\pi^2 \Delta U_b}{3H_I^4} \sim 1$$

The new stopping condition

$$\Lambda_b^4 \sim \max(g\Lambda^3 f, H_I^4).$$

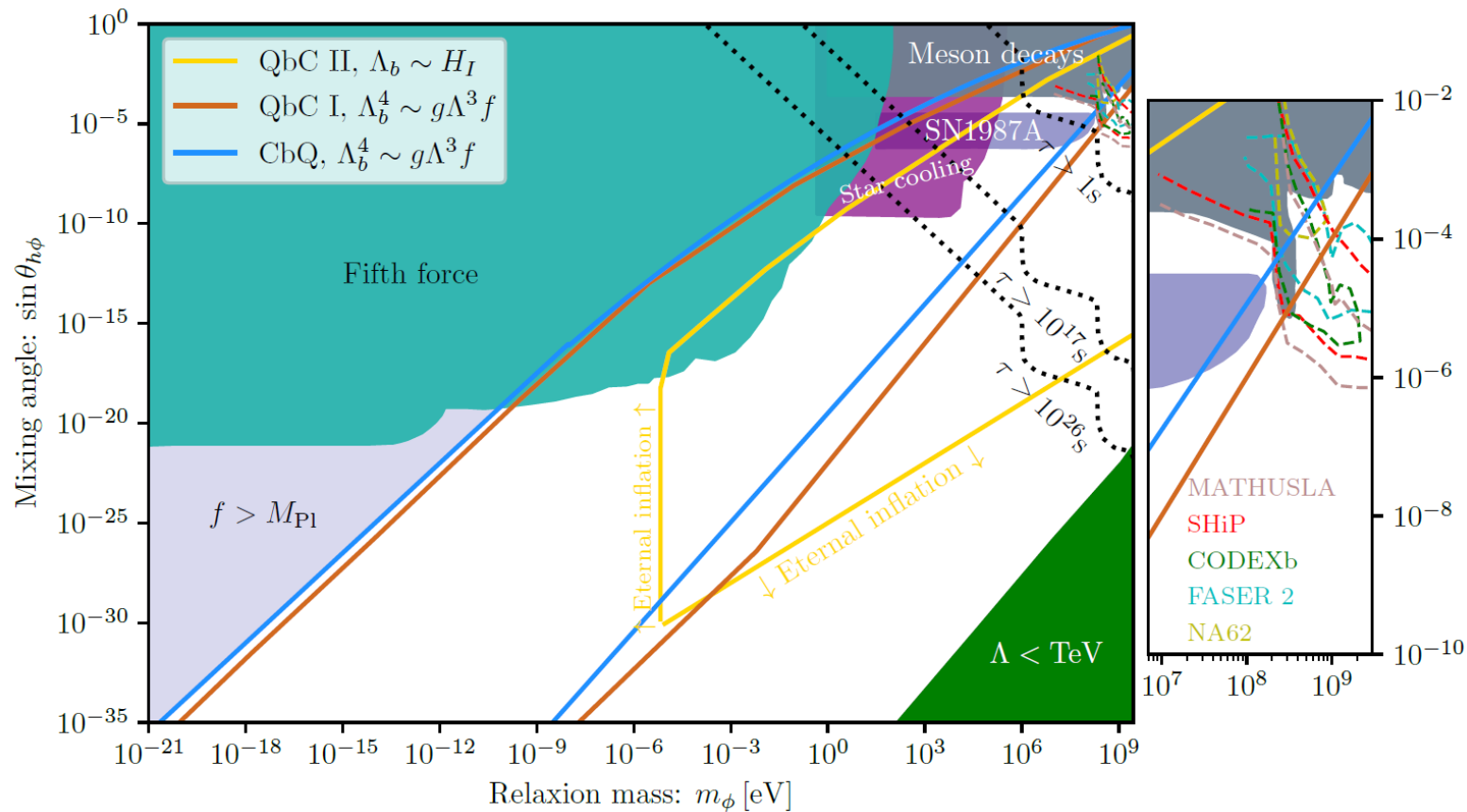
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Relaxion-Higgs mixing

In most of the parameter space the relaxion is light and long-lived, interacts via its Higgs mixing

$$\sin(2\theta_{h\phi}) = -\frac{2m_{h\phi}^2}{\sqrt{(2m_{h\phi}^2)^2 + (m_h^2 - m_\phi^2)^2}}$$

$$m_{h\phi}^2 = \frac{\partial^2 U}{\partial h \partial \phi}$$



Flacke et. al., 1610.02025

Hardy et al., 1611.05852

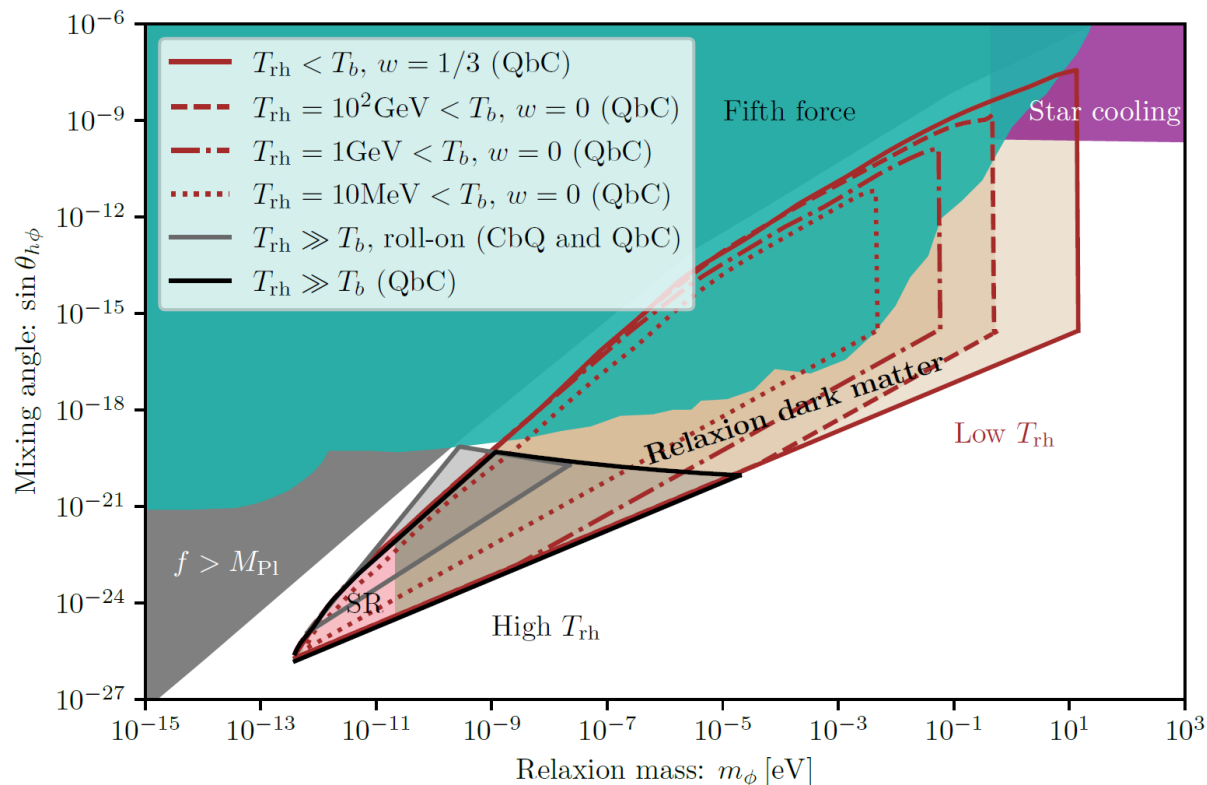
Balaji et al., 2205.01699

Relaxion dark matter window

In most of the parameter space the relaxion is light and long-lived, interacts via its Higgs mixing

Can the relaxion account for the dark matter?

Yes, via its misalignment from the minimum



Brown: low reheating temperature, stochastic misalignment

$$\rho(\phi) \propto \exp\left(-\frac{8\pi^2 V(\phi)}{3H_I^4}\right)$$

Graham et al 1805.07362
Takahashi et al 1805.08763

Grey: high reheating temperature, misalignment from roll-on after reheating [Banerjee et. al., 1810.01889](#)

Black: high reheating temperature, stochastic misalignment

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Implications for the QCD relaxion model

The local minima of the relaxion potential are at

$$0 = V'(\phi_0) = -g\Lambda^3 + \frac{\Lambda_b^4(\phi_0)}{f} \sin\left(\frac{\phi_0}{f}\right)$$

resulting in a nonvanishing θ -angle,

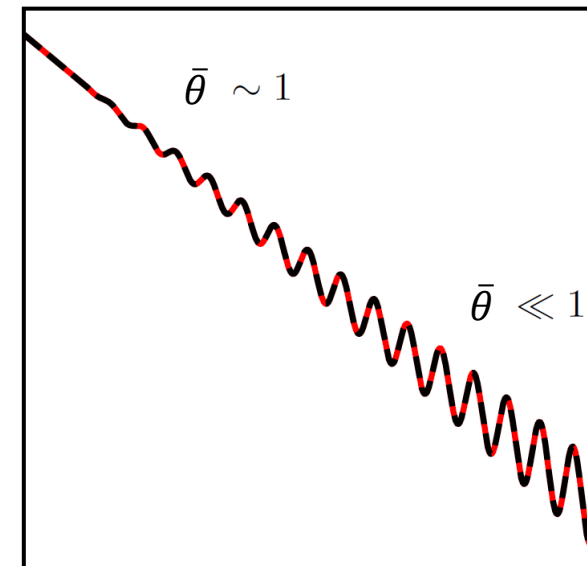
$$\bar{\theta} = \arcsin\left(\frac{g\Lambda^3 f}{\Lambda_b^4}\right)$$

Strong CP problem **can be solved**
in the QbC regime if

$$H_I \sim \Lambda_b \approx 75\text{MeV}$$

and

$$g\Lambda^3 f < 10^{-10} \Lambda_b^4$$



Field: ϕ

- New perspective into the relaxation mechanism when considering the effects of fluctuations i.e. the **stochastic dynamics**.
- The mechanism **can address multiple problems at the same time**.
- Future directions: Other applications or observational signatures?

Thanks for your attention!

Backup slides

The parameter space

1) Vacuum energy

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$$\Delta U \sim \Lambda^4 < H_I^2 M_{Pl}^2$$

2) Classical beats quantum (CbQ)

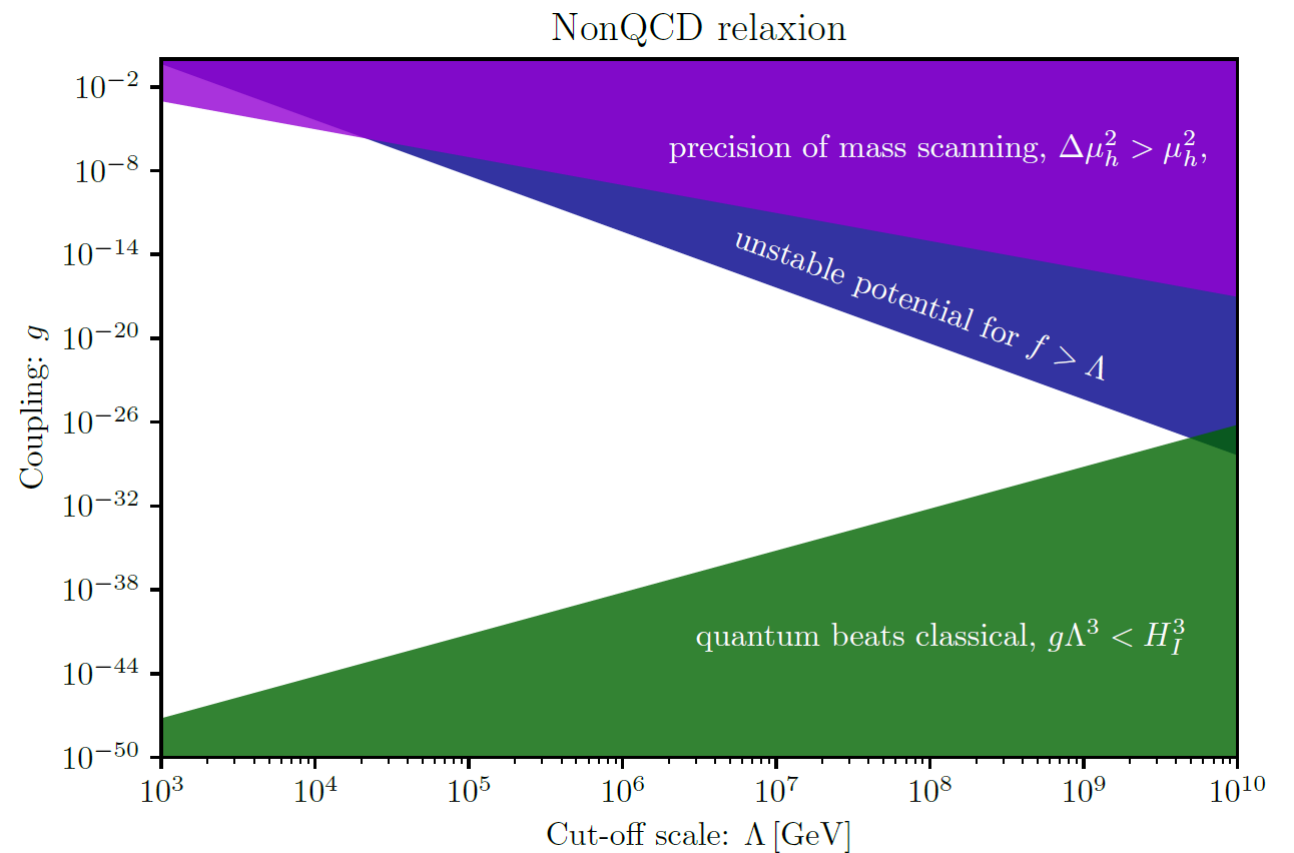
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$$\Lambda < 4 \times 10^9 \text{ GeV} \left(\frac{\Lambda_b}{\sqrt{4\pi v_h}} \right)^{4/7}$$

The local minima of the relaxation potential are **not** CP conserving

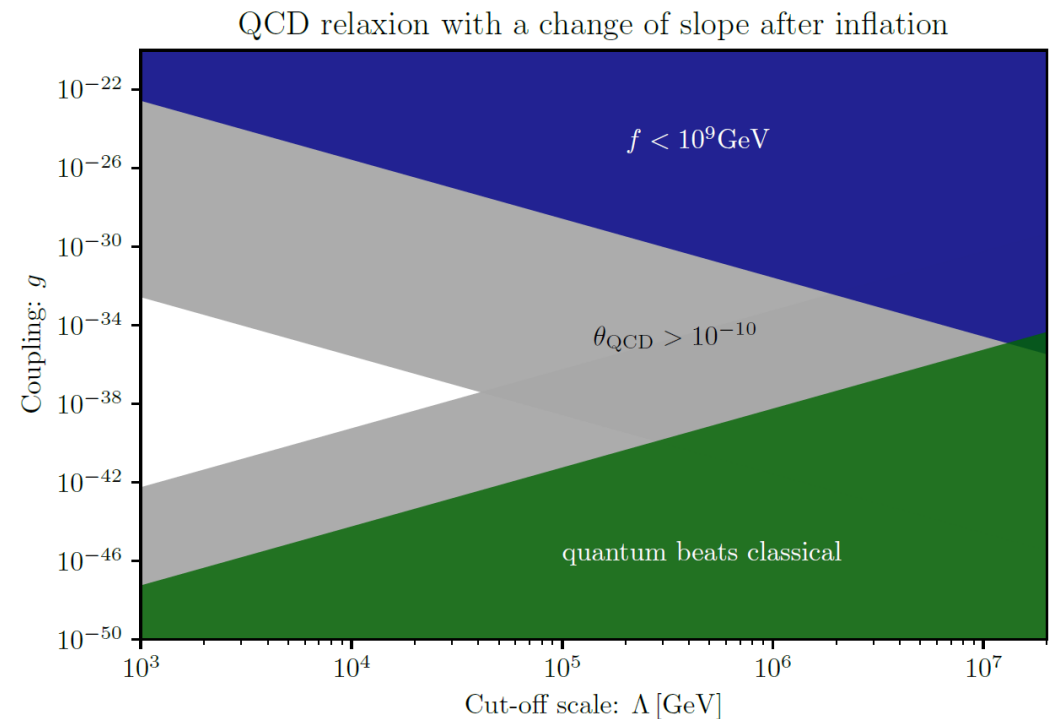
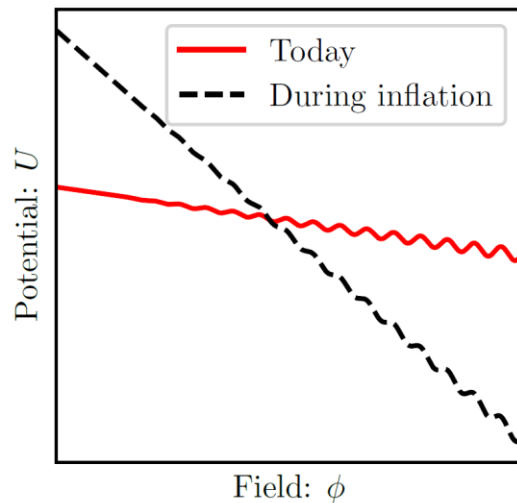
$$0 = U'(\bar{\theta}) = -g\Lambda^3 + \frac{\Lambda_b^4}{f} \sin \bar{\theta} \quad \longrightarrow \quad \bar{\theta} = \arcsin\left(\frac{g\Lambda^3 f}{\Lambda_b^4}\right)$$

Solution: the slope of the potential drops after inflation,

$$g = \xi g_I, \quad \xi < 10^{-10},$$

to reduce CP violation

$$\bar{\theta} = \xi \bar{\theta}_I < 10^{-10}.$$



$$\Lambda < 3 \times 10^4 \text{ GeV} \left(\frac{10^9 \text{ GeV}}{f} \right)^{1/6} \left(\frac{\xi}{10^{-10}} \right)^{1/4}.$$

Eternal inflation and volume weighting

- The minimum number of e-folds of inflation required to relax the Higgs mass from $\mu_h \sim \Lambda$ to $\mu_h = 0$ is given by

$$N_I = H_I t_I > N_{\text{req}} = \frac{3H_I^2}{g^2 \Lambda^2}$$

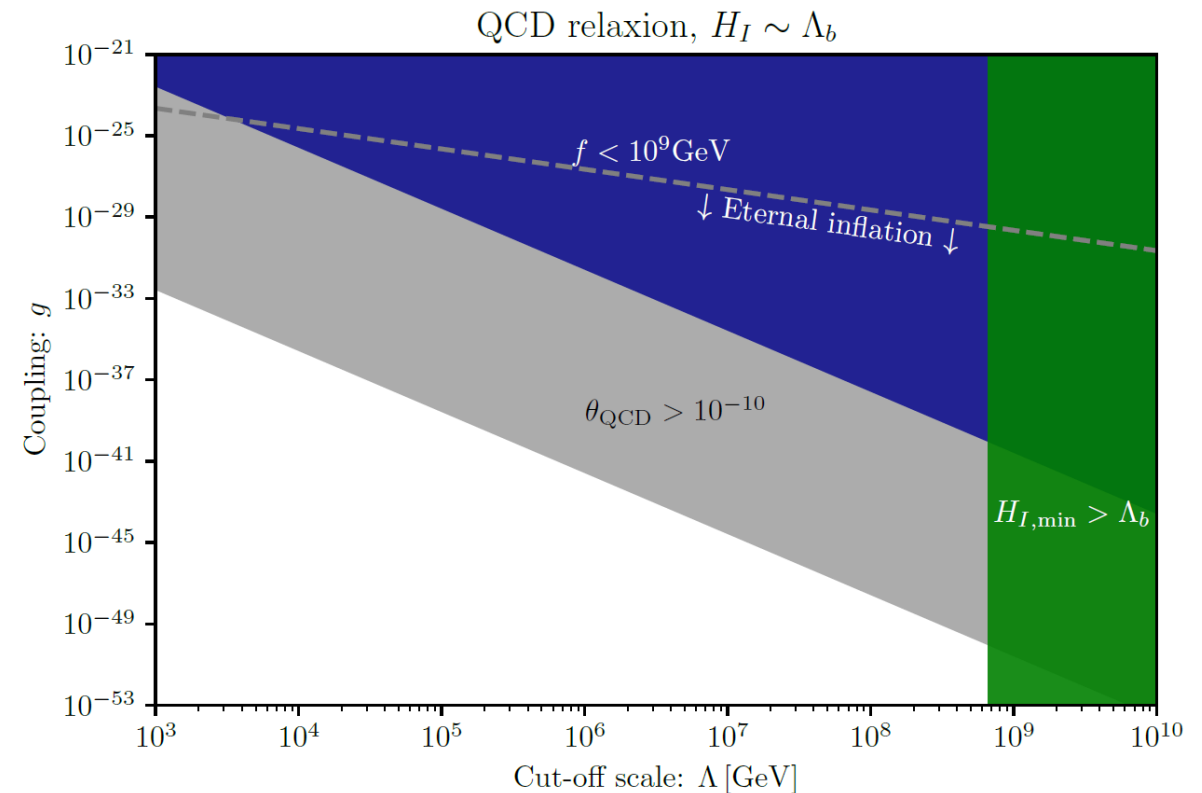
- If $N_I > N_c \sim \frac{2\pi^2}{3} \frac{M_{\text{Pl}}^2}{H_I^2}$, inflation is **eternal**.

0802.1067

- Eternal inflation has associated measure problems.

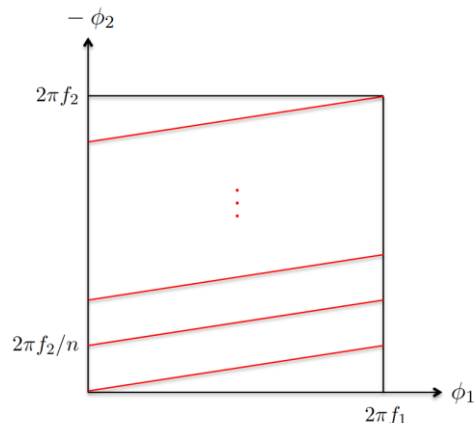
- Possible solution: using scale factor cut-off measure.

Nelson et. al., 1708.00010



Large field range from the clockwork mechanism

Example: 2 axions



$$\mathcal{L} = \frac{1}{2} (\partial_\mu \phi_1)^2 + \frac{1}{2} (\partial_\mu \phi_2)^2 - \left(\tilde{V}_0 + V_0 + \mu_h^2 |h|^2 + V_{\text{br}} + \dots \right)$$

$$\tilde{V}_0 = -\Lambda^4 \cos \left(\frac{\phi_1}{f_1} + n \frac{\phi_2}{f_2} \right),$$

$$V_0 = -\epsilon f_2^4 \cos \left(\frac{\phi_2}{f_2} + \delta_2 \right),$$

$$\mu_h^2 = M_h^2 - \epsilon' f_2^2 \cos \left(\frac{\phi_2}{f_2} + \delta_2' \right),$$

$$V_{\text{br}} = -\Lambda_{\text{br}}^4(h) \cos \left(\frac{\phi_1}{f_1} + \delta_1 \right),$$

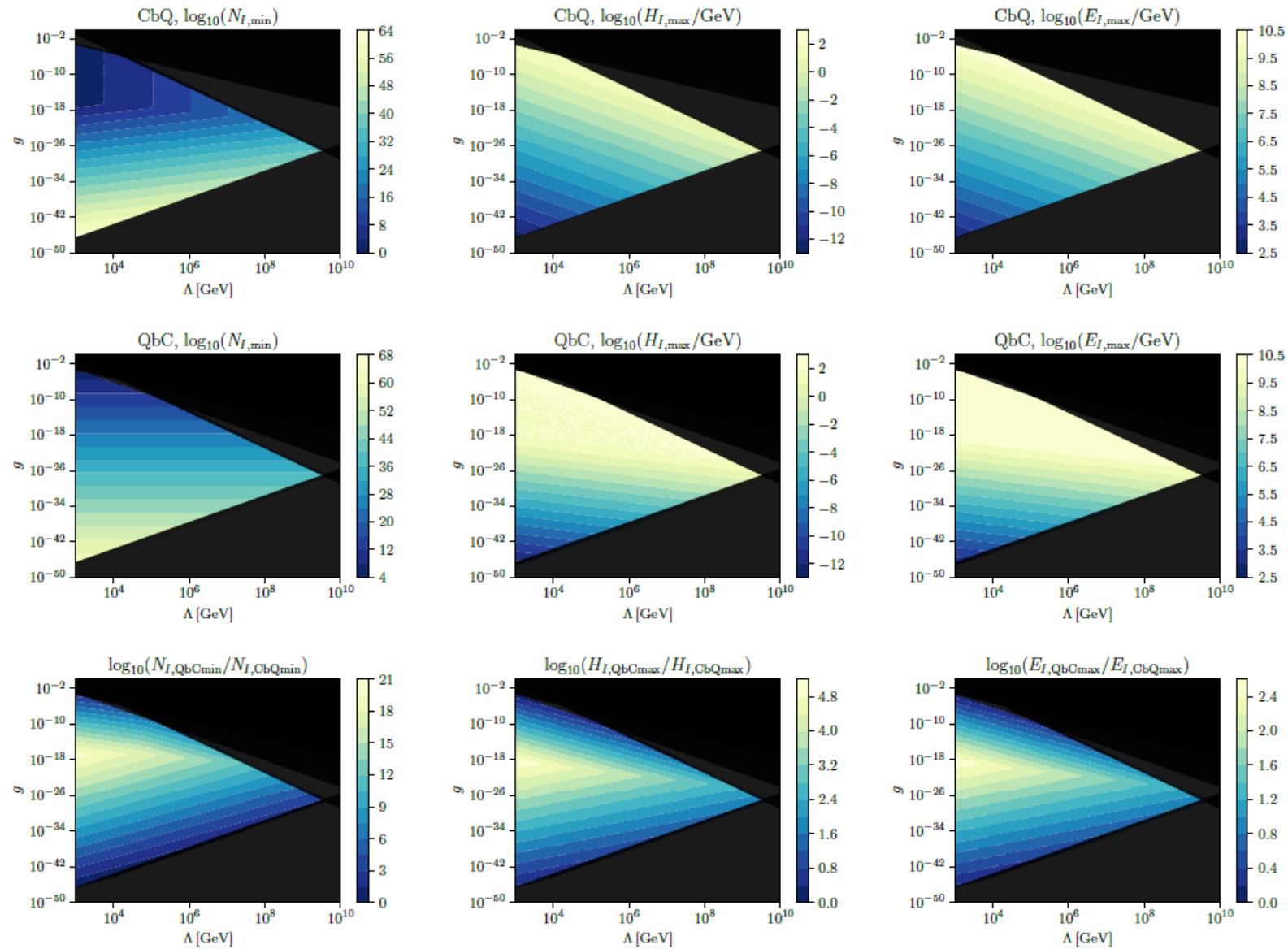
Choi et. al., 1511.00132

Low energy potential along the light direction

$$V_{\text{eff}} = -\epsilon f_2^4 \cos \left(\frac{\phi}{f_{\text{eff}}} - \delta_2 \right) + \left(M_h^2 - \epsilon' f_2^2 \cos \left(\frac{\phi}{f_{\text{eff}}} - \delta_2' \right) \right) |h|^2 - \Lambda_{\text{br}}^4(h) \cos \left(\frac{\phi}{f} + \delta_1 \right),$$

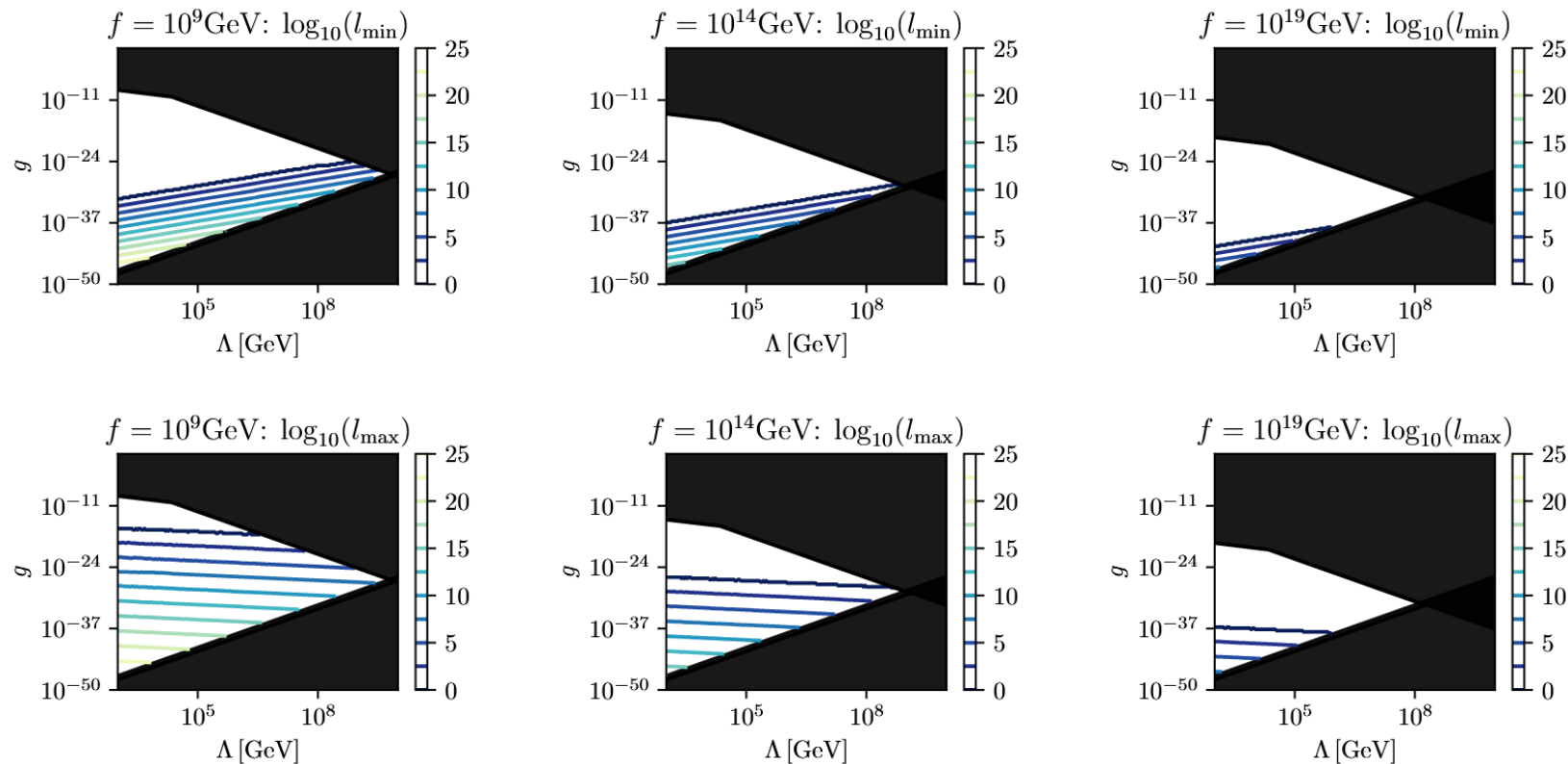
where $f_{\text{eff}} = \sqrt{n^2 f_1^2 + f_2^2} \equiv n f.$

Required number of e-folds and scales of inflation



Implications for the classical-beats-quantum regime

- The usual stopping condition $\Lambda_b^4 \approx g\Lambda^3 f$ holds.
 - Only the nonQCD model is viable
- The relaxion does not always get trapped in the first minimum



$$l \sim \frac{1}{\delta_1^2} \left(\frac{9H_I^4}{16\pi^2\Lambda_b^4} \right)^{2/3} \approx \frac{(-\mu_h^2)}{g'\Lambda f} \left(\frac{9H_I^4}{16\pi^2\Lambda_b^4} \right)^{2/3}$$

Volume-weighting

- Volume-weighted Fokker-Planck equation

$$\frac{dP}{dt} = \frac{1}{3H_I} \frac{\partial(P \partial_\phi V)}{\partial\phi} + \frac{H_I^3}{8\pi^2} \frac{\partial^2 P}{\partial\phi^2} + \frac{4\pi}{M_{\text{Pl}}^2} \frac{V}{H_I} P$$

$$P(\phi, t) = e^{3(H(\phi) - H_I)t} \rho(\phi, t)$$

- Does the relaxion climb up during inflation?

No, if $N_I < N_c$

$$\phi_{\text{peak}}(t) = \dot{\phi}_{\text{SR}} t - \frac{g\Lambda^3 H_I^2 t^2}{M_{\text{Pl}}^2 \pi}$$

- The fate of “wrong” Hubble patches ($\mu_h \sim \Lambda$) after inflation

The field slow-rolls down to the region with a small Higgs vev.

Gupta, 1805.09316

Axion abundance from stochastic misalignment

- If $H_{rh} > H_{osc}$, the onset of oscillations in the radiation dominated era.

$$\rho_{\phi,0} \approx \rho_{\phi,osc} \left(\frac{a_{osc}}{a_0} \right)^3 \approx \frac{m_\phi^2 \phi^2}{2} \left(\frac{T_0}{T_{osc}} \right)^3 \left(\frac{g_{s,0}}{g_{s,osc}} \right)$$

- If $H_{rh} < H_{osc}$, the onset of oscillations is before reheating. The fractional energy density today depends on the equation of state before reheating

$$\rho_{\phi,0} \approx \rho_{\phi,osc} \left(\frac{a_{osc}}{a_{rh}} \right)^3 \left(\frac{a_{rh}}{a_0} \right)^3 \approx \frac{m_\phi^2 \phi^2}{2} \left(\frac{H_{rh}}{H_{osc}} \right)^{2/(1+w)} \left(\frac{T_0}{T_{rh}} \right)^3 \left(\frac{g_{s,0}}{g_{s,rh}} \right)$$

Combining the two cases:

$$\frac{\langle \Omega_{\phi,0} \rangle}{\Omega_{DM}} \approx 20 \left(\frac{\text{eV}}{m_\phi} \right)^{3/2} \left(\frac{H_I}{100\text{GeV}} \right)^4 \min \left\{ 1, \left(\frac{H_{rh}}{H_{osc}} \right) \right\}^{\frac{1-3w}{2(1+w)}}$$

The case of high reheating temperature

- The displacement after inflation

$$\ddot{\phi} + \frac{3}{2t}\dot{\phi} - g\Lambda^3 + C(T)\frac{\Lambda_b^4}{f}\sin\left(\frac{\phi}{f}\right) = 0$$

Where for simplicity we take $C(T(t)) = \theta(T_b/T(t) - 1)$

- The total displacement of the field

$$\Delta\phi \approx \frac{g\Lambda^3}{4H_b^2}$$

- The field gets re-trapped if $\Delta\phi < \phi_b - \phi_0$
 - Additional constraints on the parameter region.

- DM from roll-on was studied in [Banerjee et. al., 1810.01889](#)

- DM from stochastic misalignment

$$10^{-13} \left(\frac{\Lambda}{\text{TeV}}\right)^{\frac{16}{7}} \left(\frac{M_{Pl}}{f}\right)^{\frac{4}{7}} < \frac{m_\phi}{\text{eV}} < 6 \times 10^{-6} \left(\frac{g(T_b)}{100}\right) \left(\frac{T_b}{100\text{GeV}}\right)^4 \left(\frac{\text{TeV}}{\Lambda}\right)^2$$

The case of the relaxion

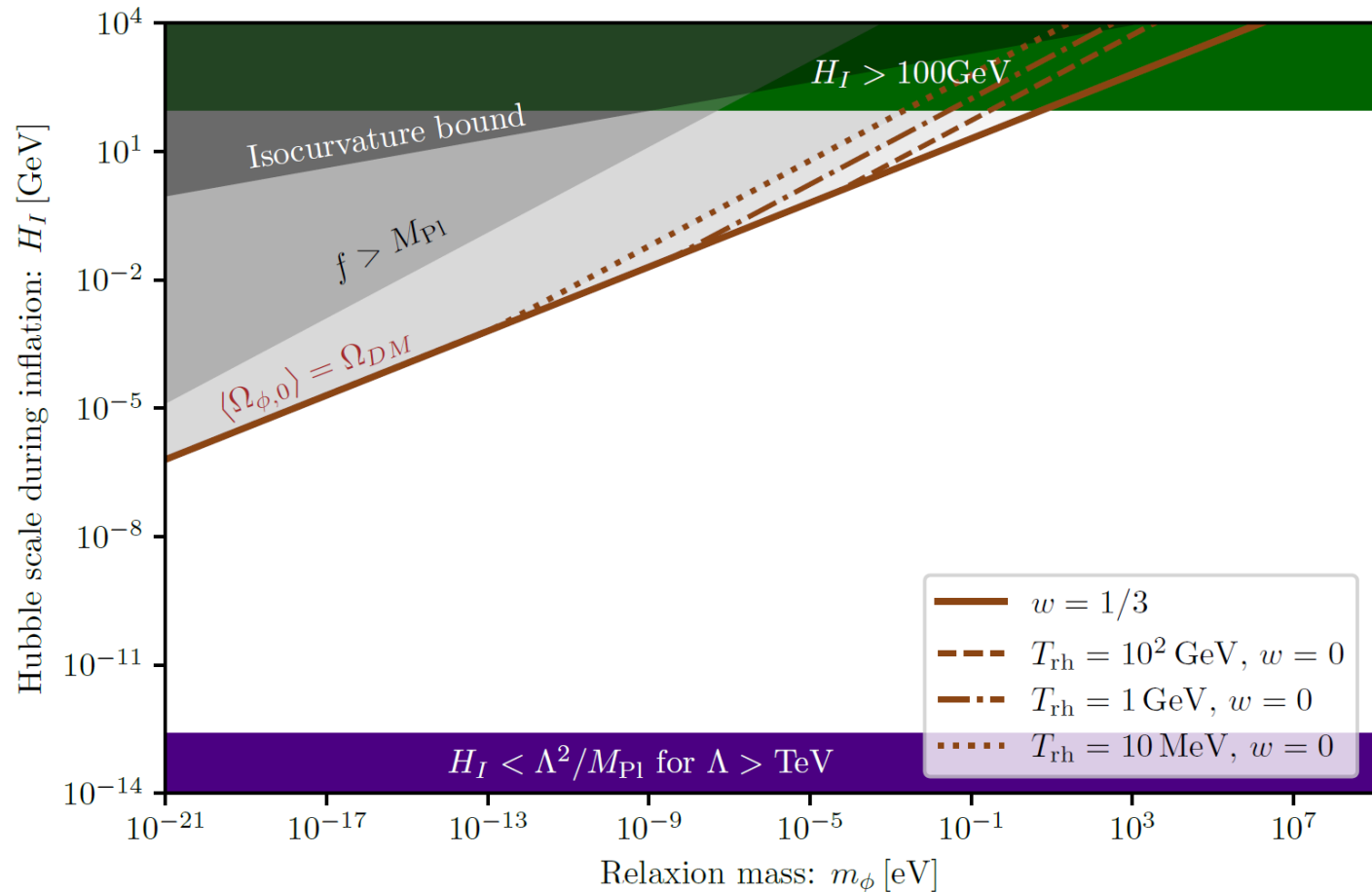
In which local minimum does the relaxion end up?

$$B = \frac{8\pi^2 \Delta V_b^{\rightarrow}}{3H_I^4} \sim 1$$

Stopping condition

The barriers disappear at $T > T_b$
(T_b is at most the weak scale)

- Additional displacement for $T_{rh} \gg T_b$



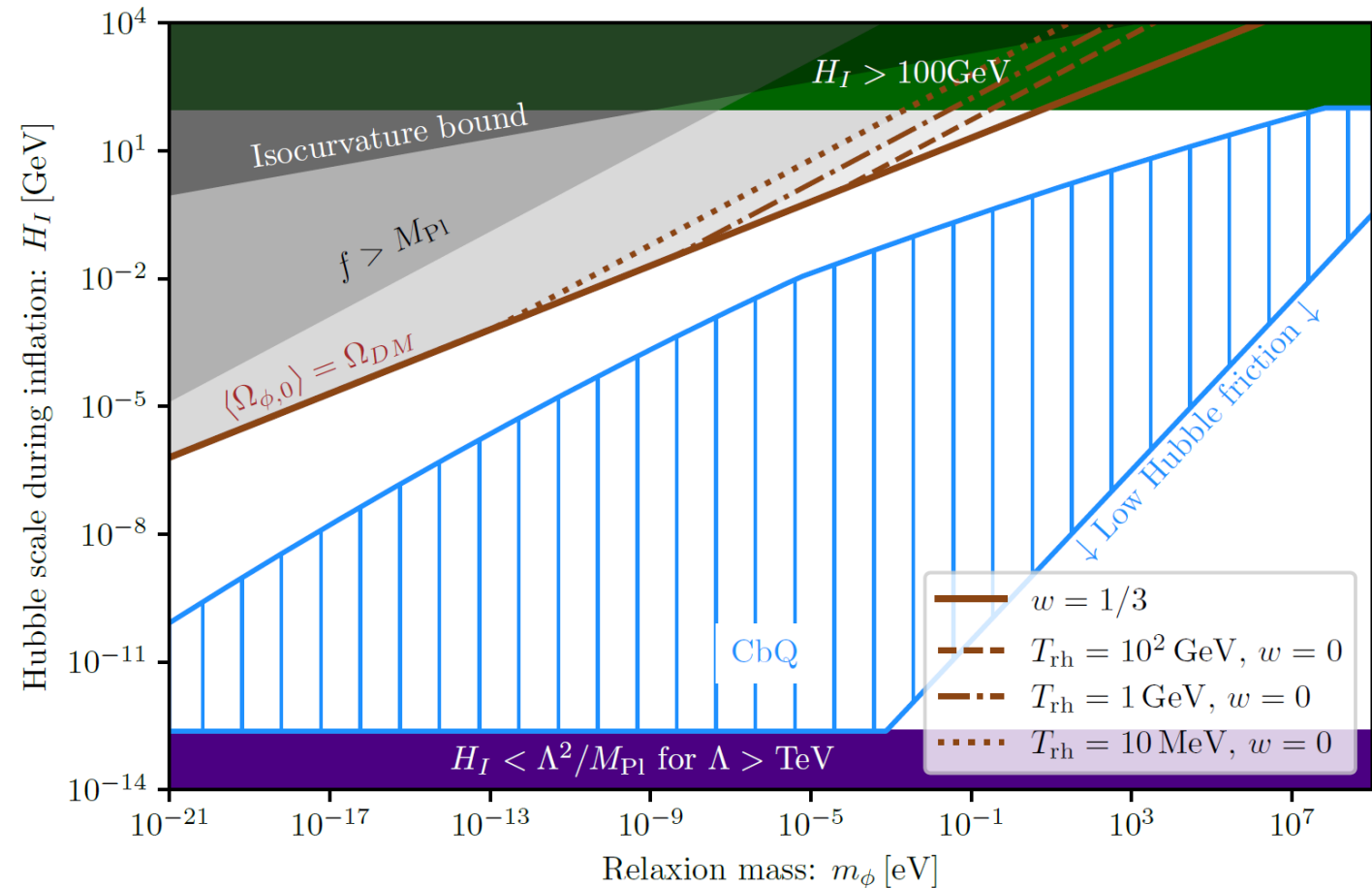
Bounds on isocurvature fluctuations: $\frac{H_I}{\text{GeV}} < 0.3 \times 10^7 \frac{\phi}{10^{11} \text{GeV}} \left(\frac{\Omega_{DM}}{\Omega_{\phi,0}} \right)$

Relaxion DM window, $T_{rh} < T_b$

The classical beats quantum (CbQ) regime

$$H_I^3 < g\Lambda^3$$

The relaxion is always under-abundant



Relaxion DM window, $T_{rh} < T_b$

The classical beats quantum (CbQ) regime

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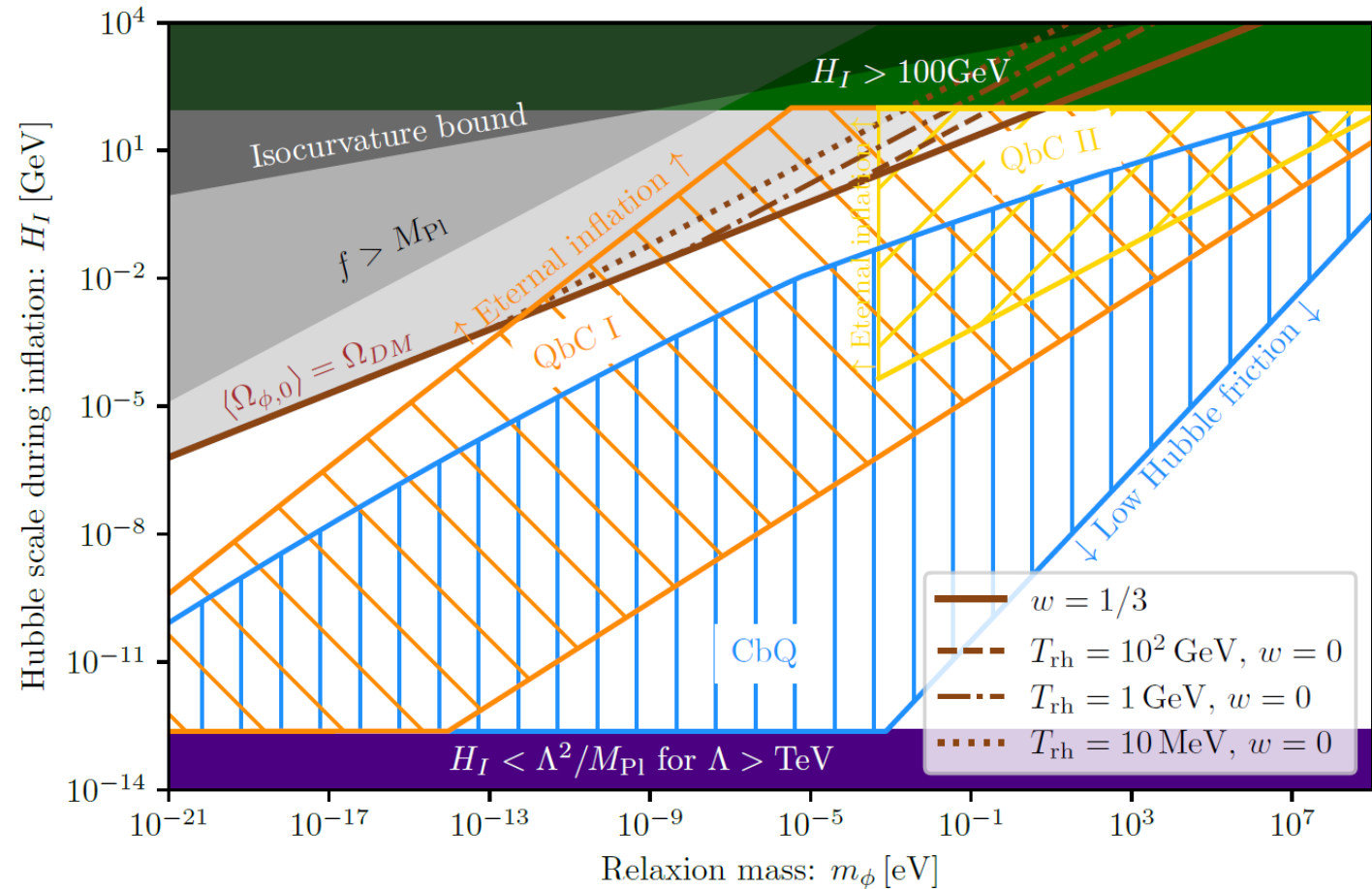
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The quantum beats classical (QbC) regime

$$H_I^3 > g\Lambda^3$$

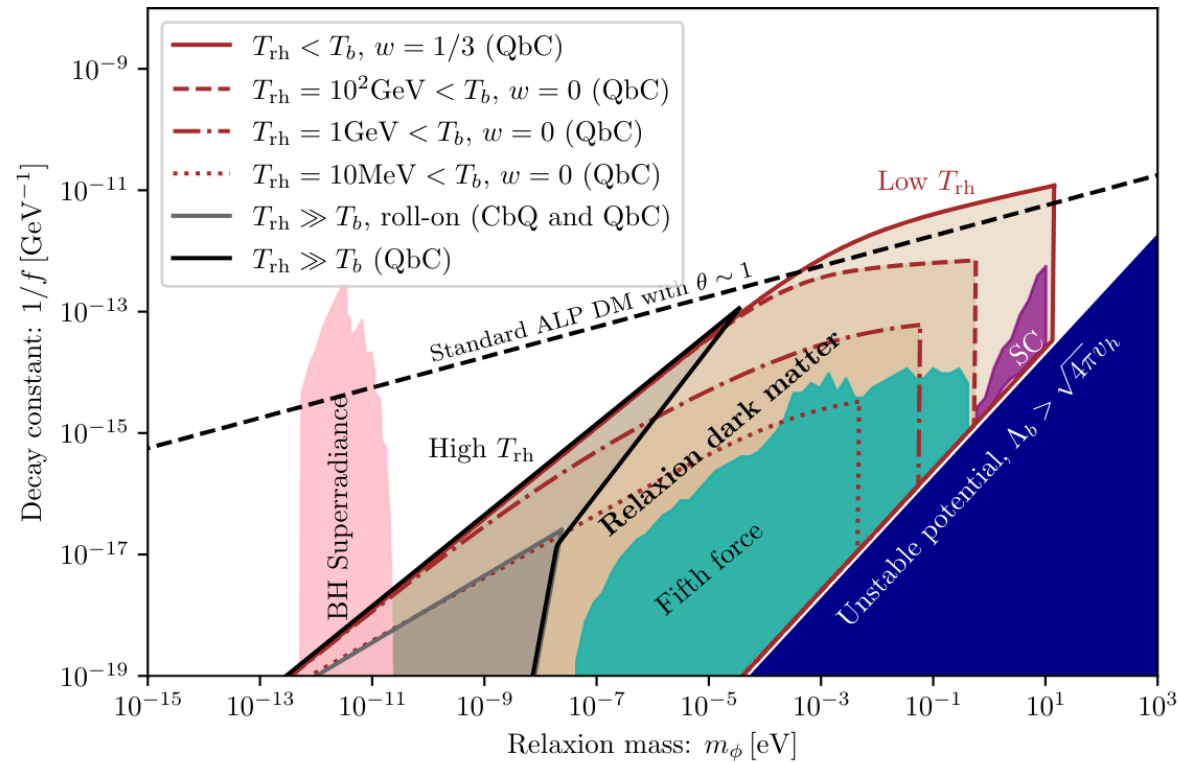
The lower bounds is to avoid eternal inflation

$$\text{if } N_{\min} > N_c = \frac{2\pi^2}{3} \frac{M_{Pl}^2}{H_I^2}$$



$$10^{-13} \left(\frac{\Lambda}{\text{TeV}} \right)^{\frac{16}{7}} \left(\frac{M_{Pl}}{f} \right)^{\frac{4}{7}} < \frac{m_\phi}{\text{eV}} < 0.4 \times 10^{4w} \left(\frac{H_I}{100\text{GeV}} \right)^{2(1+w)} \left[\frac{T_{rh}}{100\text{GeV}} \left(\frac{g(T_{rh})}{100} \right)^{\frac{1}{4}} \right]^{\frac{1-3w}{2}}$$

Relaxion DM window (nonQCD model)



Brown: low reheating temperature, stochastic misalignment

Grey: high reheating temperature, misalignment from roll-on after reheating

Banerjee et. al., 1810.01889

Black: high reheating temperature, stochastic misalignment

The stopping condition

- The barriers of the relaxion potential are suppressed due to the rolling term

$$\phi_b - \phi_0 = 2f \times \delta$$

From $V' = 0$ one finds that

$$\cos \delta = \frac{g\Lambda^3 f}{\Lambda_b^4}, \text{ as well as}$$

$$m_\phi^2 = \frac{\Lambda_b^4}{f^2} \times \sin \delta$$

$$\Delta V_b^{\rightarrow} = 2\Lambda_b^4 \times [\sin \delta - \delta \cos \delta]$$

$$d = \frac{3}{8\pi^2} \frac{H_I^4}{g\Lambda^3 f}$$

- The stopping condition:

- $d \ll 1 \rightarrow B \sim 1$ already for $\delta \ll 1$ $\rightarrow \frac{16\pi^2 \Lambda_b^4}{3H_I^4} (\sin \delta - \delta \cos \delta) \approx g\Lambda^3 f \frac{2}{d} [\tan(\delta) - \delta] \sim 1$

- $d \gg 1 \rightarrow B \sim 1$ only for $\delta \approx \frac{\pi}{2} \rightarrow \Lambda_b^4 \approx 3H_I^4/16\pi^2$

$$\Lambda_b^4 \sim \max(g\Lambda^3 f, H_I^4).$$

Density-triggered phase transitions in stars

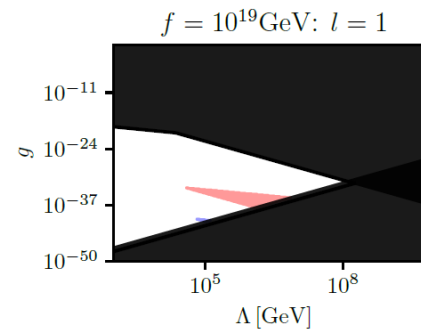
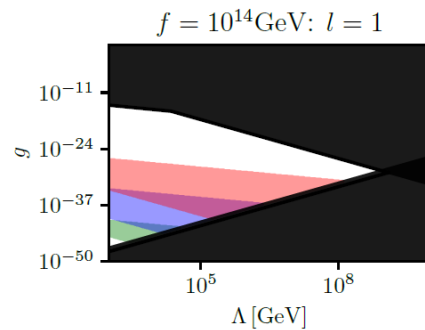
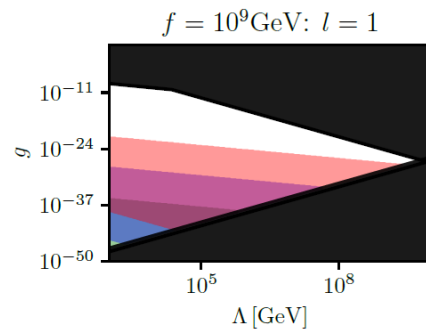
The basic idea

- Large baryon density suppresses the higgs vev/barrier height
- If the minimum disappears and the star is large enough, an expanding bubble can form.

$$n > \frac{\Lambda_b^4 v_h}{\sin \theta_{h\phi} g_{hN} \Lambda^2}$$

$$r > \frac{f}{\Lambda_b^2}$$

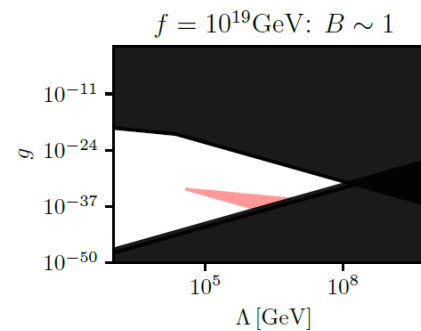
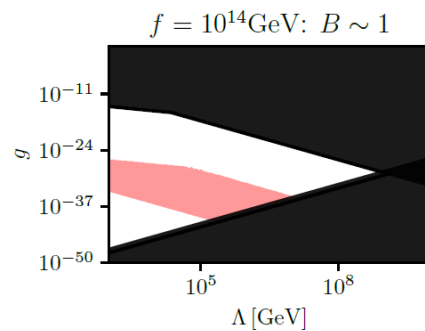
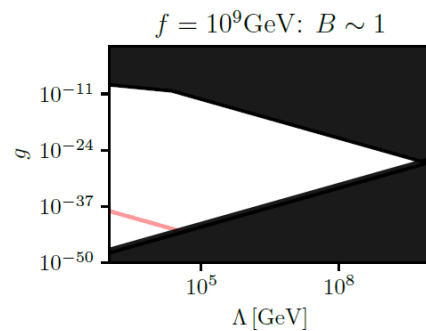
Budnik et al 2006.14568, Balkin et al 2106.11320



Red giants

White dwarfs

The Sun



Weaker constraints if correct values of l are used!

Exact solution in the $v_h = 0$ region,

$$\rho(\phi, t) = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi\sigma^2(t)}} \exp \left\{ -\frac{(\phi - \dot{\phi}_{SR}t)^2}{2\sigma^2(t)} \right\},$$

with

$$\dot{\phi}_{SR} = \frac{g\Lambda^3}{3H_I} \quad \sigma(t) = \sqrt{\frac{H_I^3}{4\pi^2} t}$$

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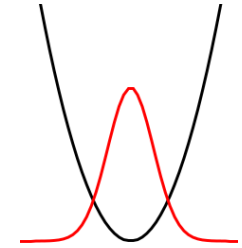
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In a bounded potential, $\rho(\phi)$ reaches equilibrium

$$\rho_{\text{eq}}(\phi) \propto \exp\left(-\frac{8\pi^2 V(\phi)}{3H_I^4}\right)$$



Exact solution in the $v_h = 0$ region,

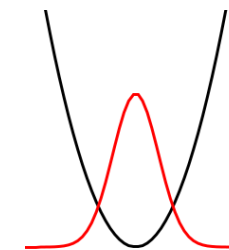
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with

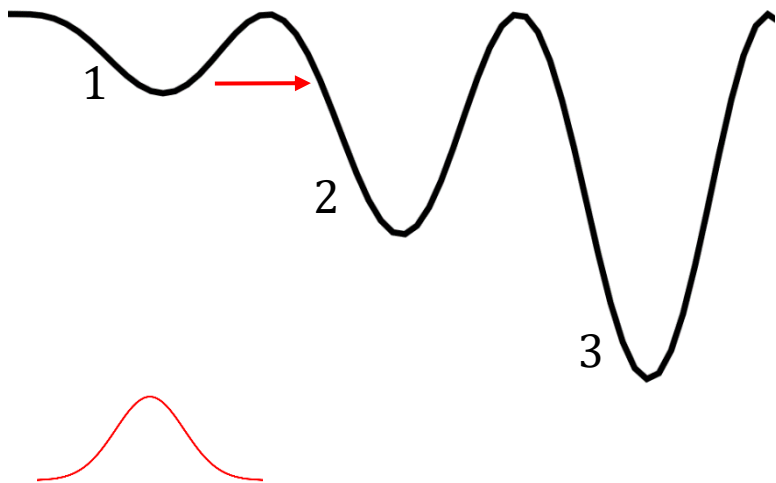
$$\dot{\phi}_{SR} = \frac{g\Lambda^3}{3H_I} \quad \sigma(t) = \sqrt{\frac{H_I^3}{4\pi^2}t}$$

In a bounded potential, $\rho(\phi)$ reaches equilibrium

$$\rho_{eq}(\phi) \propto \exp \left(-\frac{8\pi^2 V(\phi)}{3H_I^4} \right)$$



Diffusion generates a **flux of probability** to a lower minimum



$$\frac{dN_1}{dt} = -k_{12} N_1$$

$$k \approx \frac{\sqrt{V_0''|V_b''|}}{6\pi H_I} e^{-\frac{8\pi^2 \Delta V_b}{3H_I^4}}$$

Hawking-Moss
instanton

PLB 110 (1982) 35.

Exact solution in the $v_h = 0$ region,

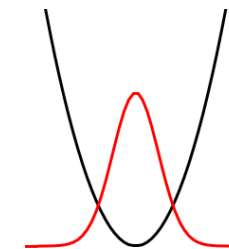
$$\rho(\phi, t) = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi\sigma^2(t)}} \exp \left\{ -\frac{(\phi - \dot{\phi}_{SR}t)^2}{2\sigma^2(t)} \right\},$$

with

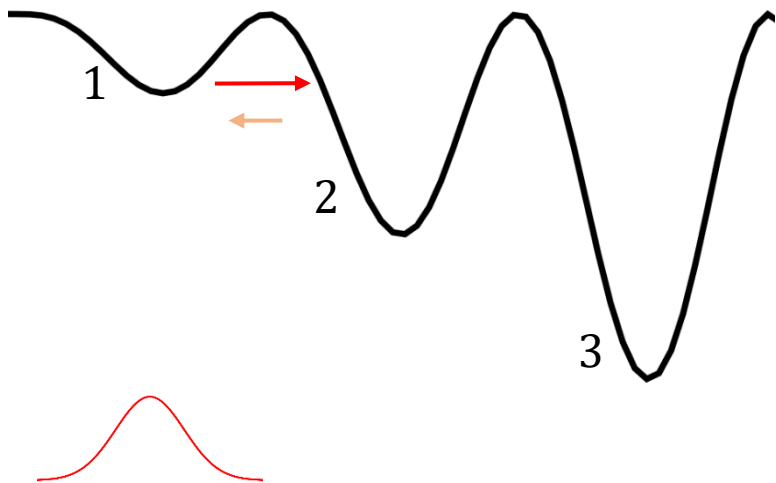
$$\dot{\phi}_{SR} = \frac{g\Lambda^3}{3H_I} \quad \sigma(t) = \sqrt{\frac{H_I^3}{4\pi^2}t}$$

In a bounded potential, $\rho(\phi)$ reaches equilibrium

$$\rho_{eq}(\phi) \propto \exp \left(-\frac{8\pi^2 V(\phi)}{3H_I^4} \right)$$



Diffusion generates a **flux of probability** to a lower minimum



$$\frac{dN_1}{dt} = -k_{12}^{\rightarrow} N_1 + k_{21}^{\leftarrow} N_2$$

$$k \approx \frac{\sqrt{V_0''|V_b''|}}{6\pi H_I} e^{-\frac{8\pi^2 \Delta V_b}{3H_I^4}}$$

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Stochastic dynamics of the relaxion

Diffusion introduces to new effects, such as

- **probability fluxes** between neighboring local minima,

$$k \approx \frac{\sqrt{U_0''|U_b''|}}{6\pi H_I} e^{-B}, \quad B = \frac{8\pi^2 \Delta U_b}{3H_I^4}$$

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Dynamics in the region with local minima,

$$\frac{dn_{0,i}}{dt} = -k_{\rightarrow} n_{0,i} - k_{\leftarrow} n_{0,i} + k_{\leftarrow} n_{0,i+1} + k_{\rightarrow} n_{0,i-1}$$

Mean velocity of the field

$$\langle \dot{\phi} \rangle = \int \rho(\phi) \dot{\phi} d\phi \approx \sum_i \dot{n}_{0,i} \phi_{0,i} = 2\pi f (k_{\rightarrow} - k_{\leftarrow})$$

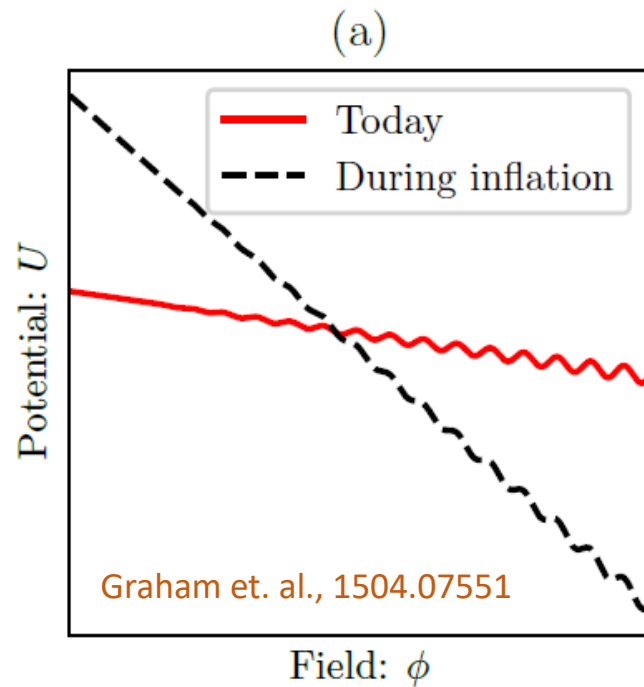
Summary

- New parameter space for the relaxion when considering quantum fluctuations.
- The relaxion in this regime can reproduce the observed dark matter relic abundance.

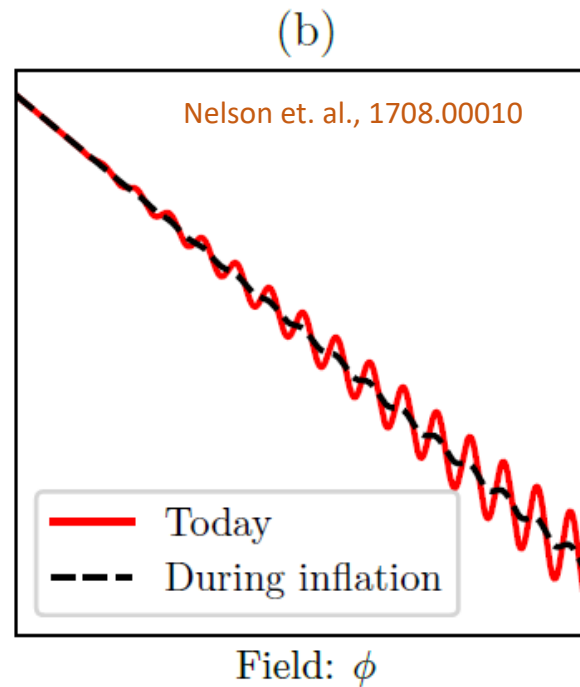


	With eternal inflation	No eternal inflation	No eternal inflation + dark matter
Classical beats quantum (GKR)	-	$\Lambda < 10^9 \text{ GeV}$	-
Quantum beats classical	$\Lambda < 10^{11} \text{ GeV}$	$\Lambda < 10^9 \text{ GeV}$	$\Lambda < 10^6 \text{ GeV}$

Different approaches to the QCD relaxation



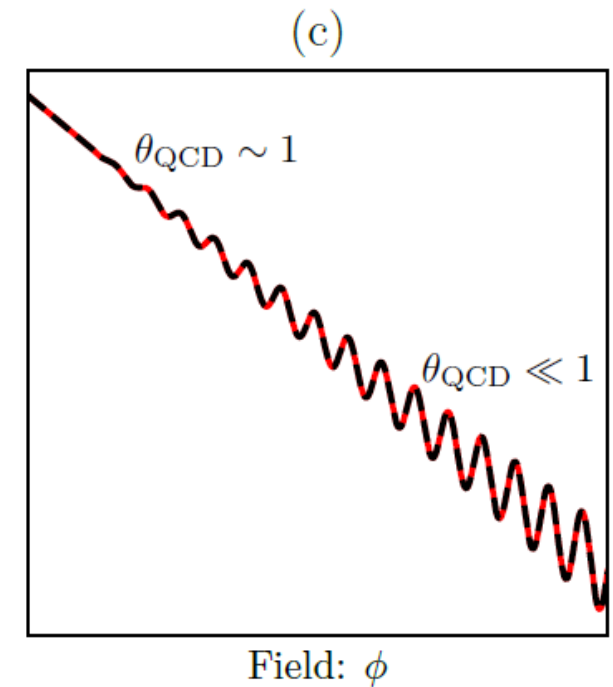
$$10^{-7} \Lambda_b < H_I < 10^{-3} \Lambda_b$$



$$3\text{GeV} < H_I < 100\text{GeV}$$

$$\Lambda_b^4(T, h) \approx \frac{\Lambda_b^4(0, h)}{1 + (T/\Lambda_{\text{QCD}})^m}$$

Wrong stopping condition
used, $\Lambda_b^4(\phi; T_I) \sim g\Lambda^3 f$



$$H_I \sim \Lambda_b \approx 75\text{MeV}$$