

Goldstone bosons at finite temperature

(Based on: PL, O. Philipsen, 2501.17120, 2506.XXXX)

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Outline

1. Goldstone's theorem in vacuum
2. Generalisation to finite temperature
3. A thermal particle? \rightarrow "Thermoparticle"
4. Thermal Goldstone bosons
5. Goldstone signatures from the lattice

1. Goldstone's theorem in vacuum

- In words: Goldstone's theorem states that the spontaneous breaking of a continuous symmetry implies the existence of massless (Goldstone) bosons
- QFT language: if j^μ is the conserved current associated with the symmetry, and A is some local field whose transformation under the symmetry has a non-trivial vev: $\langle \delta A \rangle = \lim_{R \rightarrow \infty} \langle [Q_R, A] \rangle \neq 0$, then:

→ The Fourier transform of $\langle [j^0(x), A(y)] \rangle$ contains a $\delta(p^2)$ singularity

- In fact... current conservation and field locality means that $\langle \delta A \rangle \neq 0$ implies the Fourier transform of $\langle [j^0(x), A(y)] \rangle$ contains a $\delta(\omega)$ component as $\mathbf{p} \rightarrow 0$. This is **independent** of the properties of the background state^{*}
- The Goldstone “quasi-particle” $\delta(\omega)$ becomes a stable massless particle state $\delta(p^2)$ for relativistic QFTs

^{*} See: [F. Strocchi, Symmetry Breaking, Lect. Notes Phys. 732 (2008)]

2. Generalisation to finite temperature

- For $T = 1/\beta > 0$, one defines: $\langle \Phi(x_1) \dots \Phi(x_n) \rangle_\beta = Z^{-1} \text{Tr } e^{-\beta H} \Phi(x_1) \dots \Phi(x_n)$
- There are some immediate implications:
 - **Lorentz invariance** ✗ \rightarrow but can retain rotational invariance
 - **Spectral condition** ($H > 0$) ✗ \rightarrow replaced by KMS condition
 - **Field locality** (causality) ✓ \rightarrow this is important!
- Since current conservation and field locality are unaffected by T , the Fourier transform of $\langle [j^0(x), A(y)] \rangle_\beta$ **still** contains a $\delta(\omega)$ as $\mathbf{p} \rightarrow 0$
- Can we learn anything else about the properties of thermal Goldstone modes, e.g. what happens for $\mathbf{p} > 0$?

Yes! The key is to determine how T modifies spectral functions $\rho_{AB}(\omega, \mathbf{p})$, the Fourier transform of the thermal expectation values $\langle [\Phi_A(x), \Phi_B(y)] \rangle_\beta$ [Bros, Buchholz, *PRD* 58 (1998)]

2. Generalisation to finite temperature

- For (complex) scalar fields, the constraints imposed for $T > 0$ imply that the spectral function has the representation*

$$\rho(\omega, \vec{p}) = \int_0^\infty ds \int \frac{d^3 \vec{u}}{(2\pi)^2} \epsilon(\omega) \delta(\omega^2 - (\vec{p} - \vec{u})^2 - s) \tilde{D}_\beta(\vec{u}, s)$$

This is the $T > 0$ generalisation of the textbook *Källén-Lehmann* representation!

$$\rho(\omega, \vec{p}) = 2\pi\epsilon(\omega) \int_0^\infty ds \delta(p^2 - s) \varrho(s)$$

“Thermal spectral density”

- $T > 0$ effects amount to understanding: $\rho(s) \rightarrow \tilde{D}_\beta(\mathbf{u}, s)$, which tells us about the possible excitations that can exist in a thermal medium
- The non-trivial \mathbf{u} dependence of $\tilde{D}_\beta(\mathbf{u}, s)$ controls the extent to which the spectral function can be off the mass-shell $p^2 = s$
- The s dependence determines whether the spectral function has energy ω thresholds, much like in the $T = 0$ case

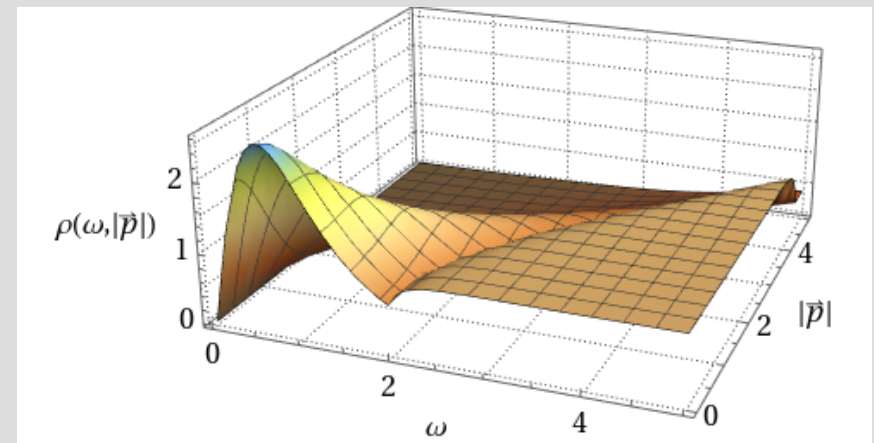
* See: [J. Bros and D Buchholz, *Z. Phys. C* 55 (1992); *Ann. Inst. H.Poincaré Phys.Theor.* 64 (1996)]

3. A thermal particle? → “Thermoparticle”

Proposition: the medium contains “Thermoparticles”: particle-like excitations which differ from collective quasi-particle modes, and show up as **discrete** contributions to $\tilde{D}_\beta(\mathbf{u}, s)$ [Bros, Buchholz, *NPB* 627 (2002)]

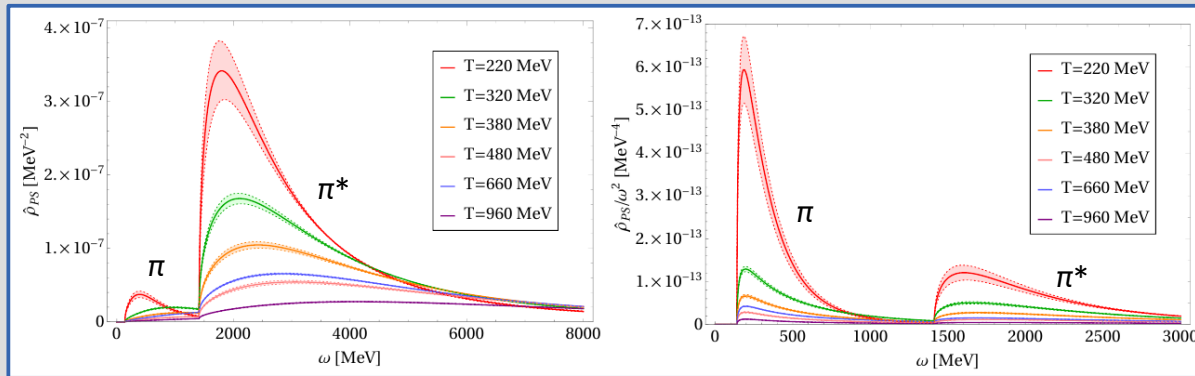
$$\tilde{D}_\beta(\vec{u}, s) = \tilde{D}_{m,\beta}(\vec{u}) \delta(s - m^2) + \tilde{D}_{c,\beta}(\vec{u}, s)$$

- Thermoparticle components $\tilde{D}_\beta(\mathbf{u})\delta(s-m^2)$ reduce to those of a vacuum particle with mass m in the limit $T \rightarrow 0$
- Non-trivial “Damping factor” $\tilde{D}_\beta(\mathbf{u})$ results in thermally-broadened peaks in the spectral function: this parametrises the effects of collisional broadening
- Component $\tilde{D}_{c,\beta}(\mathbf{u}, s)$ contains all other types of excitations, including those that are *continuous* in s



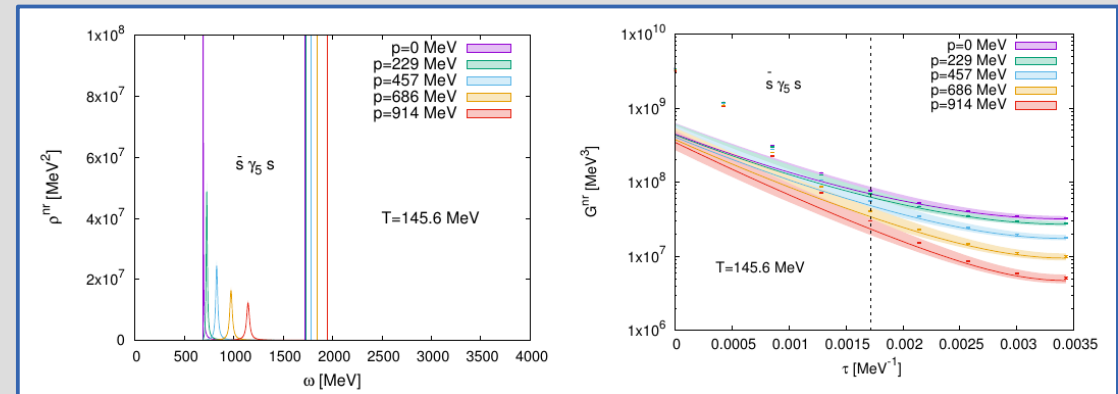
3. A thermal particle? → “Thermoparticle”

- There is mounting evidence for low-energy thermoparticle excitations, e.g. spatial correlator $C_{PS}(z)$ of the pseudo-scalar meson operator $\mathcal{O}_{PS}^a = \bar{\psi}\gamma_5\tau_2^a\psi$ in lattice QCD
- Studies extracting pseudo-scalar spectral function in various channels:



Light-light pseudo-scalar meson (pion) channel [P.L., O. Philipsen, *JHEP* 10, 161 (2022)]

Light-strange (kaon) and strange-strange (eta) pseudo-scalar meson channels [D. Bala, O. Kaczmarek, P. L., O. Philipsen, and T. Ueding, *JHEP* 05, 332 (2024)]



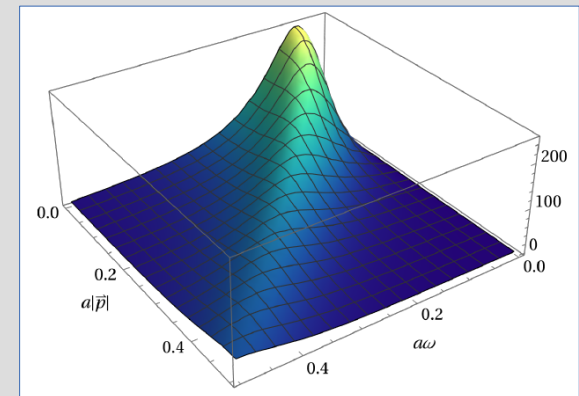
Data in *all* channels consistent with a thermoparticle-type ground state: suggests light pseudo-scalar mesons (pions, kaons,..) still have a bound-state-like structure, even at high T

4. Thermal Goldstone bosons

- Using the extra information given by the $T > 0$ spectral representation, in [Bros, Buchholz, 1998] the authors were able to prove that the SSB condition $\langle \delta A \rangle \neq 0$ implies that $\langle [j^0(x), A(0)] \rangle_\beta$ contains a *massless* thermoparticle component, which in position space has the form:

$$D_\beta^G(\vec{x}, s) = D_\beta^G(\vec{x})\delta(s)$$

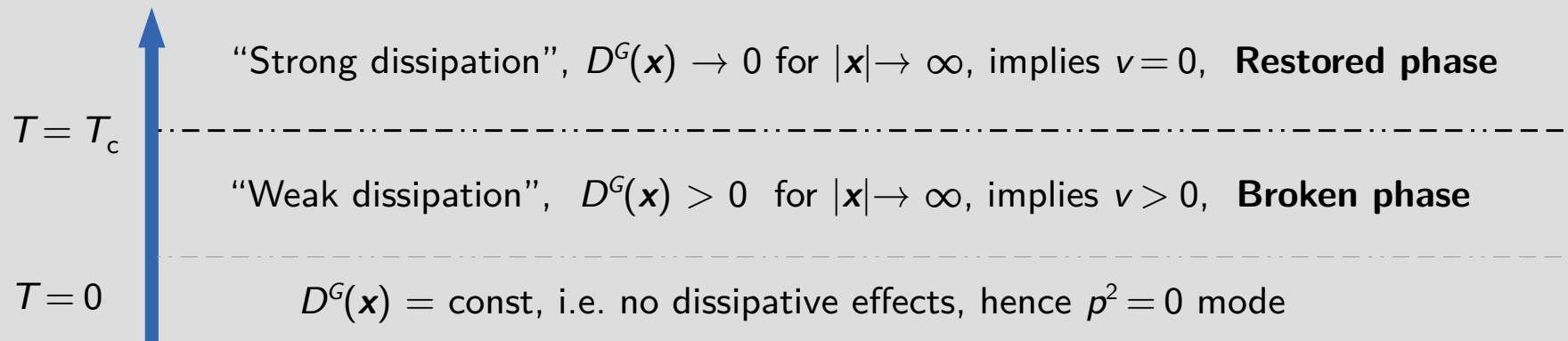
- This a **thermal Goldstone boson**: in the $T \rightarrow 0$ limit $D^G(x) \rightarrow \text{const}$, hence the current-field spectral function contains a vacuum Goldstone component $\delta(p^2)$, as expected!
- When the damping factor $D^G(x)$ is non-trivial, this causes the stable massless Goldstone peak at $p^2 = 0$ to become broadened



→ Describes the dissipative effects of the Goldstone moving through the thermal medium

4. Thermal Goldstone bosons

- This analysis reveals some very important characteristics:
 - The thermal Goldstone mode is never on-shell for $T > 0$
 - This component can persist at **any** temperature, even if the symmetry is restored when $T > T_c$
 - The order parameter v depends **entirely** on the functional form of the damping factor $D^G(\mathbf{x})$



- This captures the physics! Sufficiently strong dissipative effects destroy the long-range order and lead to symmetry restoration

4. Thermal Goldstone bosons

- The phase of the theory is determined *entirely* by the dissipative effects experienced by the thermal Goldstone mode
- Only $D^G(\mathbf{x}) \rightarrow 0$ for $|\mathbf{x}| \rightarrow \infty$ is required to ensure the symmetry is restored, but this can happen at *any* rate
- If the damping factor has the functional form $D^G(\mathbf{x}) \sim |\mathbf{x}|^{-\varepsilon}$ with some $\varepsilon > 0$ at large $|\mathbf{x}|$, the two-point function decays as a pure power-law

Interesting possibility: a symmetry could be restored at high temperatures without there being a finite correlation length!

- Analysis of *massive* thermoparticle states [Bros, Buchholz, (2002)] demonstrates that damping factors are fixed by the (asymptotic) dynamics of the theory
- If this is also the case for thermal Goldstone modes, this suggests that universality arguments alone may not be sufficient to fully characterise finite-temperature phase transitions

4. Thermal Goldstone bosons

- If thermal Goldstone modes are present one can look for their signatures in (Euclidean) correlation functions
- For simplicity, consider the QFT of a single complex scalar field at finite temperature, with two-point function $C(\tau, \vec{x}) = \langle \phi(\tau, \vec{x}) \phi^\dagger(0) \rangle_\beta$
- If a thermal Goldstone mode is present, it follows from the thermoparticle structure, and the spectral function representation, that:

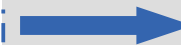
$$C^G(0, \vec{x}) = \frac{\coth\left(\frac{\pi|\vec{x}|}{\beta}\right)}{4\pi\beta|\vec{x}|} D_\beta^G(\vec{x})$$

- The mode dissipation is determined by the damping factor $D^G(\mathbf{x})$

→ For $T \rightarrow 0$ the vacuum behaviour is recovered: $C^G(0, \vec{x}) \xrightarrow{T \rightarrow 0} \frac{\alpha_0}{4\pi^2|\vec{x}|^2}$

- For the spatial correlator

$$\begin{aligned} C(z) &= \int dx dy d\tau C(\tau, \vec{x}) \\ &= \frac{1}{2} \int_0^\infty ds \int_{|z|}^\infty dR e^{-R\sqrt{s}} D_\beta(R, s) \end{aligned}$$



$$C^G(z) = \frac{1}{2} \int_{|z|}^\infty dR D_\beta^G(R)$$

See: [PL, O. Philipsen, 2022]

5. Goldstone signatures from the lattice

- Now we know what the signatures of thermal Goldstone modes are, one can look for them in lattice data
- Consider a simple model with SSB: U(1) complex scalar field theory

$$\mathcal{L} = \frac{1}{2} \partial_\mu \phi^\dagger \partial^\mu \phi - \frac{1}{2} m^2 \phi^\dagger \phi - \frac{\lambda}{4!} (\phi^\dagger \phi)^2$$

- In the broken phase at $T=0$ the model contains a massless Goldstone boson and a resonance-like mode

→ Model expected* to undergo a second-order phase transition: for $T > T_c$ the U(1) symmetry is restored, and $|v|^2 = \langle \phi \rangle \langle \phi^\dagger \rangle = 0$

- Investigate theory on a $L_\tau \times L^3$ lattice ($L_\tau = aN_\tau, L = aN_s$) with action

$$S = a^4 \sum_{x \in \Lambda_a} \left[\sum_\mu \left(\frac{1}{2} \Delta_\mu^f \phi^*(x) \Delta_\mu^f \phi(x) \right) + \frac{m_0^2}{2} \phi^*(x) \phi(x) + \frac{g_0}{4!} (\phi^*(x) \phi(x))^2 \right]$$

→ Avoid potential triviality by keeping lattice spacing fixed throughout, hence $T = (aN_\tau)^{-1}$ is varied in discrete steps

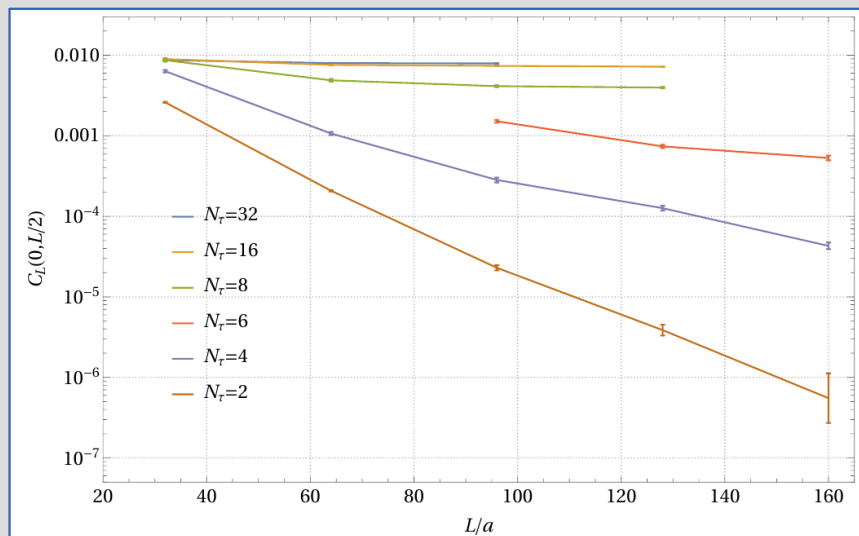
* See eg. [J. I. Kapusta and C. Gale, *Finite-temperature Field Theory*]

5. Goldstone signatures from the lattice

- SSB does not occur in a finite spatial volume $V=L^3$, i.e. there is no notion of a “vev” on the lattice

→ One needs to perform an $L \rightarrow \infty$ extrapolation of lattice results!

- For the finite-volume correlator $C_L(\tau, \vec{x})$: $\lim_{L \rightarrow \infty} C_L(\tau, \vec{x}) \xrightarrow{|\vec{x}| \rightarrow \infty} |v|^2$
- Based on this property there are different approaches* for extracting $|v|^2$
- Given periodic spatial boundary conditions one can use: $|v|^2 = \lim_{L \rightarrow \infty} C_L(0, |\vec{x}| = L/2)$



- $N_\tau = 8, 16, 32$ non-zero for large $L \rightarrow \mathbf{U(1)}$ *broken*
- $N_\tau = 2, 4, 6$ vanishing for small $L \rightarrow \mathbf{U(1)}$ *restored*
- Infinite-volume extrapolation requires a parametrisation for $C_L(\tau=0, |\vec{x}| = z)$
- Use finite-volume version of $C^G(0, \vec{x}) = \frac{\coth\left(\frac{\pi|\vec{x}|}{\beta}\right)}{4\pi\beta|\vec{x}|} D_\beta^G(\vec{x})$

* See eg. [H. Neuberger, *PRL* 60,(1988).]

5. Goldstone signatures from the lattice

Broken phase ($N_\tau = 8, 16, 32$):

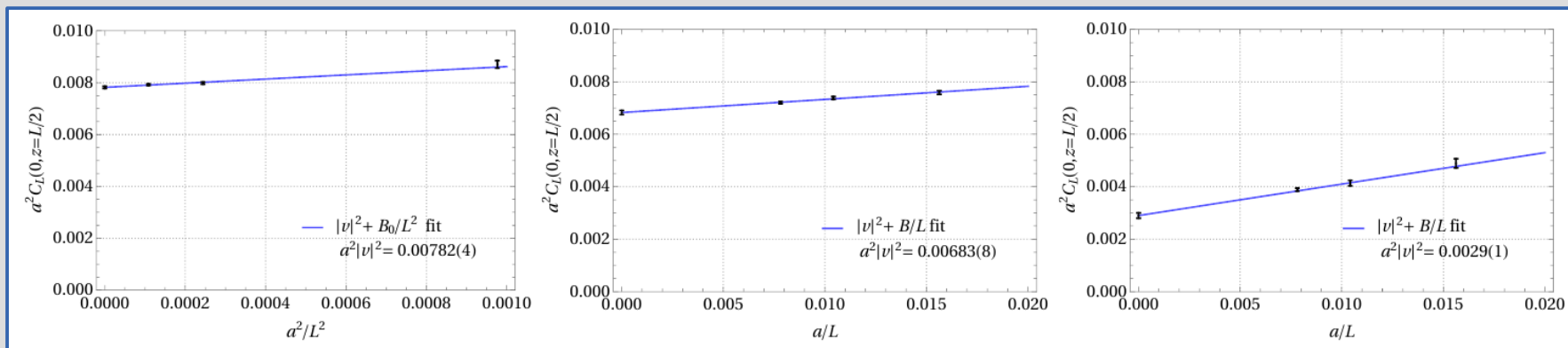
- In this case we fit the ansatz (assuming $D^G(\mathbf{x}) \sim \text{const}$):

$$C_L(0, z) = c_L + b_L \left[\frac{\coth\left(\frac{\pi z}{\beta}\right)}{z} + \{z \rightarrow (L - z)\} \right]$$

Non-zero if in broken phase

Finite L symmetrisation

- Functional form provides very good description of the data for each volume considered ($L/a = 32, 64, 96, 128$). Use this to do $L \rightarrow \infty$ extrapolation:



5. Goldstone signatures from the lattice

Restored phase ($N_\tau = 2, 4, 6$):

- As outlined previously, the Goldstone mode can still persist in this regime, and would have the properties of a massless thermoparticle
- What is the structure of the damping factor $D^G(\mathbf{x})$? Use *spatial* correlator:

$$C_L(z) = d_L [e^{-m_L z} + \{z \rightarrow (L - z)\}]$$

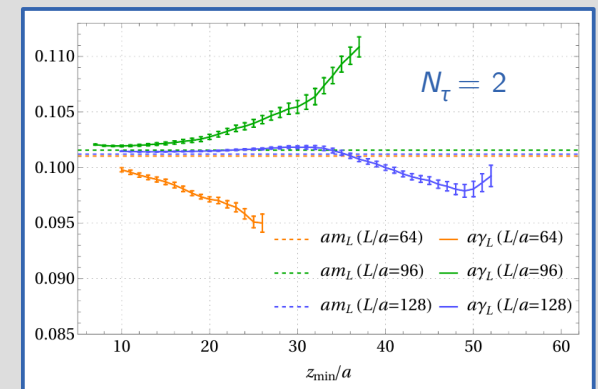


$$D_\beta^G(\vec{x}) = \alpha e^{-\gamma|\vec{x}|}$$



$$C^G(0, \vec{x}) = \frac{\coth\left(\frac{\pi|\vec{x}|}{\beta}\right)}{4\pi\beta|\vec{x}|} \alpha e^{-\gamma|\vec{x}|}$$

- Spatial correlator fits provide excellent description of data over full range $[0, L/2]$ for each of the (large) volumes considered ($L/a = 64, 96, 128, 160$)
- Test damping by fitting: $C_L(0, z) = b_L \left[\frac{\coth\left(\frac{\pi z}{\beta}\right)}{z} e^{-\gamma_L z} + \{z \rightarrow (L - z)\} \right]$
- Consistency of the thermoparticle hypothesis requires that the fit parameters γ_L and m_L approach one another in the infinite-volume $L \rightarrow \infty$ limit

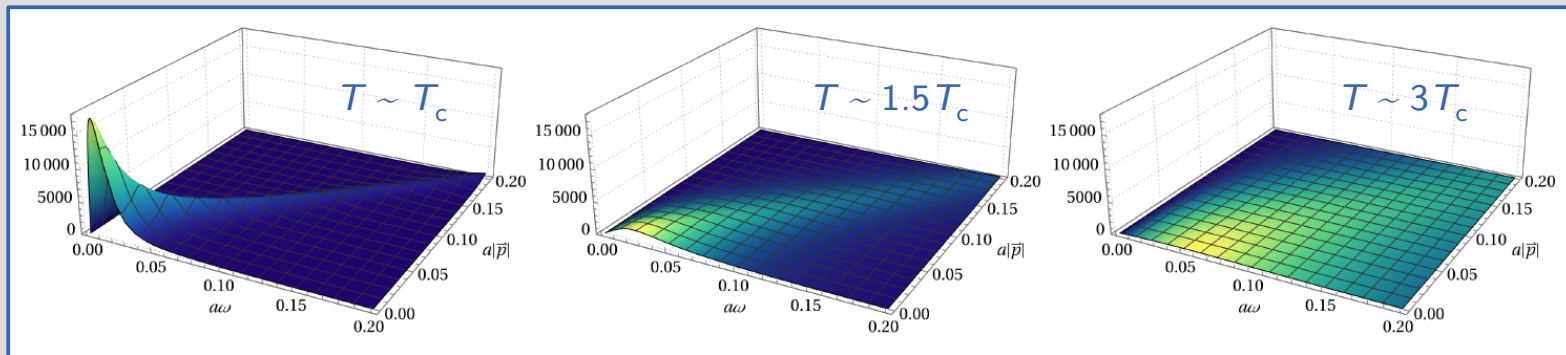


5. Goldstone signatures from the lattice

Restored phase ($N_\tau = 2, 4, 6$):

- Data at each value of N_τ consistent with the correlator being dominated by an exponentially-damped massless thermoparticle \rightarrow a *thermal Goldstone*!
- One can use the extracted damping factor $D^G(\mathbf{x}) = a e^{-\gamma|\mathbf{x}|}$ to compute the spectral function $\rho_G(\omega, \mathbf{p})$ of the Goldstone mode
- Spectral properties are very different to the vacuum case $\rho_G(\omega, \mathbf{p}) \sim \delta(p^2)$

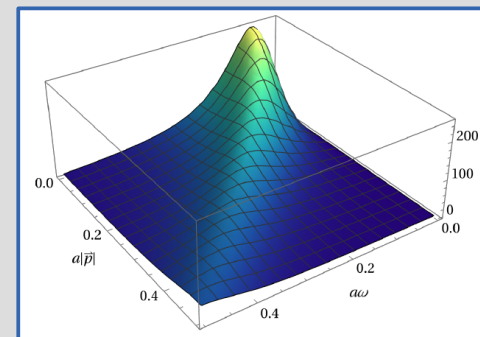
$$\rho_G(\omega, \vec{p}) = \frac{4\alpha\omega\gamma}{(\omega^2 - |\vec{p}|^2 - \gamma^2)^2 + 4\omega^2\gamma^2}$$



- Broadened peak structure around $p^2 = 0$ increases with temperature
 \rightarrow Represents the increasingly strong dissipative effects of the medium!

Summary & outlook

- Goldstone's theorem in vacuum has well-known consequences, but at finite temperature there still remain open questions
- One can use the non-perturbative constraints imposed by *causality* to gain new insights $\rightarrow \rho(\omega, \mathbf{p})$ have spectral representations. This narrows down the potential excitations that exist \rightarrow “Thermoparticles”
- SSB for $T > 0$ implies existence of Goldstone modes which have the structure of *massless* thermoparticles \rightarrow these modes can persist at *any* temperature, even if the symmetry is restored
- Phase structure is determined by the damping of the Goldstone mode:
(i) Weak dissipation \rightarrow SSB, (ii) Strong dissipation \rightarrow symmetry restoration
- We find evidence for the existence of such modes in the U(1) complex scalar field theory on the lattice below *and* above $T_c \rightarrow$ General feature of $T > 0$ QFTs



Backup: Rigorous definition of SSB

- In order to define SSB rigorously one needs to define a regularised charged operator Q_R , and this only converges for $R \rightarrow \infty$ within commutator $[Q_R, A]$

$$Q_{\delta R} = \int d^4x \alpha_\delta(t) g_R(\vec{x}) j_0(t, \vec{x})$$

(i) $g_R(\mathbf{x})=1$ for $|\mathbf{x}| \leq R$, $g_R(\mathbf{x})=0$ for $|\mathbf{x}| \geq R(1+\varepsilon)$

(ii) $\alpha_\delta(t)$ has compact support, and $\alpha_\delta(t) \rightarrow \delta(t)$

- The condition: $\lim_{R \rightarrow \infty} \langle [Q_R, A] \rangle = q$ is then **always** well-defined, and $q=0$ is a necessary and sufficient condition for the existence of a charge operator Q , defined by: $\langle u, Qv \rangle := \lim_{R \rightarrow \infty} \langle u, Q_R v \rangle$

→ If this is non-vanishing for *any* A then no such charge exists, i.e. SSB!

- SSB condition:
$$\lim_{\delta \rightarrow 0} \lim_{R \rightarrow \infty} \int_0^\infty ds \int \frac{d^3 \vec{u}}{(2\pi)^3} \frac{d^3 \vec{p}}{(2\pi)^3} \tilde{D}_\beta^{(+)}(\vec{u}, s) \tilde{g}(\vec{p}) \tilde{\alpha} \left(\delta R \sqrt{((\vec{p}/R) - \vec{u})^2 + s} \right) = iq \tilde{\alpha}(0)$$

- In the vacuum case this implies: $\tilde{D}^{(+)}(\mathbf{u}, s) \rightarrow iq (2\pi)^3 \delta(\mathbf{u}) \delta(s)$
- Value of q is **determined** by Goldstone damping factor $D^{(+)}(\mathbf{x})$ for $|\mathbf{x}| \rightarrow \infty$

Backup: NRT theorem

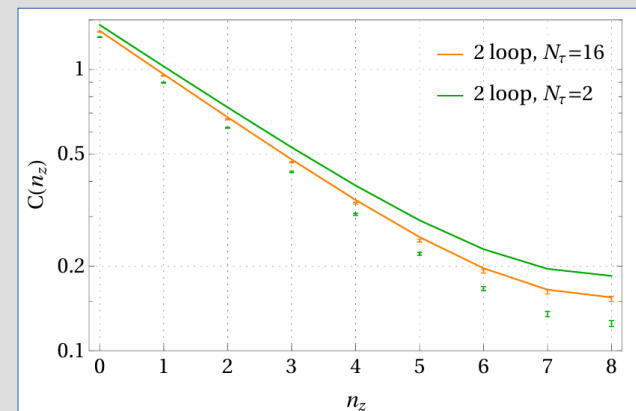
- The NRT theorem implies that states with purely real dispersion relations $\omega = E(p)$ **cannot exist** in interacting theories when $T > 0$

QFT reason: *thermal states satisfy the KMS condition, and this gives rise to very different spectral constraints than in the vacuum case*

Physics reason: *Dissipative effects of the thermal medium are everywhere-present \rightarrow always need to take these into account (i.e. always a width!)*

- This has significant implications for perturbation theory: *neither free field, nor quasi-particle propagators with real poles can form the basis of finite-temperature perturbative expansions* [Landsman, *Ann. Phys.* 186, 141 (1988)]

- There is both analytic [Weldon, *PRD* 65 (2002)] and now numerical [PL, O. Philipsen, *JHEP* 08, (2024)] evidence for this perturbative breakdown



Backup: Perturbation theory

- How might one resolve inconsistencies of $T > 0$ perturbation theory?
- In the vacuum theory we know that the basis of perturbation theory is the Gell-Mann/Low formula [Landsman, *Ann. Phys.* 186, 141 (1988)]:

$$iG(x_1 \cdots x_n) = \sum_{i_1 \cdots i_n} Z_{i_1}^{1/2} \cdots Z_{i_n}^{1/2} \frac{\langle \Omega | T[\Phi_{i_1}(x_1) \cdots \Phi_{i_n}(x_n) U(\infty, -\infty)] | \Omega \rangle}{\langle \Omega | U(\infty, -\infty) | \Omega \rangle}.$$

$$\begin{aligned} U(t_1, t_2) &= e^{iH_0[\Phi]t_1} e^{-iH[\Phi](t_1 - t_2)} e^{-iH_0[\Phi]t_2} \\ &= T \exp \left(-i \int_{t_2}^{t_1} dt H_I(t) \right), \end{aligned}$$

- Correlation functions of *interacting* fields can be computed from correlators of *free* fields \rightarrow This is *derived* from the fact that at large times the interactions between fields diminish: the asymptotic fields/states are free!
- The standard perturbative series is defined by expanding the exponential in the evolution operator as a series in the coupling parameter \rightarrow each term in the expansion is determined by the propagators of the asymptotic fields

Key point: free field propagators form the basis of perturbation theory at $T=0$ because the large-time states experience no interactions

Backup: Thermoparticles in QCD data

Goal: Extract information about the finite T spectral function $\rho_r(\omega, \mathbf{p})$ from data of *Euclidean* correlator $C_\Gamma(\tau, \vec{x}) = \langle O_\Gamma(\tau, \vec{x}) O_\Gamma(0, \vec{0}) \rangle_T$ O_Γ = scalar operator

- Standard approach: extract $\rho_r(\omega, \mathbf{p})$ from temporal correlator $\tilde{C}_r(\tau, \mathbf{p})$

$$\tilde{C}_\Gamma(\tau, \vec{p}) = \int_0^\infty \frac{d\omega}{2\pi} \frac{\cosh \left[\left(\frac{\beta}{2} - |\tau| \right) \omega \right]}{\sinh \left(\frac{\beta}{2} \omega \right)} \rho_\Gamma(\omega, \vec{p}) \rightarrow \text{Problem is ill-conditioned, need more information!}$$

- Instead, one can use the **spatial** correlator, where one integrates $C_\Gamma(\tau, \mathbf{x})$ over $\{\tau, x, y\}$ and fixes a spatial direction z

$$C_\Gamma(z) = \int_{-\infty}^\infty \frac{dp_z}{2\pi} e^{ip_z z} \int_0^\infty \frac{d\omega}{\pi\omega} \rho_\Gamma(\omega, p_x = p_y = 0, p_z)$$

- It turns out that *if* thermoparticles exist, then they will give a distinct contribution to $C(z)$

$$C(z) \approx \frac{1}{2} \int_{|z|}^\infty dR e^{-mR} D_{m,\beta}(R)$$

[P.L., *PRD* 106 (2022); P.L., O. Philipsen, *JHEP* 10, 161 (2022)]

→ This component can be extracted *directly* from data

Backup: Thermoparticle characteristics

Given a specific QFT, what form should the damping factors take?

Idea: thermal scattering states are defined by imposing an asymptotic field condition [Bros, Buchholz, (2002)]:

Asymptotic fields Φ_0 are assumed to satisfy dynamical equations, but only at large x_0

In Φ^4 theory

$$(\partial^2 + m^2)\phi_0(x) + \frac{\lambda}{3!}\phi_0^3(x) \xrightarrow{|x_0| \rightarrow \infty} 0$$

- Since thermoparticles dominate the large-time behaviour of correlators, they are natural candidates for describing such states. It turns out that their damping factors $\tilde{D}_{m,\beta}(\mathbf{u})$ are **uniquely fixed** by the asymptotic condition
- In Φ^4 theory one finds (where κ is a thermal width):

For $g < 0$:

$$\tilde{D}_{m,\beta}^{(-)}(\vec{u}) = \frac{2\pi^2}{\kappa^2} \delta(|\vec{u}| - \kappa),$$



$$\tilde{G}_{\beta}^{(-)}(k_0, \vec{p}) = \frac{1}{4|\vec{p}|\kappa} \ln \left[\frac{-k_0^2 + m^2 + (|\vec{p}| + \kappa)^2}{-k_0^2 + m^2 + (|\vec{p}| - \kappa)^2} \right]$$

For $g > 0$:

$$\tilde{D}_{m,\beta}^{(+)}(\vec{u}) = \frac{4\pi}{\kappa_0 (|\vec{u}|^2 + \kappa^2)},$$



$$\tilde{G}_{\beta}^{(+)}(k_0, \vec{p}) = \frac{i}{2|\vec{p}|\kappa_0} \ln \left[\frac{\sqrt{-k_0^2 + m^2} - i|\vec{p}| + \kappa}{\sqrt{-k_0^2 + m^2} + i|\vec{p}| + \kappa} \right]$$

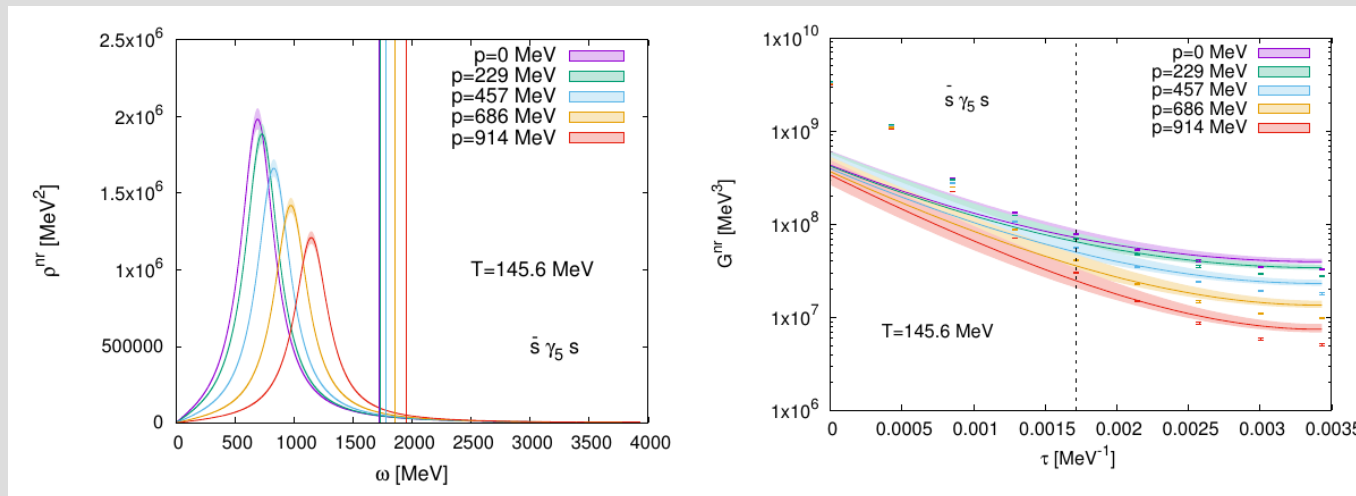
Backup: Robustness of spectral approach

- The robustness of the thermoparticle hypothesis can also be tested by comparing with different causal models, e.g. a Breit Wigner

$$\rho_{\text{BW}}(\omega, \vec{p}) = \frac{4\omega\Gamma}{(\omega^2 - |\vec{p}|^2 - m^2 - \Gamma^2)^2 + 4\omega^2\Gamma^2},$$

$$C_{\text{BW}}(z) = \frac{e^{-\sqrt{m^2 + \Gamma^2}|z|}}{2\sqrt{m^2 + \Gamma^2}}.$$

- Same procedure as with the thermoparticle case: (i) extract the width parameter Γ and coefficient from the spatial lattice data (ii) use this to predict the corresponding temporal correlator



→ Data is *not* consistent with a Breit-Wigner-type ground state!