Sharp length–inradius bounds and heat-content stability on compact metric graphs

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Luminary Oddities

Abstract

We determine how total length and Dirichlet inradius constrain heat retention on compact metric graphs, refining the all-times length-only comparison with the mixed Dirichlet–Neumann interval proved in a companion paper. For every stationary p-torsion problem, $1 < p < \infty$, we obtain the exact joint upper envelope, and we determine the sharp envelope of every positive linear resolvent. For finite metric trees with one Dirichlet root, the same endpoint-mass interval gives the exact heat-content supremum at every positive time; one sequence of finite brooms approaches the entire envelope uniformly on positive compact time windows. The resulting marked measured geometric stability estimate has the optimal exponent $1/3$, uniformly in tree complexity and minimum edge length. A positive averaged mass-relocation principle extends the heat comparison to trees with matching edge energy and speed weights at least one, and to cyclic graphs with exact root-preserving tree quotients, where the resistance height of the quotient sharpens the envelope. For every finite connected compact metric graph the same endpoint-mass interval gives the exact heat-content supremum at fixed length and inradius, approached by finite brooms, and the cubic one-time deficit holds with a constant uniform on compact time windows, so the marked measured stability exponent $1/3$ is attained and sharp on the whole class. We also determine the infimum of the first p-Laplacian eigenvalue at fixed length and inradius for every $1 < p < \infty$, extending Kennedy's linear result, with the first correction near maximal inradius and the sharp geometric stability power, and a sharp inverse-edge rate for the gap above this infimum on graphs with finitely many edges. For the nonlinear p-Laplacian heat flow from datum one, the same endpoint-mass interval gives the sharp one-step mass for every $1 < p < \infty$, and for $p > 2$ the sharp early-time heat content and the sharp coefficient of $t^{-1/(p-2)}$ at late times. The proofs combine shortest-path variational bounds, positive absorption-time response identities and a nonnegative heat-deficit source.

1 Introduction

How much heat can a graph retain when both its total length and its largest distance from the absorbing boundary are prescribed? The total length alone singles out the interval with one reflecting and one absorbing endpoint. Keeping the Dirichlet inradius adds information about how the graph departs from that interval. We determine the sharp stationary and resolvent envelopes for these two geometric parameters, and use their deficits to quantify the geometry of near-maximal heat retention at a single positive time.

The model and the sharp envelopes

Let G be a finite compact connected metric graph of total length $L > 0$, with a nonempty set D of Dirichlet vertices. At all other vertices we impose continuity and the unweighted Kirchhoff condition; an unmarked terminal vertex is therefore reflecting. Loops and multiple edges are

allowed, and $G \setminus D$ need not be connected. Let H_G be the nonnegative Dirichlet–Kirchhoff Laplacian and write

$$R = \max_{x \in G} \operatorname{dist}(x, D), \qquad \mathcal{Q}_G(t) = \langle \mathbf{1}, e^{-tH_G}\mathbf{1} \rangle.$$

Integration and the inner product use arclength measure. The comparison interval I_L has length L, with one Dirichlet and one Neumann endpoint. The weak operator formulations and the geometric distance used below are defined in the corresponding proof sections.

Bifulco and Täufer [1] asked whether $\mathcal{Q}_G(t) \le \mathcal{Q}_{I_L}(t)$ at every time. For $G \setminus D$ connected, they proved it for large times and, when the edge lengths are rationally dependent, for small times [1, Theorem 2.6], and they recorded the all-times question in their abstract and in [1, Remark 2.9]. The companion paper [A, Theorem 1.2] proves the inequality for every graph in the present model at every time, with no condition on the edge lengths; the decomposition at Dirichlet vertices recorded in [2, Remark 2.7] also accommodates disconnected $G \setminus D$. Theorem 5.3 below rederives it for initial datum one through a nonnegative heat-deficit source, whose quantitative form the stability theory requires. This all-times inequality uses only the total length. Prescribing the Dirichlet inradius as well, we determine the exact supremum at every positive time on rooted trees,

$$\mathcal{Q}_T(t) \le Q_{R,L-R}(t) < \mathcal{Q}_{I_L}(t) \qquad (t > 0,\ R < L),$$

where $Q_{R,L-R}$ is the endpoint-mass interval model described below. The supremum is approached by finite brooms uniformly on positive compact time windows. The pitchforks singled out in [1, Remark 2.8] as the delicate small-time candidates obey the comparison at every time through an explicit positive convolution formula (Proposition 9.1, also [A, Proposition 6.1]). At fixed positive times their deficit is exactly cubic in the arm length (Theorem 10.1), which fixes the optimal geometric stability exponent 1/3. The double-Dirichlet counterpart of the domain comparison discussed in [1, Remark 2.7] is the subject of [A, Theorem 5.1], under the condition that every bridge has Dirichlet vertices on both sides.

For $1 < p < \infty$, let u_p solve the datum-one stationary problem $-(|u_p'|^{p-2}u_p')' = 1$, with zero Dirichlet values and natural Kirchhoff p-flux conditions, and put

$$S_p(G) = \int_G u_p \, \mathrm{d}x, \qquad q = \frac{p}{p-1}.$$

Our first sharp envelope is

$$S_p(G) \le \frac{L^{q+1} - (L-R)^{q+1}}{q+1}. \tag{1}$$

The normalization is important: S_p is the torsion integral, not its $(p-1)$st power. In particular $S_2(I_L) = L^3/3$. At each prescribed $0 < R < L$, the right-hand side is an exact supremum. It is approached by finite brooms and is not attained by a finite graph. We prove the full weak formulation, the bound, nonattainment and the fixed-parameter sharpness in Section 2.

The second envelope retains a positive resolvent parameter. Set $J_G(z) = \langle \mathbf{1}, (H_G + z)^{-1}\mathbf{1} \rangle$ for $z > 0$ and $s = \sqrt{z}$. Then

$$J_G(z) \le \frac{L}{z} - \frac{\tanh(sR) + s(L-R)}{z^{3/2}\bigl(1 + s(L-R)\tanh(sR)\bigr)}. \tag{2}$$

This is again the exact supremum at fixed L, R, approached by the same broom limit. Section 3 proves the bound and an exact integral formula for its deficit from $J_{I_L}(z)$. The stationary $p = 2$ bound is recovered as $z \downarrow 0$. The resolvent family supplies additional information needed for the heat-stability argument. On rooted trees and exact tree quotients, the pointwise heat comparison with the limiting broom model is obtained separately, through positive inverse kernels (Section 7).

From deficit to marked measured geometry

Normalize length by L and arclength measure by L^{-1}, and put $\beta = 1 - R/L$. We compare G/L with the unit mixed interval by a common-embedding distance d_m. This distance records the metric support, the Dirichlet marked set and the arclength probability measure through Hausdorff and Prokhorov distances. Thus it detects more than an unmarked metric approximation. The shortest-path argument gives

$$d_m(G/L, I_1) \le 2\beta.$$

Combined with (1), it yields

$$d_m(G/L, I_1) \le 2\left(\frac{L^{q+1} - (q+1)S_p(G)}{L^{q+1}}\right)^{1/(q+1)}. \tag{3}$$

The exponent $1/(q+1)$ is optimal, even on a fixed graph topology; the coefficient 2 comes from an explicit common embedding. The distance and the proof of geometric stability are given in Section 4.

For heat content, the normalized one-time deficit is

$$\delta_G(\tau) = \frac{\mathcal{Q}_{I_L}(L^2\tau) - \mathcal{Q}_G(L^2\tau)}{L}.$$

For every $\varepsilon > 0$ and every window $0 < \tau_0 \le \tau_1 < \infty$, we prove

$$\delta_G(\tau) \ge C_{\varepsilon,\tau_0,\tau_1}\beta^{3+\varepsilon} \qquad (\tau \in [\tau_0, \tau_1]), \tag{4}$$

where the constant is positive and independent of the number of edges, vertices and minimum edge length. Consequently, for each $0 < \alpha < 1/3$ there is a uniform estimate

$$d_m(G/L, I_1) \le C_{\alpha,\tau_0,\tau_1}\delta_G(\tau)^{\alpha}.$$

For general graphs the positive-time proof uses a nonnegative heat-deficit source to control an earlier integrated deficit, followed by the sharp resolvent reserve and a weighted-tail estimate. The necessary comparison and source identities for constant initial datum are proved inside this article; they overlap with [A, Sections 3 and 4], as detailed at the start of Section 5.

A family of small-arm pitchforks shows that the heat deficit is cubic in its geometric departure from the interval. The full asymptotic is proved in Section 10, uniformly on positive compact time windows. It rules out every exponent $\alpha > 1/3$, even at a fixed positive observation time. Together with the preceding upper stability bounds, this identifies $1/3$ as the exact supremum of the admissible exponents. For singly rooted trees, the endpoint itself is valid by the stronger heat-envelope comparison below.

The sharp tree heat envelope and its positive extensions

For a finite tree with one Dirichlet root, the positive-time comparison retains both geometric parameters exactly. Let $Q_{r,\beta}$ be the heat content on $[0, r]$ with Dirichlet condition at zero, energy $\int |f'|^2$ and speed measure $\mathrm{d}x + \beta\delta_r$; its initial heat includes the endpoint atom. We prove

$$\mathcal{Q}_T(t) \le Q_{R,L-R}(t) \qquad (t > 0).$$

At every prescribed $0 < R < L$ this is the exact supremum, approached by the same finite brooms uniformly on positive compact time windows. Each finite tree has strict inequality there; the DN interval attains the case $R = L$. The endpoint model has a positive radius-variation formula, which yields a cubic deficit and hence the optimal admissible geometric exponent $1/3$ for this tree class.

The proof uses absorption-time distributions to merge parallel rooted branches, and positive junction-response factors to propagate their heat-content order along a common stem. An averaged mass-relocation lemma then moves excess speed mass from ancestors to descendant leaves. In resistance coordinates this gives the same heat envelope for weighted trees whose edge energy and speed have identical multiplicities $c_e \geq 1$. Exact invariant tree quotients transfer the result to a specified cyclic class; equilateral complete graphs with one Dirichlet vertex provide examples of unbounded cycle rank. These results are proved in Section 7.

Relation to existing bounds and methods

Mugnolo and Plümer [4] establish the sharp length-only stationary bound $S_2(G) \leq L^3/3$ and discuss bounds retaining the Dirichlet inradius, including $S_2(G) < RL^2$ [4, Remark 5.2(1)]. Our joint envelope (1) for $p = 2$ is strictly smaller than RL^2 when $0 < R < L$, and determines the exact supremum rather than an inradius scaling alone. Their stower constructions also supply important ancestry for concentrating graph length in short arms; their explicit stower formula already yields torsion of order R at fixed length, incompatible with an upper bound proportional to LR^2 (see the discussion after Corollary 2.4). The new ingredient here is the exact joint envelope. Their work also develops surgery principles and Kohler–Jobin-type bounds for the ground-state energy.

Özcan [5] develops sharp metric-graph p-torsion inequalities using level sets and variational methods. Comparisons with that work must account for the powered convention for torsional rigidity: our quantity is S_p, and the corresponding powered quantity is S_p^{p-1}. The extension here determines the exact joint length–inradius envelope and its fixed-parameter sharpness for every $1 < p < \infty$. The linear resolvent theorem and the positive-time stability conclusions concern the linear case $p = 2$.

For heat content, Bifulco and Täufer [1] prove the interval comparison for large times and, under rational dependence of the edge lengths, for small times, and give an all-times comparison formula for suitable pairs of equilateral graphs [1, Corollary 4.9]. Bifulco and Mugnolo [2] give a closed formula for the heat content at every positive time as a sum over paths between Dirichlet vertices, a small-time expansion, and surgery principles, including operations that preserve heat content at all times. The companion paper [A] proves the length-only all-times comparison, together with a concentration order for general nonnegative L^2 data. The present question is quantitative: how much does prescribed inradius reduce the extremal stationary and resolvent values, and how does a small positive-time deficit constrain marked measured geometry? The sharp envelopes, effective heat reserve and cubic obstruction answer successive parts of that question.

The analytic inputs have classical antecedents. Friedlander's graph coarea argument [3] and parabolic symmetrization [6, 7, 8] underlie the constant-datum heat comparison, here and in [A]. Our proofs retain the graph-specific positive deficit source and the shortest-path variational information needed for stability. The paper first proves the stationary and resolvent envelopes and their geometric consequence. It then supplies the necessary heat-source argument, the exact rooted-tree heat envelope and its mass-relocation extensions, the general-graph effective positive-time estimate, and the sharpness obstruction.

2 Sharp stationary bounds in length and inradius

Let G be a finite compact connected metric graph with strictly positive edge lengths, total length $L > 0$, and a nonempty set D of Dirichlet vertices. Integrals use ordinary edge-length measure. All functions are continuous at vertices; at vertices outside D we impose the natural Kirchhoff condition. In particular, a degree-one vertex outside D has a Neumann condition.

The Dirichlet inradius is

$$R = \max_{x \in G} \operatorname{dist}_G(x, D), \qquad 0 < R \le L.$$

There is no bound on the number of edges or the vertex degrees.

Fix $1 < p < \infty$ and put $q = p/(p-1)$. Write $V_p(G, D)$ for the continuous, edgewise $W^{1,p}$ functions vanishing on D. We use the unpowered normalization

$$S_p(G, D) = \int_G u_p \, \mathrm{d}x,$$

where u_p is the weak solution of

$$\int_G |u_p'|^{p-2} u_p' f' \, \mathrm{d}x = \int_G f \, \mathrm{d}x \qquad (f \in V_p(G, D)). \tag{5}$$

Thus the edge equation is $-(|u_p'|^{p-2}u_p')' = 1$, with conservation of outward p-flux at every non-Dirichlet vertex.

The length-only Saint–Venant comparison is classical for $p = 2$ [4] and has a nonlinear counterpart in [5]. The latter uses the powered quantity $\mathcal{T}_p = S_p^{p-1}$. We retain S_p throughout the stationary argument and give the conversion explicitly below. The new comparison fixes both L and R.

Lemma 2.1 (Weak problem and normalization)**.** *The problem* (5) *has a unique nonnegative, nonzero solution. Moreover*

$$S_p(G, D) = \int_G |u_p'|^p \, \mathrm{d}x, \tag{6}$$

$$S_p(G, D) = \frac{1}{p-1} \sup_{f \in V_p(G,D)} \left\{ p \int_G f \, \mathrm{d}x - \int_G |f'|^p \, \mathrm{d}x \right\}, \tag{7}$$

$$\mathcal{T}_p(G, D) := \sup_{0 \ne f \in V_p(G,D)} \frac{|\int_G f \, \mathrm{d}x|^p}{\int_G |f'|^p \, \mathrm{d}x} = S_p(G, D)^{p-1}. \tag{8}$$

Proof. For any $x \in G$, integrate f' along a simple path from D to x. Hölder's inequality gives

$$|f(x)| \le L^{1/q} \left(\int_G |f'|^p \, \mathrm{d}x \right)^{1/p}.$$

Consequently the derivative norm controls the full Sobolev norm on $V_p(G, D)$. This space is a closed subspace of the finite product of the edge Sobolev spaces. The functional

$$f \longmapsto \frac{1}{p} \int_G |f'|^p \, \mathrm{d}x - \int_G f \, \mathrm{d}x$$

is coercive and weakly lower semicontinuous. Reflexivity gives a minimizer, and strict convexity in derivatives, together with the Dirichlet anchor, gives uniqueness. Its Euler equation is (5). Replacing a real minimizer by its absolute value preserves energy and does not increase the functional, so uniqueness gives nonnegativity. A small positive multiple of a nonzero nonnegative edge-interior bump has negative functional value; hence the minimizer is nonzero.

On an edge its p-flux has distributional derivative -1, so that flux is affine. Inverting the map $t \mapsto |t|^{p-2}t$ gives a continuous edge derivative. Testing with functions having prescribed vertex values yields the Kirchhoff flux law. No twice-differentiability assertion at a zero of u_p' is needed.

Testing by u_p proves (6). The minimized functional at u_p equals $-(p-1)S_p/p$, proving (7). Finally (5) and Hölder give

$$\left| \int_G f \, \mathrm{d}x \right| \le S_p^{(p-1)/p} \left(\int_G |f'|^p \, \mathrm{d}x \right)^{1/p}.$$

Equality in the resulting quotient bound is attained by $f = u_p$, which proves (8). □

Theorem 2.2 (Sharp joint stationary envelope)**.** *For every graph in the stated class and every $1 < p < \infty$,*

$$S_p(G, D) \le A_p(L, R) := \frac{L^{q+1} - (L - R)^{q+1}}{q + 1}. \tag{9}$$

For each prescribed $0 < R < L$, the right side is the exact supremum over finite graphs with those values of L, R, but is not attained by a finite graph. At $R = L$ the Dirichlet–Neumann interval attains the bound. In the powered convention the inequality is $\mathcal{T}_p(G, D) \le A_p(L, R)^{p-1}$.

Proof. The supremum in (7) may be restricted to nonnegative real functions. Let f be such a function, not identically zero, and choose a point x where it reaches its maximum. A shortest path γ from a closest Dirichlet vertex to x has length $r = \mathrm{dist}_G(x, D) \le R$. It is simple and has edge measure r; if x lies inside an edge we subdivide that edge. Parameterize it by arclength from its Dirichlet endpoint and put $g = f|_\gamma$. Then $g(0) = 0$ and $g(r) = \max_G f$. The complement has length $L - r$, whence

$$\begin{aligned} p \int_G f \, \mathrm{d}x - \int_G |f'|^p \, \mathrm{d}x &\le p \int_0^r g(s) \, \mathrm{d}s + p(L - r)g(r) - \int_0^r |g'(s)|^p \, \mathrm{d}s \\ &= \int_0^r \left[p(L - s)g'(s) - |g'(s)|^p \right] \mathrm{d}s. \end{aligned}$$

The equality is Fubini's formula for an absolutely continuous g with $g(0) = 0$; it requires no monotonicity of g. For $a \ge 0$ and real z,

$$paz - |z|^p \le (p - 1)a^q.$$

Applying this sharp Young inequality pointwise gives an upper bound $(p - 1) \int_0^r (L - s)^q \, \mathrm{d}s$, and then $(p - 1) \int_0^R (L - s)^q \, \mathrm{d}s$. Equation (7) proves (9).

If $R < L$, apply the argument to u_p. The complement of its selected path has positive length and contains an open edge subinterval. Equality would force the discarded energy there to be zero, so u_p would be constant on that subinterval. This contradicts the edge equation that its p-flux has derivative -1. Thus the bound is strict on every finite graph when $R < L$. Exact sharpness follows from the brooms constructed next. For $R = L$, the DN interval gives $S_p = L^{q+1}/(q + 1)$ by direct integration. □

Proposition 2.3 (Exact brooms and sharp deficit scale)**.** *Join a Dirichlet stem of length $a > 0$ to $n \ge 2$ equal arms of length $b > 0$, with Neumann conditions at their terminal endpoints. Then $L = a + nb$, $R = a + b$, and*

$$S_p = \frac{L^{q+1} - (n^{q+1} - n)b^{q+1}}{q + 1}. \tag{10}$$

For every fixed $0 < R < L$, these brooms approach $A_p(L, R)$ while retaining exactly L and R. The stationary deficit exponent $q + 1$ in

$$\frac{L^{q+1}}{q + 1} - S_p \ge \frac{(L - R)^{q+1}}{q + 1}$$

cannot be replaced by any smaller exponent with a positive uniform coefficient at fixed L.

Proof. With s measured along the stem from its Dirichlet endpoint and t along an arm from the junction, define

$$\begin{aligned} u_{\mathrm{stem}}(s) &= \frac{L^q - (L - s)^q}{q}, \qquad 0 \le s \le a, \\ u_{\mathrm{arm}}(t) &= u_{\mathrm{stem}}(a) + \frac{b^q - (b - t)^q}{q}, \qquad 0 \le t \le b. \end{aligned}$$

Their derivatives have p-fluxes $L-s$ and $b-t$, respectively, since $(q-1)(p-1)=1$. The forcing equation and endpoint conditions hold. At the junction the sum of outgoing fluxes is $-(L-a)+nb=0$. Thus these functions solve (5), and uniqueness identifies them with u_p. Equation (6) now gives

$$S_p=\int_0^a (L-s)^q\,\mathrm{d}s+n\int_0^b (b-t)^q\,\mathrm{d}t,$$

which is (10).

For fixed L,R, put $b=(L-R)/(n-1)$ and $a=R-b$, positive for sufficiently large n. Then

$$\frac{L^{q+1}/(q+1)-S_p}{(L-R)^{q+1}}=\frac{n^{q+1}-n}{(q+1)(n-1)^{q+1}}\longrightarrow\frac{1}{q+1}.$$

This proves the asserted exact supremum. For the exponent assertion keep L fixed, take $n=2$, and let $b\downarrow 0$ with $a=L-2b$. Here $L-R=b$ and the deficit is exactly $(2^{q+1}-2)b^{q+1}/(q+1)$. Dividing by any smaller power of b proves the claim. □

Corollary 2.4 (Failure of an inradius-power upper bound)**.** *For each fixed $1<p<\infty$, there is no finite constant C_p such that*

$$S_p(G,D)\le C_pLR^q$$

for every graph in this class. Equivalently, there is no universal bound $\mathcal{T}_p(G,D)\le C_pL^{p-1}R^p$ in the powered convention. The leading small-inradius scale L^qR has optimal coefficient one.

Proof. For integers $k\ge 2$, take

$$n=k^2,\qquad a=\frac{1}{k+1},\qquad b=\frac{1}{k(k+1)}.$$

These are finite brooms with $L=1$ and $R=1/k$. Their exact value is

$$S_p=\frac{1}{q+1}\left[1-\left(\frac{k}{k+1}\right)^{q+1}+\frac{k^{1-q}}{(k+1)^{q+1}}\right].$$

For fixed $q>1$, differentiability of $(1-t)^{q+1}$ at zero gives $kS_p\to 1$; the final term is $O(k^{-2q})=o(k^{-1})$. Consequently $S_p/R^q\sim k^{q-1}\to\infty$, whereas $S_p/R\to 1$. Raising to $p-1$ proves the powered statement, because $(q-1)(p-1)=1$. Finally (9) implies $S_p\le L^qR$, and the same sequence proves the optimal leading coefficient. □

For $p=2$ the failed form is $T\le CLR^2$. A particular constant-four analogy with Makai's domain inequality was raised in [4, Remark 4.7(1)]. The negative example has classical network ancestry: the explicit stower formula in [4, Example 3.10], with many small loop petals on one Dirichlet stem, also yields $T\asymp R$ at fixed length as $R\downarrow 0$. The broom calculation above gives the elementary Neumann-arm version. The sharp fixed-(L,R) envelope, rather than the computation of torsion on a star or stower, is the joint geometric comparison established here. All statements concern a fixed exponent $1<p<\infty$.

3 The sharp positive-resolvent envelope

Return to the linear operator $H=-\mathrm{d}^2/\mathrm{d}x^2$ with Dirichlet conditions on D and standard continuity/Kirchhoff conditions elsewhere. For $z>0$, write

$$J_G(z)=\langle\mathbf{1},(H+z)^{-1}\mathbf{1}\rangle,\qquad s=\sqrt{z},$$

and define

$$F_{L,R}(z) = \frac{L}{z} - \frac{\tanh(sR) + s(L-R)}{z^{3/2}\big[1 + s(L-R)\tanh(sR)\big]}. \tag{11}$$

The following is a resolvent comparison; the pointwise heat comparison with the endpoint-mass model is proved for rooted trees in Section 7.

Theorem 3.1. *For every $z > 0$,*

$$J_G(z) \le F_{L,R}(z).$$

For each prescribed $0 < R < L$ and $z > 0$, this is the exact supremum over finite graphs with those L, R. The DN interval attains the endpoint $F_{L,L}(z) = L/z - \tanh(sL)/z^{3/2}$.

Proof. The anchored form is coercive, and its resolvent solution $u = (H + z)^{-1}\mathbf{1}$ satisfies

$$\int_G u' f' \, \mathrm{d}x + z \int_G uf \, \mathrm{d}x = \int_G f \, \mathrm{d}x \qquad (f \in V_2(G, D)).$$

Testing with the negative part gives $u \ge 0$. Testing with $(u - 1/z)_+$, which vanishes on D, gives

$$\int_G |((u - 1/z)_+)'|^2 \, \mathrm{d}x + z \int_G (u - 1/z)_+^2 \, \mathrm{d}x = 0.$$

Hence $0 \le u \le 1/z$. Testing by u and completing the form square also gives

$$J_G(z) = \sup_{f \in V_2(G,D)} \left\{ 2\int_G f \, \mathrm{d}x - \int_G |f'|^2 \, \mathrm{d}x - z\int_G f^2 \, \mathrm{d}x \right\}. \tag{12}$$

The supremum is attained by u.

Choose a maximum point of u, and a shortest anchored path to it of length $r \le R$. Set $g = u$ along that path, parameterized from its Dirichlet endpoint. On $[0, 1/z]$, the function $w(v) = 2v - zv^2$ is nondecreasing. Thus the complement contribution is at most $(L-r)w(g(r))$; discarding only its nonnegative gradient energy yields

$$J_G(z) \le \int_0^r (2g - zg^2 - |g'|^2) \, \mathrm{d}y + (L - r)\big[2g(r) - zg(r)^2\big]. \tag{13}$$

We may bound this by the supremum over all real $g \in H^1(0, r)$ with $g(0) = 0$. This strictly concave functional has the unique maximizer v satisfying, with $\beta_r = L - r$,

$$-v'' + zv = 1, \qquad v(0) = 0, \qquad v'(r) = \beta_r\big(1 - zv(r)\big).$$

The boundary condition follows by integration by parts at the free endpoint; when $\beta_r = 0$ it is Neumann. Put $t = \tanh(sr)$ and $b = s\beta_r$. Direct solution gives

$$v(y) = \frac{1 - \cosh(sy) + A\sinh(sy)}{z}, \qquad A = \frac{t + b}{1 + bt}. \tag{14}$$

All denominators are positive. Integration of its equation and the endpoint condition gives

$$z\left[\int_0^r v \, \mathrm{d}y + \beta_r v(r)\right] + v'(0) = L.$$

Testing the endpoint-mass weak equation by v shows that the maximum of (13) is $\int_0^r v \, \mathrm{d}y + \beta_r v(r)$. Since $v'(0) = A/s$, this maximum is $F_{L,r}(z)$.

It remains to vary r while keeping the total length L fixed. Put $x = sr$, $\ell = sL$, $b = \ell - x$ and $t = \tanh x$. Differentiation gives

$$\frac{\mathrm{d}}{\mathrm{d}x}\frac{t + b}{1 + bt} = -\frac{b^2(1 - t^2)}{(1 + bt)^2}.$$

Therefore $F_{L,r}(z)$ is nondecreasing in r, and $J_G(z) \le F_{L,r}(z) \le F_{L,R}(z)$. This does not assume that the resolvent maximum occurs at a point realizing the inradius.

For sharpness, use a broom with stem a and n equal arms b. An arm with junction value c has the solution

$$u_{\mathrm{arm}}(t) = \frac{1}{z} + \left(c - \frac{1}{z}\right) \frac{\cosh(s(b-t))}{\cosh(sb)}.$$

Its outgoing derivative at the junction is $(1-zc)\tanh(sb)/s$. Kirchhoff gives the stem condition $u'_{\mathrm{stem}}(a) = n\tanh(sb)(1-zu(a))/s$. Solving the stem as in (14) yields

$$u'_{\mathrm{stem}}(0) = \frac{A_n}{s}, \qquad A_n = \frac{\tanh(sa) + n\tanh(sb)}{1 + n\tanh(sb)\tanh(sa)}.$$

Integration of the graph equation cancels all non-Dirichlet fluxes and gives $u'_{\mathrm{stem}}(0) + zJ_G(z) = L$. Hence its exact resolvent is

$$J_G(z) = \frac{L}{z} - \frac{A_n}{z^{3/2}}. \tag{15}$$

At fixed $0 < R < L$, take $b = (L-R)/(n-1)$ and $a = R - b > 0$. Then $a \to R$ and $n\tanh(sb) \to s(L-R)$, proving convergence to (11). Every finite graph in the sequence has exactly the prescribed L, R. At $R = L$, direct solution on the DN interval gives the stated endpoint value. □

Corollary 3.2 (An explicit weighted heat deficit)**.** *Let I_L be the length-L DN interval. Then, for $z > 0$,*

$$\begin{aligned} J_{I_L}(z) - J_G(z) &\ge J_{I_L}(z) - F_{L,R}(z) \\ &= \int_R^L \frac{(L-r)^2 \operatorname{sech}^2(sr)}{[1 + s(L-r)\tanh(sr)]^2}\, \mathrm{d}r \qquad (16) \\ &\ge \frac{\operatorname{sech}^2(sL)}{3(1+sL)^2}(L-R)^3. \qquad (17) \end{aligned}$$

The middle expression is the sharp envelope deficit. It is positive for $R < L$ and tends to $(L-R)^3/3$ as $z \downarrow 0$.

Proof. The derivative computed above gives exactly

$$\frac{\partial F_{L,r}(z)}{\partial r} = \frac{(L-r)^2 \operatorname{sech}^2(sr)}{[1 + s(L-r)\tanh(sr)]^2}.$$

Integrating from R to L proves (16). On this interval the numerator's hyperbolic factor is at least $\operatorname{sech}^2(sL)$, while the denominator is at most $(1+sL)^2$. Integration of $(L-r)^2$ proves (17). As $z \downarrow 0$, the integrand tends to $(L-r)^2$ and is bounded by it. Dominated convergence proves the limit. Also $J_{I_L}(z) \to L^3/3$, so the stationary $p = 2$ envelope is recovered without requiring cancellation of divergent terms as a proof step. □

If $\mathcal{Q}_G(t)$ denotes the heat content for generator $-H$, the spectral semigroup–resolvent identity gives

$$J_G(z) = \int_0^\infty e^{-zt} \mathcal{Q}_G(t)\, \mathrm{d}t.$$

Thus (16) is an exponentially weighted all-time heat-content deficit bound. Pointwise heat ordering against the endpoint-mass model is obtained on rooted trees and exact tree quotients by the positive-kernel arguments of Section 7, and fixed-time stability rates on every graph by the parabolic argument of Section 8. The stationary and resolvent proofs use classical variational duality, the maximum principle and elementary interval equations.

4 Marked measured geometry

Throughout this section normalize total length to one. Distances are rescaled by L^{-1} and arclength measure by L^{-1} when starting from a graph of length L. Write

$$R = \max_{x \in G} \operatorname{dist}(x, D), \qquad \beta = 1 - R.$$

The interval used for geometric comparison is $[0, 1]$ marked at its Dirichlet endpoint 0. Reflection identifies its heat content with that of the physical interval in Section 5.

Definition 4.1. Let $d_m(G, I)$ be the infimum over common isometric embeddings of the maximum of the Hausdorff distance between the supports, the Hausdorff distance between their closed Dirichlet marked sets, and the Prokhorov distance between their arclength probability measures. The Prokhorov distance is the infimum of $\varepsilon > 0$ such that $\mu(A) \le \nu(A^\varepsilon) + \varepsilon$ and $\nu(A) \le \mu(A^\varepsilon) + \varepsilon$ for every Borel set A; A^ε denotes its open ε-neighborhood.

Theorem 4.2 (Geometric consequence of the inradius reserve)**.** *For every graph in the stated model,*

$$d_m(G, I) \le 2\beta.$$

Consequently, for every fixed $1 < p < \infty$, $q = p/(p-1)$, and every original length L,

$$d_m(G/L, I) \le 2 \left[\frac{L^{q+1} - (q+1) S_p(G)}{L^{q+1}} \right]^{1/(q+1)}. \tag{18}$$

The exponent $1/(q+1)$ cannot be increased in an estimate uniform over these graphs, even with a fixed graph topology.

Proof. Choose x_* at distance R from D and a shortest path γ from a closest $d_0 \in D$ to x_*. This path is an isometric interval: a shortcut between two of its points would shorten the whole path. Its complement has total length β. Every off-path point connects to its first attachment on γ by a simple path of length at most β. The same statement applies to another Dirichlet vertex d. If its first attachment is $\gamma(s)$ and that connecting path has length $\ell \le \beta$, then

$$R \le \operatorname{dist}(x_*, d) \le R - s + \ell.$$

Thus $s \le \ell$ and $\operatorname{dist}(d, d_0) \le 2\beta$. A Dirichlet vertex already on γ must be d_0, by the same inequality with $\ell = 0$.

Attach a new dead-end segment of length β at x_*. In the resulting space both G and the interval formed by γ followed by this segment embed isometrically. Their support Hausdorff distance is at most β and their marked-set Hausdorff distance is at most 2β. Their measures agree on γ, of mass $1-\beta$, and the remaining mass is β for each. Their total-variation distance, and hence their Prokhorov distance, is at most β. This proves the embedding bound. The stationary reserve gives $\beta^{q+1} \le [L^{q+1} - (q+1)S_p(G)]/L^{q+1}$, proving (18).

For the exponent, take a length-one broom with three equal arms of length b and a stem of length $1 - 3b$, where $0 < b < 1/4$. Its diameter is $1 - 2b$, so its ordinary Gromov–Hausdorff distance from the unit interval is at least b: any common embedding has Hausdorff distance at least half the difference of diameters. Its exact torsion deficit is

$$\frac{1}{q+1} - S_p = \frac{3^{q+1} - 3}{q+1} b^{q+1}.$$

Since d_m dominates the ordinary Gromov–Hausdorff distance, no larger deficit exponent can hold uniformly as $b \downarrow 0$. □

5 The constant-data heat deficit and its positive source

Relation to the companion paper. This section overlaps with [A]. The all-times inequality $\mathcal{Q}_G \le \mathcal{Q}_{I_L}$ is [A, Theorem 1.2], where it follows from a concentration comparison for arbitrary nonnegative L^2 data [A, Theorem 1.1]. Lemma 5.1, Lemma 5.2, Theorem 5.3 and Corollary 5.4 correspond to [A, Lemma 4.1, Lemma 3.2, Theorem 4.2 and Corollary 4.5]. Only initial datum one is needed here, and the argument below obtains $W \ge 0$ directly from the source representation. The section is therefore self-contained, and its quantitative source identities are the ones used in Sections 6 and 8.

Let G be a finite compact connected metric graph obtained by identifying endpoints of finitely many intervals of positive lengths ℓ_e. Its total length is $L = \sum_e \ell_e > 0$, and integration uses arclength; vertices have measure zero. Loops and multiple edges are allowed, and a loop contributes two germs at its vertex. Let D be a nonempty set of vertices. The form

$$a_G(f,g) = \sum_e \int_e f'\overline{g'}\,\mathrm{d}x, \qquad V = \{f \in H^1(G) : f|_D = 0\},$$

where $H^1(G)$ means continuous and edgewise H^1, defines the self-adjoint operator H_G. It acts as $-d^2/dx^2$, with continuity and unweighted Kirchhoff conditions outside D. There is no additional flux condition at a Dirichlet vertex. A non-Dirichlet leaf is Neumann. The heat generator is $+d^2/dx^2$, without a factor $1/2$.

The Dirichlet anchor gives a useful elementary coercivity estimate. A simple path from D to any $x \in G$ has length at most L, so

$$|f(x)| \le \sqrt{L}\,\|f'\|_{L^2(G)}, \qquad \|f\|^2_{L^2(G)} \le L^2 a_G(f,f) \quad (f \in V).$$

Thus H_G has a positive spectral gap. The finite-edge Sobolev embedding also makes its resolvent compact. Inserting or suppressing a non-Dirichlet vertex of degree two changes neither this form nor its heat semigroup.

Cutting every Dirichlet incidence separates the form into finitely many positive-length components, each anchored at a Dirichlet endpoint. A path from any point to D proves that each component is anchored. In particular $G \setminus D$ need not be connected. The semigroup $T_G(t) = e^{-tH_G}$ is positive and sub-Markovian, by the usual form contraction property. On each cut component it is positivity improving. Here one can use the classical strong parabolic maximum principle on the open edges: an interior zero at a positive time forces vanishing backwards on that edge. At a zero non-Dirichlet vertex all outgoing derivatives are nonnegative. If an adjacent edge solution is positive, the boundary Hopf lemma makes its outgoing derivative strictly positive, contradicting the Kirchhoff sum. Vanishing therefore propagates through the connected component. A nonzero initial datum cannot have a zero evolved component, since the spectral multipliers $e^{-t\lambda}$ are nonzero. This proves strict positivity off the Dirichlet endpoints for any nonzero nonnegative component datum. This is the standard positivity mechanism for these graph forms; see also [9, Theorem A.2].

Only the initial datum $\mathbf{1}$ is used in this section. Write

$$u(t) = T_G(t)\mathbf{1}, \qquad \mathcal{Q}_G(t) = \langle \mathbf{1}, T_G(t)\mathbf{1}\rangle.$$

Thus $\mathcal{Q}_G$ is heat content, not heat trace. Let $I_L = [0,L]$ have Neumann condition at 0 and Dirichlet condition at L, and write $v(t) = T_{I_L}(t)\mathbf{1}$. Its explicit heat content is

$$\mathcal{Q}_{I_L}(t) = \frac{8L}{\pi^2} \sum_{n\ge 0} \frac{e^{-(2n+1)^2\pi^2 t/(4L^2)}}{(2n+1)^2}. \tag{19}$$

Its torsion solution is $(L^2 - x^2)/2$, and consequently

$$\int_0^\infty \mathcal{Q}_{I_L}(t)\,\mathrm{d}t = \frac{L^3}{3}. \tag{20}$$

Reflection gives the same heat content when the Dirichlet mark is placed at 0 for later geometric comparisons.

5.1 Level coordinates for the survival solution

For a nonnegative function f on the graph, define its top-mass profile by

$$\mathcal{M}f(s) = \sup_{|E|=s} \int_E f\,\mathrm{d}x = \int_0^s f^*(y)\,\mathrm{d}y, \qquad 0 \le s \le L,$$

where f^* is its decreasing rearrangement. The supremum allows measurable parts of a level set. Directly from this formula,

$$\|\mathcal{M}f - \mathcal{M}g\|_\infty \le \|f - g\|_1 \le \sqrt{L}\,\|f - g\|_2 \qquad (f, g \ge 0). \tag{21}$$

Set

$$U(t,s) = \mathcal{M}u(t)(s), \qquad F(t,s) = \int_0^s v(t,x)\,\mathrm{d}x, \qquad W = F - U.$$

No sign of W is assumed at this point.

Lemma 5.1 (Positive-time survival profiles)**.** *For every $t > 0$, $u(t) > 0$ off D and $u_{xx}(t,x) = u_t(t,x) < 0$ on the open edges. Each edge profile is strictly concave and has at most one interior critical point. All edge derivatives needed below are bounded locally uniformly for positive time.*

Proof. Positivity and sub-Markovianity give

$$u(t+h) = T_G(t)T_G(h)\mathbf{1} \le T_G(t)\mathbf{1} = u(t).$$

Spectral calculus puts $u(t)$ in every power domain of H_G for $t > 0$; the edge equation and one-dimensional Sobolev regularity give smooth edgewise representatives and locally uniform derivative bounds. Therefore $w(t) = -u_t(t) = H_G u(t) \ge 0$. On each anchored cut component, $u(r)$ is nonzero by injectivity and the initial component datum $\mathbf{1}$. If $w(r) = 0$ on that component, its trivial operator kernel would give $u(r) = 0$, a contradiction. For $0 < r < t$, $w(t) = T_G(t-r)w(r)$, so positivity improvement gives $w(t) > 0$ on every open edge and at non-Dirichlet vertices. The edge heat equation yields $u_{xx} = u_t = -w < 0$. Positivity of u follows from the same component positivity argument applied directly to $u(t)$. Strict decrease of its edge derivative proves the critical-point assertion. □

At each positive time there are therefore only finitely many vertex and critical levels, and every level set has length zero. The coarea argument below is the graph rearrangement mechanism of [3, Lemma 3]; the integrated parabolic formulation has classical symmetrization ancestry [7, 8]. We print the needed constant-data argument.

Lemma 5.2 (Inverse-distribution regularity)**.** *For each $t > 0$, the decreasing rearrangement $q(t,\cdot) = u(t)^*$ extends by $q(t,0) = \max u(t)$ and $q(t,L) = 0$ to a Lipschitz function. Consequently $U(t,\cdot) \in W^{2,\infty}(0,L)$, with $U(t,0) = 0$ and $U_s(t,L) = 0$, locally uniformly for positive times.*

Proof. Fix a time, let $M = \max_e \|u_e'\|_\infty > 0$, and set $\mu(z) = |\{u > z\}|$. A simple arclength path from a point of D to a maximizer crosses every level between zero and $\max u$. For $0 \le \alpha < \beta \le \max u$, choose the first β crossing on that path and the last preceding α crossing. The intervening open segment has $\alpha < u < \beta$, is counted only once in edge measure, and has length at least $(\beta - \alpha)/M$. Hence

$$\mu(\alpha) - \mu(\beta) \ge (\beta - \alpha)/M.$$

The distribution is continuous because all level sets have zero length; it strictly decreases from L to zero. Its inverse is therefore M-Lipschitz, including the endpoint extensions. Integrating that inverse gives the asserted spatial regularity. The derivative bounds from Lemma 5.1 are uniform on compact positive-time intervals. No connectedness of the Dirichlet-cut interior was used. □

For a regular level z of a positive-time profile, let $s = \mu(z)$ and sum over all its crossings:

$$A = \sum_{u=z} |u_x|, \qquad B = \sum_{u=z} |u_x|^{-1}, \qquad N = \#\{u = z\}.$$

The path in Lemma 5.2 ensures $N \ge 1$. Coarea on the finitely many monotone edge pieces and inverse differentiation give

$$-\mu'(z) = B, \qquad U_{ss}(t,s) = -1/B, \qquad AB \ge N^2 \ge 1. \tag{22}$$

The top-s set is the hot set $E(t,s) = \{u(t) > q(t,s)\}$, up to null sets. Its envelope derivative is

$$U_t(t,s) = \int_{E(t,s)} u_t(t,x)\,\mathrm{d}x = -A. \tag{23}$$

To justify the first equality, bracket the time difference with the old and new maximizing sets. Uniform convergence of u and continuity of its inverse distribution place their symmetric difference in a shrinking band around a null level set. The two difference quotients have the same limit. For the second equality integrate $u_t = u_{xx}$ over the hot set. Every hot non-Dirichlet vertex includes all its germs and its flux cancels by Kirchhoff. Dirichlet vertices do not occur at a positive hot level. Each boundary crossing contributes $-|u_x|$. Disconnected hot sets give the same cancellation. Also $|U(t,s) - U(r,s)| \le \|u(t) - u(r)\|_1$ gives local Lipschitz regularity in time, uniformly in s.

5.2 The positive heat-deficit source

On the mass interval $[0, L]$ let

$$\mathsf{A} = -d^2/ds^2, \qquad f(0) = 0, \quad f'(L) = 0, \qquad \mathcal{S}(t) = e^{-t\mathsf{A}},$$

and let $K(t; s, y)$ be its kernel. This semigroup is positive and an L^∞ contraction by the mixed maximum principle. Its positive-time kernel is smooth and

$$K(t; s, y) = K_{DD,2L}(t; s, y) + K_{DD,2L}(t; s, 2L - y) > 0 \quad (t > 0,\ s, y \in (0, L]),$$

by reflection at L, where $K_{DD,2L}$ is the usual Dirichlet kernel on $(0, 2L)$. Its Green kernel is

$$\int_0^\infty K(h; s, y)\,\mathrm{d}h = \min(s, y), \tag{24}$$

as follows by solving the mixed one-dimensional inverse problem. At the Dirichlet mass endpoint, the inward boundary derivative is strictly positive by the parabolic Hopf lemma. Thus $K(h; L, y)/y$ has a positive continuous extension at $y = 0$, uniformly for h in any compact positive window. These facts concern this fixed interval, not heat kernels on a varying graph.

Theorem 5.3 (Exact constant-data source)**.** *There is a jointly measurable nonnegative function $d(t,s)$, bounded on compact positive-time cylinders, such that at almost every mass coordinate of every positive-time profile,*

$$d = A - \frac{1}{B} = \frac{N^2-1}{B} + \frac{1}{B}\sum_{i<j}\frac{(\alpha_i-\alpha_j)^2}{\alpha_i\alpha_j}, \qquad \alpha_i = |u_x| \text{ at the crossings.} \tag{25}$$

The deficit satisfies

$$W_t - W_{ss} = d, \qquad W(t,0) = 0, \quad W_s(t,L) = 0,$$

and, for every $t > 0$ and $0 \le s \le L$,

$$W(t,s) = \int_0^t \int_0^L K(t-r;s,y)d(r,y)\,\mathrm{d}y\,\mathrm{d}r. \tag{26}$$

The integral is the finite increasing limit from source times $r \ge \varepsilon$ as $\varepsilon \downarrow 0$. In particular $W \ge 0$, so $\mathcal{Q}_G(t) \le \mathcal{Q}_{I_L}(t)$ for all $t \ge 0$, which is [A, Theorem 1.2].

Proof. Equations (22)–(23) give $U_t - U_{ss} = -(A - 1/B)$. Direct expansion gives

$$AB - N^2 = \sum_{i<j}\left(\frac{\alpha_i}{\alpha_j} + \frac{\alpha_j}{\alpha_i} - 2\right),$$

proving (25) and nonnegativity. Every regular level has at most two crossings per edge. If $M(t) = \max_e \|u_x(t)\|_\infty$, then $0 \le d \le A \le 2|\mathsf{E}(G)|M(t)$. The weak time and spatial derivatives define a jointly measurable version. At each fixed time there are finitely many exceptional mass coordinates. The established Sobolev and local Lipschitz bounds exclude any singular residual in the space-time equation.

For the physical interval, Lemma 5.1 gives $v_{xx} < 0$ at positive times, while its reflecting condition is $v_x(t,0) = 0$. Thus v is decreasing from that endpoint. Integrating its heat equation gives $F_t = F_{ss}$, with $F(t,0) = 0$ and $F_s(t,L) = v(t,L) = 0$.

Fix $0 < \varepsilon < t$. Variation of constants for the weak mixed heat problem on $[\varepsilon, t]$ yields

$$\begin{aligned} W(t,s) = {} & (\mathcal{S}(t-\varepsilon)W(\varepsilon,\cdot))(s) \\ & + \int_\varepsilon^t \int_0^L K(t-r;s,y)d(r,y)\,\mathrm{d}y\,\mathrm{d}r. \end{aligned} \tag{27}$$

The identity first holds in L^2; the continuous initial profiles and positive-time kernel smoothing make the initial term continuous. For the source integral, split off a short final-time strip: its sup norm is bounded by the strip length times the local L^∞ source bound, while on the remaining strip the kernel is smooth. This gives a continuous representative and equality for every s, including L.

Strong L^2 continuity of both heat semigroups and (21) imply $U(\varepsilon,\cdot) \to s$ and $F(\varepsilon,\cdot) \to s$ uniformly. Hence $\|W(\varepsilon,\cdot)\|_\infty \to 0$. The contraction property gives

$$\|\mathcal{S}(t-\varepsilon)W(\varepsilon,\cdot)\|_\infty \le \|W(\varepsilon,\cdot)\|_\infty \longrightarrow 0.$$

No sign of this initial term is required. The source integral in (27) is nonnegative and increases as ε decreases. That same identity bounds it by $|W(t,s)| + \|W(\varepsilon,\cdot)\|_\infty$, so its limit is finite and equals $W(t,s)$. This proves (26), and derives $W \ge 0$ rather than assuming a previous concentration theorem. At $t = 0$ both heat contents equal L. □

Corollary 5.4 (Integrated constant-data source)**.** *For $0 \le s \le L$,*

$$\int_0^\infty W(t,s)\,\mathrm{d}t = \int_0^\infty \int_0^L \min(s,y) d(r,y)\,\mathrm{d}y\,\mathrm{d}r.$$

In particular

$$\frac{L^3}{3} - \langle \mathbf{1}, H_G^{-1}\mathbf{1}\rangle = \int_0^\infty \int_0^L y\, d(r,y)\,\mathrm{d}y\,\mathrm{d}r. \tag{28}$$

For $L = 1$, $0 \le \Delta_G(t) = \mathcal{Q}_{I_1}(t) - \mathcal{Q}_G(t) \le \mathcal{Q}_{I_1}(t)$ and $\int_0^\infty \mathcal{Q}_{I_1}(t)\,\mathrm{d}t = 1/3$.

Proof. Tonelli in (26) and (24) gives the identity. Its left side is finite because $0 \le W(t,s) \le F(t,s) \le \mathcal{Q}_{I_L}(t)$ and (20) holds. At $s = L$, integrate both heat contents; spectral calculus and coercivity give $\int_0^\infty \mathcal{Q}_G(t)\,\mathrm{d}t = \langle \mathbf{1}, H_G^{-1}\mathbf{1}\rangle$. □

6 A backward integral estimate

In this section normalize total length to one and write $I = I_1$. Put $\Delta_G(t) = \mathcal{Q}_I(t) - \mathcal{Q}_G(t)$. For datum one, Theorem 5.3 gives

$$\Delta_G(t) = \int_0^t \int_0^1 K(t-r;1,y) d(r,y)\,\mathrm{d}y\,\mathrm{d}r, \qquad d \ge 0. \tag{29}$$

This is the fixed mixed kernel in the mass coordinate, not the graph kernel. Its Green integral is

$$\int_0^\infty K(h;1,y)\,\mathrm{d}h = y.$$

For $0 < a \le b < \infty$ define

$$c(a,b) = \min_{\substack{a\le h\le b\\ 0\le y\le 1}} \frac{K(h;1,y)}{y} > 0, \tag{30}$$

where the quotient at $y = 0$ is the inward derivative. To justify positivity, positive-time smoothness and positivity of this fixed interval kernel give positivity for $y > 0$, including its Neumann endpoint. Reflection across the Neumann endpoint reduces the Dirichlet endpoint to the ordinary interval kernel; the parabolic boundary Hopf lemma gives a strictly positive inward derivative. The quotient therefore extends continuously and positively on the displayed compact set. These facts involve only a fixed interval.

Lemma 6.1 (Early integrated deficit from one observation)**.** *Fix $0 < \tau_0 \le \tau_1 < \infty$, set $T = \tau_0/2$ and $c = c(\tau_0/2, \tau_1)$. For every $t_0 \in [\tau_0, \tau_1]$,*

$$\int_0^T \Delta_G(t)\,\mathrm{d}t \le \frac{\Delta_G(t_0)}{c}. \tag{31}$$

Proof. Tonelli and the Green integral give

$$\int_0^T \Delta_G(t)\,\mathrm{d}t \le \int_0^T \int_0^1 y\, d(r,y)\,\mathrm{d}y\,\mathrm{d}r.$$

In (29) at t_0, retain $r \le T$. Then $t_0 - r \in [\tau_0/2, \tau_1]$, and the retained integral is at least c times the right side. All integrands are nonnegative; the monotone interpretation at initial time from Theorem 5.3 makes both Tonelli steps valid without a separate initial integrability assumption. □

7 The sharp heat envelope on rooted trees

We now retain the endpoint mass as a positive heat model. For $r > 0$ and $\beta \geq 0$, let $E(r, \beta)$ have speed measure $\mu_{r,\beta} = \mathrm{d}x + \beta\delta_r$ on $[0, r]$ and quadratic form

$$\mathcal{E}(f, g) = \int_0^r f'\overline{g'}\ \mathrm{d}x, \qquad f, g \in H^1(0, r), \quad f(0) = g(0) = 0.$$

Its total mass is $r + \beta$. At $\beta = 0$ it is the ordinary DN interval. For $\beta > 0$ the heat equation is $u_t = u_{xx}$ in the interior, with $\beta u_t(t, r) = -u_x(t, r)$ at the endpoint. Write $Q_{r,\beta}(t) = \langle \mathbf{1}, e^{-tH_{r,\beta}}\mathbf{1}\rangle_{\mu_{r,\beta}}$. The initial datum and this integral both include the endpoint atom. The resolvent calculation in Section 3 gives

$$\widehat{Q}_{r,\beta}(z) = F_{r+\beta,r}(z),$$

where F is defined by (11).

7.1 A positive model variation

Lemma 7.1 (Endpoint absorption densities)**.** *For every $r > 0$ and $\beta \geq 0$ there is a continuous strictly positive probability density $k_{r,\beta}$ on $(0, \infty)$ with transform*

$$h_{r,\beta}(z) = \frac{1}{\cosh(r\sqrt{z}) + \beta\sqrt{z}\sinh(r\sqrt{z})}. \tag{32}$$

The densities and their self-convolutions are jointly continuous for r in a compact positive interval, β in a compact nonnegative interval, and time in a compact subinterval of $(0, \infty)$.

Proof. The form is dense, closed and Markovian. For $\beta > 0$, thin boundary layers approximate the endpoint coordinate independently in $L^2(\mu)$; thus the trace constraint in the form domain does not prevent density. The bounds $|f(r)|^2 \leq r\mathcal{E}(f, f)$ and $\int |f|^2 \leq r^2\mathcal{E}(f, f)$ give coercivity. Compactness of the H^1 embedding, including its endpoint trace, gives compact resolvent and strictly positive spectral bottom.

Put $v(t) = e^{-tH}\mathbf{1}$. The Markov property gives $0 \leq v \leq 1$ and $v(t + s) \leq v(t)$. For positive time, $g(t) = -v_t(t) = He^{-tH}\mathbf{1}$ is nonnegative and nonzero. Interior positivity follows from the strong maximum principle applied to $g(t) = e^{-tH/2}g(t/2)$. It holds at r as well. Indeed, if a nonnegative positive-time solution vanished at r, its time derivative there would vanish, whereas the boundary Hopf lemma would give a strictly negative outward derivative. This contradicts $\beta g_t(r) = -g_x(r)$, or the Neumann condition when $\beta = 0$. Positive-time smoothing gives the continuous traces used here. Thus $k_{r,\beta}(t) = g(t, r) > 0$. For $\beta > 0$, strong initial $L^2(\mu)$ continuity gives $v(0+, r) = 1$; at $\beta = 0$ the ordinary DN kernel gives the same limit. Coercivity and smoothing give $v(\infty, r) = 0$, so $\int k_{r,\beta} = 1$.

For $u = (H + z)^{-1}\mathbf{1}$, integration by parts in time gives $\widehat{k}(z) = 1 - zu(r)$. The function $a = 1 - zu$ solves

$$a'' = za, \qquad a(0) = 1, \qquad a'(r) = -\beta z a(r).$$

Its endpoint value is (32). To check parameter continuity, take $z = \sigma + i\omega$, $\sigma > 0$, and the square root w with positive real part. For $p(x) = \cosh(wx)/\cosh(wr)$, integration of $p'' = zp$ gives

$$w\tanh(rw) = \int_0^r |p'|^2\ \mathrm{d}x + z\int_0^r |p|^2\ \mathrm{d}x.$$

Its real part is nonnegative. Hence $|1 + \beta w\tanh(rw)| \geq 1$ and $|h_{r,\beta}(z)| \leq |\operatorname{sech}(rw)|$. For $r \geq a > 0$,

$$|\operatorname{sech}(rw)| \leq \frac{2e^{-r\operatorname{Re} w}}{1 - e^{-2a\sqrt{\sigma}}}.$$

Since $\operatorname{Re}\sqrt{\sigma+i\omega}$ grows like $\sqrt{|\omega|/2}$, this is an integrable vertical-line majorant for both h and h^2, uniformly over the stated parameters. Absolute Bromwich inversion gives the asserted joint continuity, including $\beta = 0$. Tonelli and transform uniqueness identify the inverse of h^2 with $k * k$. □

Proposition 7.2 (Positive radius variation)**.** *For fixed $L > 0$, $0 < R < L$ and $t > 0$,*

$$\mathcal{Q}_{I_L}(t) - Q_{R,L-R}(t) = \int_R^L (L-r)^2 (k_{r,L-r} * k_{r,L-r})(t)\ \mathrm{d}r. \tag{33}$$

For each window $0 < \tau_0 \le \tau_1 < \infty$ there is $c > 0$ such that, at unit total mass,

$$\mathcal{Q}_{I_1}(\tau) - Q_{R,1-R}(\tau) \ge \frac{c}{24}(1-R)^3 \qquad (0 < R < 1,\ \tau \in [\tau_0, \tau_1]). \tag{34}$$

Proof. The derivative in the proof of Corollary 3.2 is

$$\partial_r F_{L,r}(z) = (L-r)^2 h_{r,L-r}(z)^2.$$

Integrate from R to L. Lemma 7.1 supplies the positive inverse convolution for every integrand. Tonelli and transform uniqueness prove (33); continuity upgrades the identity to every positive time. This uses an identified positive inverse, rather than an implication from scalar transform order. At $L = 1$ put

$$c = \min_{\substack{1/2 \le r \le 1 \\ \tau_0 \le \tau \le \tau_1}} (k_{r,1-r} * k_{r,1-r})(\tau) > 0.$$

Positivity, continuity and compactness give the strict inequality. Restrict (33) to $r \in [(1+R)/2, 1]$. The remaining weight integral is $(1-R)^3/24$. □

7.2 Positive rooted responses and parallel merging

For a finite singly rooted graph, or a rooted interval model with endpoint mass, let τ_x be absorption time and $v_z(x) = \mathbb{E}_x e^{-z\tau_x}$. For real $z > 0$, it solves $v_z'' = z v_z$, has value one at the root and natural conditions elsewhere. Let $p(z)$ be the negative sum of its outward root derivatives, and let M be its total speed mass. Integrating the equation cancels the other vertex fluxes, including the dynamic endpoint contribution, and gives

$$p(z) = z \int v_z\ \mathrm{d}\mu, \qquad J(z) = \frac{M}{z} - \frac{p(z)}{z^2}. \tag{35}$$

If $U(t)$ is the absorption CDF with initial distribution μ/M, then

$$\frac{p(z)}{z^2} = M \int_0^\infty e^{-zt} U(t)\ \mathrm{d}t.$$

For $E(r, \beta)$, direct solution gives, with $k = \sqrt{z}$,

$$p_{r,\beta}(z) = k \frac{\tanh(kr) + k\beta}{1 + k\beta \tanh(kr)}. \tag{36}$$

Its endpoint-start absorption law has transform $h_{r,\beta}$.

We will use a pathwise monotonicity of those endpoint laws. Let B be standard Brownian motion and set

$$Y_u = \sqrt{2} B_u + \Lambda_u, \qquad \Lambda_u = \max\{0, -\inf_{0 \le v \le u} \sqrt{2} B_v\}, \qquad \sigma_r = \inf\{u : Y_u = r\}.$$

The boundary regulator Λ is normalized for generator d^2/dx^2. The time

$$T_{r,\beta} = \sigma_r + \beta\Lambda_{\sigma_r} \tag{37}$$

has transform $h_{r,\beta}$. To verify the coefficient of the clock, apply Itô's formula to $e^{-z(u+\beta\Lambda_u)}f(Y_u)$, stopped at σ_r. The interior drift is $(f'' - zf)\,\mathrm{d}u$ and its boundary drift is $[f'(0) - z\beta f(0)]\,\mathrm{d}\Lambda_u$. Take

$$f(r) = 1, \qquad f'' = zf, \qquad f'(0) = z\beta f(0).$$

The resulting expectation is (32), which also fixes the endpoint local-time convention. On the same path, both σ_r and Λ_{σ_r} increase with r. Therefore

$$r \le R, \quad \gamma \le \eta \quad \Longrightarrow \quad T_{r,\gamma} \le T_{R,\eta} \quad \text{on this coupling.} \tag{38}$$

Absorption from any starting point of $E(r,\gamma)$ is stochastically no larger than absorption from its far endpoint: the endpoint-start path must first hit that point, after which the strong Markov property supplies its remaining absorption time. Averaging includes the atom and gives

$$\tau_{\mathrm{unif},r,\gamma} \le_{\mathrm{st}} T_{r,\gamma}, \qquad \text{initial law } \frac{\mathrm{d}x + \gamma\delta_r}{r+\gamma}.$$

Lemma 7.3 (A positive parallel merge)**.** *Take two endpoint models of heights $R \ge r > 0$, with endpoint masses $\beta, \gamma \ge 0$. Their sum of heat contents is at most that of the single model of height R and total mass $R + \beta + r + \gamma$. The inequality is strict at every positive time.*

Proof. Put $\ell = r + \gamma$. Fractional subtraction in (36) gives

$$p_{R,\beta+\ell} - p_{R,\beta} = \ell z h_{R,\beta} h_{R,\beta+\ell}.$$

By (35), the heat-transform gap for the proposed merge is

$$\frac{p_{R,\beta} + p_{r,\gamma} - p_{R,\beta+\ell}}{z^2} = \frac{p_{r,\gamma}}{z^2} - \frac{\ell h_{R,\beta} h_{R,\beta+\ell}}{z}.$$

Its inverse is the concrete CDF difference

$$\ell\left[\mathbb{P}(\tau_{\mathrm{unif},r,\gamma} \le t) - \mathbb{P}(T_{R,\beta} + T'_{R,\beta+\ell} \le t)\right], \tag{39}$$

where the two terms in the sum are independent. The stochastic chain

$$\tau_{\mathrm{unif},r,\gamma} \le_{\mathrm{st}} T_{r,\gamma} \le_{\mathrm{st}} T_{R,\beta+\ell} \le_{\mathrm{st}} T_{R,\beta} + T'_{R,\beta+\ell}$$

uses $\gamma \le \beta + \ell$ and (38). It proves the sign of (39). Its sign is strict: the last endpoint law has a strictly positive density by Lemma 7.1, whereas the independent added time $T_{R,\beta}$ is strictly positive almost surely. Adding it strictly reduces that CDF at every $t > 0$. Transform uniqueness and continuity identify (39) with the actual heat gap. □

The tree induction consumes this merge in the response form used by the next lemma. For a finite rooted load X, that is, a finite union of singly rooted graphs and endpoint models $E(r,\beta)$ glued only at a common root, write p_X for its root response and M_X for its total speed mass. Write $X \vee Y$ for two loads glued only at their common root.

Lemma 7.4 (Merge lemma for root responses)**.**

(i) $p_{X\vee Y} = p_X + p_Y$ *and* $M_{X\vee Y} = M_X + M_Y$.

(ii) If loads X_i, X_i', $1 \le i \le m$, satisfy $M_{X_i} = M_{X_i'}$ and $(p_{X_i} - p_{X_i'})/z^2$ is the Laplace transform of a nonnegative function K_i, then $X_1 \vee \cdots \vee X_m$ and $X_1' \vee \cdots \vee X_m'$ have equal masses and their response difference divided by z^2 is the transform of $\sum_i K_i \ge 0$.

(iii) Let $R \ge r > 0$, $\beta, \gamma \ge 0$ and $\ell = r + \gamma$. Then $E(R, \beta) \vee E(r, \gamma)$ and $E(R, \beta + \ell)$ have equal mass $R + \beta + \ell$, and

$$\frac{p_{R,\beta}(z) + p_{r,\gamma}(z) - p_{R,\beta+\ell}(z)}{z^2} = \int_0^\infty e^{-zt} K_{\mathrm{m}}(t)\,\mathrm{d}t \qquad (z > 0),$$

where K_{m} is the function (39). It is nonnegative, and strictly positive at every $t > 0$.

For two loads of equal mass, $(p_X - p_{X'})/z^2$ is the transform of $\mathcal{Q}_{X'} - \mathcal{Q}_X$, by (35). Thus (iii) is the hypothesis of Lemma 7.5 for the pair $E(R, \beta) \vee E(r, \gamma)$, $E(R, \beta + \ell)$, including its strict form.

Proof. (i) The absorption solution v_z equals one at the common root, and the two loads meet only there. Hence it solves the separate problems on X and on Y, and the outward root derivatives add. Masses add because the root carries no speed mass. (ii) Apply (i) repeatedly and use linearity of the Laplace transform. (iii) The mass identity is immediate. By (i) the response of the glued pair is $p_{R,\beta} + p_{r,\gamma}$. The displayed transform identity is the computation in the proof of Lemma 7.3: there $p_{r,\gamma}/z^2$ is the transform of ℓ times the uniform-start absorption CDF, by (35), and $\ell h_{R,\beta} h_{R,\beta+\ell}/z$ is the transform of ℓ times the CDF of $T_{R,\beta} + T'_{R,\beta+\ell}$. The sign and strictness are proved there. The final assertion follows from (35), since $J_X - J_{X'} = (p_{X'} - p_X)/z^2$ when $M_X = M_{X'}$. □

Lemma 7.5 (Preservation through a common stem)**.** *Suppose two rooted loads have equal mass and their response difference $(p_1 - p_2)/z^2$ has a nonnegative inverse kernel K. Attaching the same stem preserves this property. If $K(t) > 0$ for every $t > 0$, its propagated kernel has that property as well.*

Proof. For a stem of length $a > 0$, direct solution gives the new response

$$\mathcal{M}_a(p) = \frac{k \tanh(ka) + p}{1 + (p/k)\tanh(ka)}.$$

Its difference factors exactly as

$$\mathcal{M}_a(p_1) - \mathcal{M}_a(p_2) = (p_1 - p_2) h_1 h_2, \qquad h_i = \frac{1}{\cosh(ka) + (p_i/k)\sinh(ka)}.$$

Each h_i is the absorption-time transform from the stem/load junction in the corresponding positive rooted object. The load's boundary value multiplies its unit-root absorption solution, so its flux is that value times p_i; the stem equation yields the displayed formula. The new inverse kernel is therefore K convolved with two probability measures. Equal masses make it exactly the new heat-content gap.

For strictness those measures have mass in $(0, t)$ for every $t > 0$. Indeed a load of mass M has $0 \le p_i(z) \le zM$, by (35) and $0 \le v_z \le 1$. Thus

$$\frac{e^{-a\sqrt{z}}}{1 + M\sqrt{z}} \le h_i(z) \le \operatorname{sech}(a\sqrt{z}) \qquad (z > 0).$$

The upper bound excludes an atom at zero. The lower bound gives $-\log h_i(z)/z \to 0$ and excludes a positive support gap, since support in $[\varepsilon, \infty)$ would force $h_i(z) \le e^{-\varepsilon z}$. Their convolution also has mass in every $(0, t)$, proving the strict assertion. A zero-length stem leaves the kernel unchanged. □

Theorem 7.6 (Sharp rooted-tree heat envelope)**.** *Let T be a finite compact connected metric tree of length $L > 0$, with one Dirichlet vertex and Kirchhoff conditions at every other vertex. Let R be its maximum distance from the Dirichlet vertex. Then*

$$\mathcal{Q}_T(t) \le Q_{R,L-R}(t) \qquad (t > 0). \tag{40}$$

For each fixed $0 < R < L$, the right side is the exact supremum over these trees, approached uniformly on positive compact time windows by the same finite broom sequence. Every finite tree satisfies strict inequality when $R < L$. At $R = L$ the DN interval attains the envelope.

Proof. A rooted edge is the endpoint model with zero endpoint mass. Induct from the leaves toward the root. At each branch, replace the child branches by their endpoint models with the same masses and heights. Their already nonnegative response-gap kernels add under parallel gluing, by Lemma 7.4(ii). Lemma 7.4(iii), repeated from a branch of maximum height, replaces these models by one endpoint model with the sum of their masses and the maximum of their heights; each repetition adds a further nonnegative kernel. Lemma 7.5 propagates the comparison along the next stem. Appending a stem of length a to $E(r, \beta)$ gives exactly $E(r + a, \beta)$, so the actual subtree height and mass are preserved. The finite induction also covers a root of degree greater than one, where the last operation is a parallel merge at the root. Each step supplies a nonnegative inverse response kernel, proving (40). If $R < L$ there is a genuine parallel merge; otherwise the rooted tree is a DN path up to degree-two subdivision. The strict merge and common-stem lemmas propagate strictness to the root.

For sharpness fix $\beta = L - R > 0$, and take the brooms already used in (15), with $b_n = \beta/(n-1)$, $a_n = R - b_n > 0$ and n arms. Their length and height are exactly L, R. Their responses converge for every $z > 0$ to $p_{R,\beta}(z)$. Their absorption laws for uniform initial arclength have transforms $p_n(z)/(zL)$, which converge to the actual model law with initial distribution $(\,\mathrm{d}x + \beta\delta_R)/L$. The limiting probability transform is continuous at zero, with value one, because $p_{R,\beta}(z) \sim zL$. The Laplace continuity theorem for probability measures gives weak convergence of these absorption laws. The model CDF is continuous: its survival is $Q_{R,\beta}(t)/L$, and this heat content is the Laplace integral of a finite positive spectral measure of total mass L. Thus $\mathcal{Q}_{T_n}(t) \to Q_{R,\beta}(t)$ for every $t > 0$.

All the corresponding spectral measures have mass L, so

$$|\mathcal{Q}'_{T_n}(t)| \le \frac{L}{et}, \qquad |Q'_{R,\beta}(t)| \le \frac{L}{et}.$$

These follow from $\sup_{\lambda \ge 0} \lambda e^{-t\lambda} = 1/(et)$. A finite-grid argument upgrades pointwise convergence to uniform convergence on every compact positive time window. This proves the stated supremum with a single sequence. At $R = L$ use the DN interval. □

Corollary 7.7 (The optimal cubic tree endpoint)**.** *For every $0 < \tau_0 \le \tau_1 < \infty$ there is $c > 0$ such that every rooted tree in Theorem 7.6 satisfies, with $\beta = 1 - R/L$ and $\delta_T(\tau) = [\mathcal{Q}_{I_L}(L^2\tau) - \mathcal{Q}_T(L^2\tau)]/L$,*

$$\delta_T(\tau) \ge \frac{c}{24}\beta^3, \qquad d_m(T/L, I_1) \le 2\left(\frac{24\delta_T(\tau)}{c}\right)^{1/3} \qquad (\tau \in [\tau_0, \tau_1]).$$

The exponent $1/3$ is optimal, already on a fixed tree topology.

Proof. Normalize length to one. Theorem 7.6 and (34) give the first inequality. Theorem 4.2 gives $d_m \le 2\beta$, proving the second. The pitchforks in Theorem 10.1 belong to this class, have deficit asymptotic to $2b^3 f(\tau) > 0$ and $d_m \ge b/2$ by (64). For any exponent greater than $1/3$, the corresponding ratio diverges as $b \downarrow 0$. Thus $1/3$ itself is admissible and optimal. □

The same conclusions hold when finitely many selfloops are attached at vertices of a singly rooted tree. Cutting each loop at its midpoint into two equal reflecting stubs preserves constant-data heat content, as in [2, Proposition 6.4] (numbering of arXiv:2502.09461v1). Directly, reflection along the loop fixes the rest of the graph and the initial datum; uniqueness makes the heat solution symmetric, with zero derivative at the midpoint. Its two attachment fluxes are unchanged after the cut. Length is preserved, and the maximum root distance on a loop of length ℓ is the distance of its attachment plus $\ell/2$, also preserved by the two stubs. Repeating this operation gives a rooted tree with the same L, R and heat content.

7.3 Moving excess speed mass toward the leaves

The response argument also applies after a positive redistribution of speed mass. We first keep the energy and rooted metric tree fixed. Let $\mathcal{E}(f,f) = \sum_e \int_e |f'|^2 \, \mathrm{d}y$, with zero trace at the single root, and let the speed measure $\mu \geq \mathrm{d}y$ have a positive piecewise bounded density and finitely many nonroot atoms. Heat content uses initial datum one and the full measure μ. These are classical speed-measure realizations of one-dimensional diffusions; endpoint reservoirs and response reduction have established antecedents [10, 11].

Lemma 7.8 (Ancestor-to-descendant mass relocation)**.** *Let x be an ancestor of v in the rooted tree. Moving a nonnegative amount of excess speed mass from x to v, while retaining $\mu \geq \mathrm{d}y$, cannot decrease heat content at any positive time. More generally the same conclusion holds when a finite nonnegative excess measure supported on an edge is moved to a leaf descended from that edge.*

Proof. For $z > 0$ put $u_\mu = (H_\mu + z)^{-1}\mathbf{1}$ and $h_\mu(w) = 1 - z u_\mu(w) = \mathbb{E}_w e^{-z\tau_0}$, where τ_0 is absorption at the root. The common anchored H^1 variational identity is

$$J_\mu(z) = \sup_f \left\{ 2\int f \, \mathrm{d}\mu - \mathcal{E}(f,f) - z\int f^2 \, \mathrm{d}\mu \right\}.$$

Its unique maximizer gives the measure derivative

$$D_\mu J[\delta_w] = 2u_\mu(w) - z u_\mu(w)^2 = \frac{1 - h_\mu(w)^2}{z}.$$

A path from v to the root must first hit x. The strong Markov property therefore gives $h_\mu(v) = \eta_\mu(v \to x; z) h_\mu(x)$, where η is the first-hitting-time probability transform. Hence

$$D_\mu J[\delta_v - \delta_x] = h_\mu(x)^2 \frac{1 - \eta_\mu(v \to x; z)^2}{z}. \tag{41}$$

The first factor is the transform of the sum of two independent root absorption times started at x. The second is the transform of the survival function of the sum of two independent v-to-x hitting times. Thus the derivative has a specified nonnegative inverse convolution. All these laws refer to the same current measure μ.

For the distributed assertion, let λ be the mass to be moved and interpolate

$$\mu_\theta = \mu_{\mathrm{base}} + (1-\theta)\lambda + \theta\lambda(T)\delta_v, \qquad 0 \leq \theta \leq 1, \qquad \mu_{\mathrm{base}} \geq \mathrm{d}y.$$

The forms $\mathcal{E} + z\mu_\theta$ act on one anchored H^1 space and are uniformly coercive. Point traces and integration against these finite bounded measures are bounded there. Differentiating their Lax–Milgram equations, or taking the variational difference quotient, justifies

$$\frac{\mathrm{d}J_{\mu_\theta}(z)}{\mathrm{d}\theta} = \int \frac{h_{\mu_\theta}(x)^2 - h_{\mu_\theta}(v)^2}{z} \, \lambda(\mathrm{d}x).$$

For real $z > 0$, the common form equations give continuous $u_{\mu_\theta}(x)$ and positive continuous $h_{\mu_\theta}(x; z)$. The quotient $\eta = h(v)/h(x)$ is continuous as well. Probability Laplace continuity makes the corresponding absorption and hitting laws weakly continuous in (θ, x), so their survival-convolution kernels are Borel measurable. Each inverse kernel in (41) lies between zero and one. Tonelli over the finite measure λ and $0 \le \theta \le 1$ therefore identifies a nonnegative inverse for $J_{\mu_1} - J_{\mu_0}$. The actual heat contents are continuous at positive times, and transform uniqueness proves their pointwise order there. This is an averaged heat-content comparison; no ordering of every individual clock trajectory is required. □

Theorem 7.9 (Weighted trees and resistance height)**.** *Let a finite metric tree have one Dirichlet root and, on each physical edge of length $\ell_e > 0$, identical energy and speed density $c_e \ge 1$:*

$$\mathcal{E}(f, f) = \sum_e c_e \int_e |f_x|^2 \, \mathrm{d}x, \qquad \mu = \sum_e c_e \, \mathrm{d}x.$$

Set

$$L = \sum_e c_e \ell_e, \qquad S = \max_v \sum_{e \in [0,v]} \frac{\ell_e}{c_e}, \qquad R = \max_v \sum_{e \in [0,v]} \ell_e.$$

Then, for every $t > 0$,

$$\mathcal{Q}_T(t) \le Q_{S,L-S}(t) \le Q_{R,L-R}(t).$$

Proof. On each edge put $y = x/c_e$. The energy becomes ordinary arclength energy on a tree of edge lengths ℓ_e/c_e, while the speed measure becomes $c_e^2 \, \mathrm{d}y \ge \mathrm{d}y$. Its total mass is still L and its rooted height is $S \le R \le L$. The actual interior generator in this coordinate is $c_e^{-2} d^2/dy^2$; the reference Brownian normalization in the time change is d^2, with no factor $1/2$.

Apply Lemma 7.8 to move the excess measure $(c_e^2 - 1) \, \mathrm{d}y$ on each edge to any leaf descended from that edge. There are finitely many edges. Energy, rooted height and total mass remain fixed, and heat content cannot decrease. The result is an ordinary energy tree with nonnegative leaf masses. The preceding tree response induction applies verbatim: a leaf edge of length a with mass m is the base endpoint model $E(a, m)$; parallel merging and common-stem preservation retain the same mass and height. Thus its heat content is at most $Q_{S,L-S}$. Positive radius variation gives the second inequality. □

Corollary 7.10 (Exact tree quotients)**.** *Suppose a finite standard metric graph with a single Dirichlet root admits a finite root-preserving isometry group whose metric quotient, after subdividing edge-reflection midpoints, is a tree. Then*

$$\mathcal{Q}_G(t) \le Q_{R,L-R}(t) \qquad (t > 0),$$

where L is its original total length and R its original root inradius. The uniform cubic heat-deficit and exponent-$1/3$ geometric estimates hold for this class as well.

Proof. The constant initial datum and rooted operator are group invariant, so uniqueness makes the heat solution invariant. On each quotient edge, energy and speed are both multiplied by its orbit multiplicity $c_e \ge 1$. Summing the original Kirchhoff equations gives precisely the weighted quotient flux condition; an edge-reflection midpoint gives a Neumann leaf. Thus the invariant form and its L^2 space are exactly the weighted tree of Theorem 7.9, and their heat contents agree. Total mass equals the original length. Since the group fixes the root, quotient distance from its root orbit is the original distance from the root. Hence its physical height is R. Apply the theorem and the positive model cubic reserve, followed by the already proved bound $d_m \le 2(1 - R/L)$ after normalization. □

For example, take an equilateral complete graph K_n, $n \geq 3$, with one Dirichlet vertex and edge length ℓ. Permuting the other $n-1$ vertices gives a quotient stem of length ℓ and multiplicity $n-1$. The nonroot edges fold at their midpoints into one pendant edge of length $\ell/2$ and multiplicity $(n-1)(n-2)$. These give

$$L = \frac{n(n-1)}{2}\ell, \qquad R = \frac{3}{2}\ell.$$

At the quotient junction, the weighted flux equation is the sum of the original equations. This supplies cyclic examples of arbitrarily large cycle rank under the exact quotient hypothesis.

The quotient also carries the resistance height of Theorem 7.9, which sharpens the envelope.

Corollary 7.11 (Resistance-height bound on tree quotients)**.** *In the setting of Corollary 7.10, let the quotient tree have edge lengths ℓ_e and orbit multiplicities $c_e \geq 1$, and let*

$$S = \max_v \sum_{e \in [0,v]} \frac{\ell_e}{c_e}$$

be its resistance height, the maximum over quotient vertices v of the sum along the path from the root. Then $0 < S \leq R$ and

$$\mathcal{Q}_G(t) \leq Q_{S,L-S}(t) \leq Q_{R,L-R}(t) \qquad (t > 0). \tag{42}$$

For every $0 < \tau_0 \leq \tau_1 < \infty$, with the constant c of Proposition 7.2,

$$\frac{\mathcal{Q}_{I_L}(L^2\tau) - \mathcal{Q}_G(L^2\tau)}{L} \geq \frac{c}{24}\Big(1 - \frac{S}{L}\Big)^3 \qquad (\tau \in [\tau_0, \tau_1]).$$

Proof. The proof of Corollary 7.10 identifies the heat content of G with that of the weighted tree of Theorem 7.9 whose edge lengths are ℓ_e and whose common energy and speed multiplicities are c_e. Its total mass is L and its physical height is R. The quantity S is exactly the resistance height in that theorem, which gives (42); $S \leq R$ because every $c_e \geq 1$.

For the cubic estimate, scaling lengths and endpoint masses by L^{-1} and time by L^{-2} multiplies the heat content of the endpoint model by L^{-1}, so $Q_{S,L-S}(L^2\tau) = LQ_{S/L,1-S/L}(\tau)$; likewise $\mathcal{Q}_{I_L}(L^2\tau) = L\mathcal{Q}_{I_1}(\tau)$. If $S < L$, (42) and (34) with R replaced by $S/L \in (0,1)$ give the estimate; the constant in (34) depends only on the window. If $S = L$, the right side is zero and the estimate follows from Theorem 5.3. □

For the complete graph K_n above,

$$S = \frac{\ell}{n-1} + \frac{\ell/2}{(n-1)(n-2)} = \frac{(2n-3)\,\ell}{2(n-1)(n-2)}, \qquad \frac{S}{L} = \frac{2n-3}{n(n-1)^2(n-2)},$$

whereas $R/L = 3/(n(n-1))$. Thus $S/R = (2n-3)/(3(n-1)(n-2)) < 1$ for every $n \geq 3$. For $n = 3$, $1 - S/L = 3/4$ against $1 - R/L = 1/2$, so the cubic reserve of Corollary 7.11 is $27/8$ times that of Corollary 7.10.

8 Effective almost-cubic heat stability

We retain the graph model and the marked measured distance of Theorem 4.2. First normalize total length to one and set

$$\Delta_G(t) = \mathcal{Q}_I(t) - \mathcal{Q}_G(t), \qquad R = \max_{x \in G} \operatorname{dist}(x, D), \qquad \beta = 1 - R.$$

The initial datum is $\mathbf{1}$, and the generator is d^2/dx^2. Fix a positive compact observation window $0 < \tau_0 \le \tau_1 < \infty$, and put

$$T = \frac{\tau_0}{2}, \qquad c = \min_{\substack{T \le h \le \tau_1 \\ 0 \le y \le 1}} \frac{K(h;1,y)}{y} > 0. \tag{43}$$

Here K is the fixed mixed mass-coordinate kernel from Theorem 5.3; at $y = 0$ the quotient is its positive inward derivative. Lemma 6.1 justifies this constant and gives

$$\int_0^T \Delta_G(t)\,\mathrm{d}t \le \frac{\Delta_G(t_0)}{c}, \qquad t_0 \in [\tau_0, \tau_1]. \tag{44}$$

No graph-dependent heat-kernel minimum occurs in (43).

Theorem 8.1 (An effective almost-cubic deficit)**.** *For $0 < \beta < 1$, define*

$$\ell = \log(1/\beta), \qquad s_\beta = \frac{2 + \sqrt{4 + T(3\ell + \log 2)}}{T}. \tag{45}$$

Every graph in the stated model satisfies, uniformly for $t_0 \in [\tau_0, \tau_1]$,

$$\Delta_G(t_0) \ge \frac{c}{6}\,\beta^3 \frac{e^{-2s_\beta}}{(1+s_\beta)^2}. \tag{46}$$

At $\beta = 0$ the right side is defined to be zero. For every $\varepsilon > 0$, the positive constant

$$C_\varepsilon = \frac{c}{6} \exp\left(-\frac{16}{T} - 4\sqrt{\frac{\log 2}{T}} - \frac{12}{\varepsilon T} \right) \tag{47}$$

gives the simpler estimate

$$\Delta_G(t_0) \ge C_\varepsilon \beta^{3+\varepsilon}. \tag{48}$$

The constants depend only on the prescribed time window and ε, not on the number of edges, vertex degrees, or smallest edge length.

Proof. The positive comparison in Theorem 5.3 gives $0 \le \Delta_G(t) \le \mathcal{Q}_I(t)$. The unit DN interval has torsion $\int_0^\infty \mathcal{Q}_I(t)\,\mathrm{d}t = 1/3$. Corollary 3.2, with $z = s^2 > 0$, supplies

$$\int_0^\infty e^{-s^2 t} \Delta_G(t)\,\mathrm{d}t \ge \frac{\beta^3 \operatorname{sech}^2 s}{3(1+s)^2} \ge \frac{\beta^3 e^{-2s}}{3(1+s)^2}. \tag{49}$$

The last inequality uses $\cosh s \le e^s$. Independently, splitting this weighted integral at T and using (44) yields

$$\begin{aligned} \int_0^\infty e^{-s^2 t} \Delta_G(t)\,\mathrm{d}t &\le \int_0^T \Delta_G(t)\,\mathrm{d}t + e^{-s^2 T} \int_T^\infty \mathcal{Q}_I(t)\,\mathrm{d}t \\ &\le \frac{\Delta_G(t_0)}{c} + \frac{e^{-s^2 T}}{3}. \end{aligned} \tag{50}$$

Combining (49) and (50) proves, for every $s > 0$,

$$\Delta_G(t_0) \ge \frac{c}{3} \left[\frac{\beta^3 e^{-2s}}{(1+s)^2} - e^{-Ts^2} \right]. \tag{51}$$

This is a time split combined with a separate backward estimate; the pointwise lower bound comes from the backward estimate at the observation time.

For $\beta > 0$, the number in (45) solves

$$Ts_\beta^2 - 4s_\beta = 3\ell + \log 2.$$

Thus

$$e^{-Ts_\beta^2} = \frac{\beta^3}{2} e^{-4s_\beta} \le \frac{\beta^3}{2} \frac{e^{-2s_\beta}}{(1+s_\beta)^2},$$

because $\log(1+s) \le s$ for $s \ge 0$. Substitution into (51) proves (46) for all $0 < \beta < 1$, without a smallness threshold. The case $\beta = 0$ follows from nonnegativity.

For the algebraic form, the elementary square-root inequality gives

$$s_\beta \le \frac{4}{T} + \sqrt{\frac{3\ell}{T}} + \sqrt{\frac{\log 2}{T}}.$$

Also $2s + 2\log(1+s) \le 4s$, and Young's inequality gives

$$4\sqrt{\frac{3\ell}{T}} \le \varepsilon\ell + \frac{12}{\varepsilon T}.$$

Consequently

$$2s_\beta + 2\log(1+s_\beta) \le \frac{16}{T} + 4\sqrt{\frac{\log 2}{T}} + \varepsilon\ell + \frac{12}{\varepsilon T}.$$

Exponentiating this inequality in (46), and using $e^{-\varepsilon\ell} = \beta^\varepsilon$, proves (48) with precisely (47). □

Corollary 8.2 (Every geometric Hölder exponent below one third)**.** *For every $0 < \alpha < 1/3$, let $\varepsilon = 1/\alpha - 3 > 0$. Then*

$$\beta \le C_\varepsilon^{-\alpha} \Delta_G(t_0)^\alpha, \qquad d_m(G, I) \le 2C_\varepsilon^{-\alpha} \Delta_G(t_0)^\alpha \quad (t_0 \in [\tau_0, \tau_1]). \tag{52}$$

For a graph of original length L, replace β by $1 - R/L$, use the dimensionless observation window for t/L^2, and replace $\Delta_G(t)$ by

$$\frac{\mathcal{Q}_{I_L}(t) - \mathcal{Q}_G(t)}{L}.$$

Distances and arclength measure are normalized by L before using d_m. The same constants then apply.

Proof. Raise (48) to the power $\alpha = 1/(3+\varepsilon)$, then apply Theorem 4.2, which gives $d_m \le 2\beta$. Metric rescaling multiplies lengths by L^{-1}, time by L^{-2}, and heat content by L^{-1}, proving the final assertion. □

Remark 8.3 (Effective selection of the interval constant)*.* For computable positive window parameters, a positive rational number not exceeding the minimum in (43) can be certified from this fixed interval alone. With $k_n = (n + 1/2)\pi$,

$$\frac{K(h; 1, y)}{y} = 2\sum_{n \ge 0} (-1)^n \frac{\sin(k_n y)}{y} e^{-k_n^2 h}, \qquad h \ge T,$$

where the removable quotient at $y = 0$ is k_n. The uniform tail is bounded by $2\sum_{n>N} k_n e^{-Tk_n^2}$. Bounds for the derivatives with respect to h and y are respectively

$$2\sum_{n \ge 0} k_n^3 e^{-Tk_n^2}, \qquad \sum_{n \ge 0} k_n^2 e^{-Tk_n^2}.$$

For the latter, use $\sin(ky)/y = \int_0^k \cos(vy)\,\mathrm{d}v$, including its value at zero. Gaussian integral tails bound these series effectively. Finite rational grids, these Lipschitz and tail bounds, and interval enclosures of the finite trigonometric and exponential terms yield certified uniform lower bounds on the compact cylinder. Its strictly positive true minimum ensures that a finite stage certifies a positive rational lower bound. Any smaller positive rational may be used as c throughout the theorem. This specifies an effective procedure for selecting the constant. For arbitrary real window parameters the inequalities hold for every positive c below the minimum.

Remark 8.4 (Size of the subpower factor). Since $s_\beta = \sqrt{3\log(1/\beta)/T} + O_T(1)$, (46) differs from β^3 by the subpower factor $\exp(-O_T(\sqrt{\log(1/\beta)}))$. Its right side is increasing in β, so it also admits monotone one-dimensional inversion as an effective modulus. The factor comes from the absolute tail in (50), which is balanced against the reserve by the choice $s = s_\beta$. On rooted trees and exact tree quotients the cubic bound $\Delta_G(t_0) \geq C\beta^3$ itself holds, by Corollaries 7.7 and 7.10.

9 An independent formula for the asymmetric pitchfork

Consider a stem of length $a > 0$ joining a Dirichlet leaf to a Kirchhoff junction, with two further arms of lengths $b, c > 0$ ending at Neumann leaves. Write $P = P(a; b, c)$ and $L = a + b + c$. This example admits a separate positive convolution proof. The formulas and the identity of Proposition 9.1 are also [A, Section 6 and Proposition 6.1]; we include the proof because Section 10 uses its factorization. General pendant-edge surgery principles are treated in [2, Section 6] (numbering of arXiv:2502.09461v1).

For $s > 0$ put $k = \sqrt{s}$, $A = \tanh(ka)$, $B = \tanh(kb)$ and $C = \tanh(kc)$. Let $Z_P(s)$ be the Laplace transform of the absorption time for diffusion on P started at the junction, and let $Z_I(s)$ be the corresponding transform on the mixed interval started at distance a from its absorbing endpoint. This point has coordinate $L - a$ in our Neumann-at-zero convention. Solving $Z'' = sZ$, with $Z = 1$ at the absorbing endpoint and the usual conditions elsewhere, gives

$$Z_P(s) = \frac{1}{\cosh(ka) + (B + C)\sinh(ka)}, \qquad Z_I(s) = \frac{\cosh(k(b + c))}{\cosh(kL)}. \tag{53}$$

The same calculation gives the heat-content transforms

$$\widehat{\mathcal{Q}}_P(s) = \frac{L}{s} - \frac{A + B + C}{sk(1 + A(B + C))}, \qquad \widehat{\mathcal{Q}}_I(s) = \frac{L}{s} - \frac{\tanh(kL)}{sk}. \tag{54}$$

For completeness, $\widehat{u} = (1 - Z)/s$ solves the heat resolvent with initial datum one. Integrating $Z'' = sZ$ over the graph cancels all Kirchhoff and Neumann fluxes. On the stem, with distance x from the absorbing endpoint, $Z(x) = \cosh(kx) + d\sinh(kx)$; the junction condition gives $d = -(A+B+C)/(1+A(B+C))$. Hence $\int_P Z = -Z'(0)/s = (A+B+C)/(k(1+A(B+C)))$, proving (54).

Proposition 9.1 (Pitchfork convolution identity)**.** *For $\ell > 0$ define the positive locally integrable function*

$$h_\ell(t) = \frac{2}{\ell}\sum_{n=0}^{\infty} \exp\left(-\frac{(n + 1/2)^2\pi^2 t}{\ell^2}\right), \qquad t > 0.$$

Let μ_P, μ_I be the absorption-time probability measures whose Laplace transforms are (53)*. Then*

$$\mathcal{Q}_I(t) - \mathcal{Q}_P(t) = \big(h_b * h_c * h_{b+c} * \mu_P * \mu_I\big)(t), \qquad t > 0. \tag{55}$$

In particular the deficit is nonnegative, and

$$\int_0^\infty (\mathcal{Q}_I(t) - \mathcal{Q}_P(t))\,\mathrm{d}t = bc(b+c).$$

Proof. The interval mixed eigenfunction expansion, or the partial fraction expansion of tanh, gives

$$\int_0^\infty e^{-st} h_\ell(t)\,\mathrm{d}t = \frac{\tanh(\ell\sqrt{s})}{\sqrt{s}}, \qquad \int_0^\infty h_\ell(t)\,\mathrm{d}t = \ell.$$

The transforms Z_P, Z_I are those of probability measures: absorption is almost sure on these finite anchored graphs. This also follows by letting $s \downarrow 0$ in (53). Subtract (54), use $\tanh(k(b+c)) = (B+C)/(1+BC)$, and simplify to obtain

$$\widehat{\mathcal{Q}}_I(s) - \widehat{\mathcal{Q}}_P(s) = \frac{\tanh(kb)}{k}\frac{\tanh(kc)}{k}\frac{\tanh(k(b+c))}{k}\, Z_P(s) Z_I(s).$$

Tonelli and uniqueness of Laplace transforms prove the convolution identity almost everywhere. It holds everywhere by continuity: $h_\ell(t) = O(t^{-1/2})$ near zero and decays exponentially at infinity, so the triple convolution extends to a continuous bounded function on the real line when set to zero for $t \le 0$. Convolving with the finite measures preserves continuity. Finally integrate by Tonelli and multiply the five total masses. □

10 The cubic pitchfork profile and geometric sharpness

The positive convolution formula also determines the small-arm profile at fixed positive times. This supplies a heat-specific obstruction to improving the geometric exponents, rather than inferring such an obstruction from a stationary integral alone.

Theorem 10.1. *Let $P_b = P(1-2b; b, b)$, $0 < b \le 1/4$, and let I be the unit mixed Dirichlet–Neumann interval. Put*

$$\Delta_b(t) = \mathcal{Q}_I(t) - \mathcal{Q}_{P_b}(t).$$

Let μ be the absorption-time probability law from the reflecting endpoint of I, for the generator $+d^2/dx^2$. There is a continuous strictly positive probability density f on $(0,\infty)$, namely the density of $\mu * \mu$, such that

$$\frac{\Delta_b(t)}{2b^3} \longrightarrow f(t) \qquad (b \downarrow 0), \tag{56}$$

uniformly on every compact subinterval of $(0,\infty)$. Its Laplace transform is

$$\widehat{f}(z) = \operatorname{sech}^2\sqrt{z}, \qquad \Re z > 0, \tag{57}$$

where the square root has positive real part.

Proof. The graph has length one and inradius $1-b$. We use the functions h_ℓ and the absorption transforms from Proposition 9.1 and (53). Since h_ℓ has mass ℓ, h_ℓ/ℓ is a probability density. Its transform

$$\frac{\widehat{h}_\ell(z)}{\ell} = \frac{\tanh(\ell\sqrt{z})}{\ell\sqrt{z}}$$

has modulus at most one on $\Re z > 0$ and tends to one as $\ell \downarrow 0$ for each fixed such z. Write $a = 1-2b$, $k = \sqrt{z}$, and

$$Z_{P,b}(z) = \frac{1}{\cosh(ka) + 2\tanh(kb)\sinh(ka)}, \qquad Z_{I,b}(z) = \frac{\cosh(2kb)}{\cosh k}.$$

The positive convolution identity gives the probability density $f_b(t) = \Delta_b(t)/(2b^3)$, continuous for $t > 0$, and its transform

$$F_b(z) = \left(\frac{\widehat{h}_b(z)}{b}\right)^2 \frac{\widehat{h}_{2b}(z)}{2b}\, Z_{P,b}(z) Z_{I,b}(z). \tag{58}$$

The formulas originally obtained for positive real parameters extend to $\Re z > 0$ by analyticity of these probability transforms. Each absorption factor tends to $1/\cosh k$, so

$$F_b(z) \longrightarrow F(z) = \operatorname{sech}^2 k. \tag{59}$$

We next justify inversion uniformly in b. Fix $\sigma > 0$ and take $z = \sigma + i\omega$, $k = \rho + i\eta$. Then

$$\rho^2 = \frac{|z| + \sigma}{2}, \qquad \rho \geq \sqrt{\sigma}, \qquad \rho \geq \sqrt{|\omega|/2}.$$

The identity

$$\Re \tanh(bk) = \frac{\sinh(2b\rho)}{\cosh(2b\rho) + \cos(2b\eta)} > 0$$

shows that $w = 2\tanh(bk)$ has positive real part. Hence $|1+w| \geq 1$ and $|(1-w)/(1+w)| \leq 1$. Since

$$Z_{P,b}(z) = \frac{2e^{-ka}}{(1+w) + (1-w)e^{-2ka}},$$

and $a \geq 1/2$, we obtain

$$|Z_{P,b}(z)| \leq \frac{2e^{-a\rho}}{1 - e^{-2a\rho}} \leq \frac{2e^{-a\rho}}{1 - e^{-\sqrt{\sigma}}}. \tag{60}$$

Also $|\cosh(2bk)| \leq \cosh(2b\rho) \leq e^{2b\rho}$ and $|\cosh k| \geq \sinh \rho$. Therefore

$$|Z_{I,b}(z)| \leq \frac{2e^{-a\rho}}{1 - e^{-2\rho}} \leq \frac{2e^{-a\rho}}{1 - e^{-\sqrt{\sigma}}}. \tag{61}$$

The three normalized h factors in (58) have modulus at most one. Thus, uniformly for $0 < b \leq 1/4$,

$$|F_b(\sigma + i\omega)| \leq C_\sigma e^{-2a\rho} \leq C_\sigma e^{-\rho} \leq C_\sigma e^{-\sqrt{|\omega|/2}}, \qquad C_\sigma = \frac{4}{(1 - e^{-\sqrt{\sigma}})^2}. \tag{62}$$

This is integrable over $\omega \in \mathbb{R}$. The pointwise limit F has the same bound. Dominated convergence now gives

$$\int_{\mathbb{R}} |F_b(\sigma + i\omega) - F(\sigma + i\omega)|\, d\omega \longrightarrow 0. \tag{63}$$

For clarity, inversion here is ordinary Fourier inversion of an exponentially tilted density. Extend f_b by zero to negative times. Then $e^{-\sigma t} f_b(t)$ is integrable and has Fourier transform $F_b(\sigma + i\omega)$, which is integrable by (62). Fourier inversion identifies its continuous inverse representative. Since the original f_b is continuous for $t > 0$, the almost-everywhere identification holds at every positive time. In particular

$$f_b(t) = \frac{e^{\sigma t}}{2\pi} \int_{\mathbb{R}} e^{i\omega t} F_b(\sigma + i\omega)\, d\omega.$$

The inverse expression with F defines a continuous function f at positive times. For $0 < \tau_0 \leq \tau_1 < \infty$, (63) implies

$$\sup_{t \in [\tau_0, \tau_1]} |f_b(t) - f(t)| \leq \frac{e^{\sigma \tau_1}}{2\pi} \int_{\mathbb{R}} |F_b - F|\, d\omega \longrightarrow 0.$$

The argument uses only the fixed vertical line $\Re z = \sigma$.

It remains to identify the limit and its positivity. For this purpose use coordinates with Dirichlet endpoint 0 and reflecting endpoint 1. Solving $Z'' = zZ$, $Z(0) = 1$, $Z'(1) = 0$ gives $\widehat{\mu}(z) = \operatorname{sech}\sqrt{z}$. The absorption law has a continuous positive density $j(t)$ for $t > 0$. Indeed, if $K_t(1, y)$ is the mixed-interval heat kernel, survival from the reflecting endpoint is $S(t) = \int_0^1 K_t(1, y)\, dy$. The heat equation and its endpoint conditions give

$$j(t) = -S'(t) = \partial_y K_t(1, 0) > 0.$$

The derivative is strictly positive by the parabolic boundary Hopf lemma; positive-time smoothness gives continuity. Also $S(0+) = 1$ and $S(t) \to 0$ at infinity, so j has mass one and there is no atom at zero.

One can verify the continuity needed for convolution directly on the transform side as well. On each line $\Re z = \sigma$, $|\operatorname{sech}\sqrt{z}| \le C'_\sigma e^{-\rho}$ is integrable in ω. Fourier inversion for the exponentially tilted finite measure μ therefore gives a continuous bounded density on the whole real line, agreeing with $e^{-\sigma t} j(t)$ at positive times. Its self-convolution is continuous, since it is both bounded continuous and integrable. Undoing the tilt shows that $j * j$ is continuous on compact positive time intervals. It is strictly positive at every $t > 0$, because both integrand factors in

$$(j * j)(t) = \int_0^t j(s) j(t - s)\, ds$$

are positive on $(0, t)$. It is a probability density and its transform is $F(z)$. Uniqueness of Laplace transforms identifies it with the inverse f above, proving (57) and (56). □

The mark set also gives the reverse geometric comparison

$$\beta/2 \le d_m(G, I) \le 2\beta. \tag{64}$$

Indeed, in any common embedding whose support and mark Hausdorff distances are at most h, match a support point to the other support within h. Its distance to the respective mark set changes by at most another h, because distance to a set is 1-Lipschitz and the mark sets are within h. Taking suprema in both directions gives $|R_G - R_I| \le 2h$. Infimizing over embeddings proves the lower bound; the upper bound is the explicit common embedding in Theorem 4.2.

Corollary 10.2. *At any fixed positive time, no graph-uniform bound*

$$d_m(G, I) \le C(t)[\mathcal{Q}_I(t) - \mathcal{Q}_G(t)]^\alpha$$

can hold for an exponent $\alpha > 1/3$ in the normalized graph class. Together with Corollary 8.2, the supremum of the admissible geometric Hölder exponents on each compact positive time window is exactly $1/3$. On the rooted-tree and exact tree-quotient classes, the endpoint exponent itself is valid by Corollaries 7.7 and 7.10.

Proof. For P_b, the longest root-to-leaf path has length $1 - b$, whereas the two-arm path has length $2b \le 1 - b$. Thus $\operatorname{diam} P_b = 1 - b$. Since $\operatorname{diam} I = 1$, the GH diameter inequality gives

$$d_m(P_b, I) \ge d_{\mathrm{GH}}(P_b, I) \ge b/2.$$

For every fixed $t > 0$, Theorem 10.1 gives $\Delta_b(t) \sim 2f(t)b^3$, with $f(t) > 0$. Hence for $\alpha > 1/3$,

$$\frac{d_m(P_b, I)}{\Delta_b(t)^\alpha} \ge c_t b^{1-3\alpha} \longrightarrow \infty$$

for some $c_t > 0$. This excludes every such exponent, even on this one fixed graph topology. The estimates in Corollary 8.2 provide every $\alpha < 1/3$ uniformly on each prescribed positive time window; together these two directions identify the general-graph supremum. Equivalently, the pitchfork family excludes a uniform lower heat-deficit bound proportional to β^γ for any $\gamma < 3$, while the proved lower bounds cover every $\gamma > 3$. □

On any prescribed positive time window, (64) shows that an endpoint geometric estimate $d_m \le C\Delta^{1/3}$ and a cubic inradius lower bound $\Delta \ge c\beta^3$ are equivalent up to window-dependent constants. Corollaries 7.7 and 7.10 establish these endpoint estimates on the stated rooted-tree and quotient classes. Constants refer to a prescribed positive compact time window.

11 Sharp first p-eigenvalue bounds at fixed length and inradius

Let G be a finite connected compact metric graph with total length $L > 0$ and nonempty Dirichlet vertex set D. Use continuous edgewise $W^{1,p}$ functions vanishing on D, with the natural nonlinear Kirchhoff condition at the other vertices. Its first eigenvalue is

$$\lambda_{p,1}(G) = \inf_{f \neq 0,\, f|_D = 0} \frac{\int_G |f'|^p}{\int_G |f|^p}.$$

Set $R = \max_{x \in G} \operatorname{dist}(x, D)$ and $q = p/(p-1)$. For $0 < r \le L$ define the endpoint-mass minimum

$$\lambda_p(L, r) = \inf_{g \neq 0,\, g(0) = 0} \frac{\int_0^r |g'|^p}{\int_0^r |g|^p + (L - r)|g(r)|^p}.$$

Here $g \in W^{1,p}(0, r)$. Del Pezzo and Rossi [13] give the sharp length-only bound for the first p-eigenvalue. For $p = 2$, Kennedy's broom comparison and limiting characteristic relation [12, Lemma 4.1, Proposition 1.4(i) and Equation (1.9)] already give the full joint envelope. The shortest-path estimate below parallels the nonlinear torsion envelope of Section 2. The sharp p-Kohler–Jobin inequality of [5] gives a related lower estimate through torsion. The endpoint model gives the exact joint infimum and its leading stability coefficient.

Theorem 11.1. *For every $1 < p < \infty$ and every G as above,*

$$\lambda_{p,1}(G) \ge \lambda_p(L, R).$$

When $0 < R < L$ the inequality is strict for each finite graph, and the right side is the exact infimum at fixed L, R. When $R = L$ the mixed interval attains equality.

Proof. The graph and interval quotients attain their infima by coercivity from the Dirichlet anchor and compactness on the finitely many edges. The graph minimizer may be taken nonnegative. Take a shortest path from a nearest vertex of D to a point attaining the maximum of this minimizer. Its length is $r \le R$. The restriction g satisfies $g(0) = 0$, and $g(r)$ is the global maximum. Dropping energy outside the path and bounding its discarded mass by $(L - r)|g(r)|^p$ give the lower bound $\lambda_{p,1}(G) \ge \lambda_p(L, r)$.

The model minimum is nonincreasing in its radius at fixed L: for $r' > r$ extend any trial constantly from r to r'. This preserves the energy and the total norm when the endpoint mass decreases by $r' - r$. In particular the comparison gives $\lambda_p(L, r) \ge \lambda_p(L, R)$. If equality holds for a finite graph with $R < L$, the graph minimizer is constant at its positive maximum on the part outside the path. That part contains an open edge interval of positive length. The weak p-eigenvalue equation with a positive eigenvalue prohibits a positive constant there.

For fixed $0 < R < L$ take n arms of length $b_n = (L - R)/(n - 1)$ extending from a Dirichlet stem of length $R - b_n$, with Neumann conditions at the arm ends. The total length

and inradius are exactly L, R for all sufficiently large n. Restrict the model minimizer at radius R to the stem and extend it constantly on the arms. Its graph quotient tends to $\lambda_p(L,R)$ since $nb_n \to L-R$ and the model profile is continuous. This proves sharpness. At $R=L$ use the mixed interval. □

12 The model equation and the stability coefficient

Let g be a nonnegative model minimizer at radius R and let $\lambda = \lambda_p(L,R)$. The flux $w = |g'|^{p-2}g'$ satisfies

$$-w' = \lambda g^{p-1}, \qquad w(R) = \lambda(L-R)g(R)^{p-1}.$$

Thus $w \ge 0$ and g is nondecreasing and nontrivial. Normalize $g(R)=1$, after which $g>0$ and $w>0$ in the open interval. The expression $(p-1)|g'|^p + \lambda g^p$ is constant, by the flux equation and differentiation of $|g'|^p = |w|^q$. Evaluate it at R and separate variables to obtain the exact equation

$$R = \left(\frac{p-1}{\lambda}\right)^{1/p} \int_0^1 [1 + (p-1)\lambda^{q-1}(L-R)^q - y^p]^{-1/p}\, dy. \tag{65}$$

Its right side decreases strictly from infinity to zero as λ runs from zero to infinity. For $p=2$ it is equivalent to $kR + \arctan(k(L-R)) = \pi/2$ with $k=\sqrt{\lambda}$, as in [12].

Writing $\beta = 1 - R/L$, $I_p = \int_0^1 (1-y^p)^{-1/p}\, dy$, and $\lambda_{0,p} = (p-1)I_p^p$, the normalized model has expansion

$$L^p\lambda_p(L,R) = \lambda_{0,p} + \frac{p(p-1)}{q+1}\lambda_{0,p}^q\, \beta^{q+1} + o(\beta^{q+1}). \tag{66}$$

To prove it scale to $L=1$. Continue the increasing model solution from the atom at R to its first turning point $S = R + D_*$. The first integral or the separated equation gives $\lambda = (p-1)(I_p/S)^p$. The flux identity on the continuation gives

$$\beta = \int_R^S g(x)^{p-1}\, dx, \qquad w(x) = \lambda \int_x^S g(y)^{p-1}\, dy.$$

In particular $D_* \le \beta$, $S \to 1$, and $\lambda \to \lambda_{0,p}$. The first integral bounds $g - 1 = O(\beta^q)$ on the continuation. Therefore

$$g'(x) = \lambda^{q-1}(S-x)^{q-1}(1 + O(\beta^q)), \qquad D_* \sim \beta.$$

Integrating first from R to x and then to S gives

$$\beta - D_* = (p-1)\frac{\lambda_{0,p}^{q-1}}{q+1}\beta^{q+1} + o(\beta^{q+1}).$$

Expanding $S^{-p} = [1 - (\beta - D_*)]^{-p}$ now proves (66). At $p=2$ the reserve coefficient is $\pi^4/24$, also obtained by Taylor expansion of Kennedy's linear characteristic equation.

The positive coefficient in (66) and monotonicity of the model give $L^p\lambda_{p,1}(G) - \lambda_{0,p} \ge c_p\beta^{q+1}$ over the full radius range, for some $c_p > 0$. The marked measured distance d_m of Section 4 satisfies $d_m(G/L, I_1) \le 2\beta$. It follows that this distance is controlled by the dimensionless spectral deficit to power $1/(q+1)$. This power is sharp. Choose $\beta \downarrow 0$ and fine brooms whose eigenvalues differ from the exact model by $o(\beta^{q+1})$. In any common embedding, the difference of the inradii is bounded by the sum of the Hausdorff distances of the supports and of the Dirichlet marks. Hence these graphs also satisfy $d_m(G/L, I_1) \ge c\beta$, proving sharpness.

13 The sharp heat-content envelope on general graphs

Let G be a finite connected compact metric graph of total length $L > 0$. Impose Dirichlet conditions on a nonempty set D of vertices and the natural Kirchhoff conditions at all other vertices. Use the generator d^2/dx^2 on the edges. Let H_G be the associated nonnegative Laplacian, and put $Q_G(t) = \langle 1, e^{-tH_G}1\rangle$ with arclength measure. Write $R = \max_{x\in G} \operatorname{dist}(x, D)$ and $\beta = 1 - R/L$. Let I_L denote the length-L Dirichlet–Neumann interval. For $r > 0$, $b \geq 0$ write $Q_{r,b}(t)$ for the datum-one heat content on $[0, r]$ with Dirichlet at zero, energy $\int_0^r |f'|^2$, and speed measure $dx + b\delta_r$. The initial heat and the heat-content integral both include the endpoint atom.

The effective estimate of Section 8 gives the normalized heat-content deficit lower bound with power $3 + \varepsilon$ for every $\varepsilon > 0$ on general graphs. It proves $Q_G \leq Q_{R,L-R}$ on singly rooted trees and exact tree quotients. We prove this sharper heat envelope for the general graph class. Earlier work includes the interval comparison and walk expansion of [1], the graph heat content formulas and surgery of [2], and an inradius bound in [14, Corollary 4.1.9].

Theorem 13.1. *For every graph in the stated class,*

$$Q_G(t) \leq Q_{R,L-R}(t), \qquad t > 0.$$

When $R < L$ the inequality is strict for each finite graph. At fixed L, R the right side is the exact supremum, approached by brooms uniformly on compact positive time windows. The mixed interval attains the case $R = L$.

Theorem 13.2. *For $0 < \tau_0 \leq \tau_1 < \infty$ there exists $c > 0$, depending only on this time window, such that every graph in the stated class satisfies*

$$\frac{Q_{I_L}(L^2\tau) - Q_G(L^2\tau)}{L} \geq c(1 - R/L)^3, \qquad \tau \in [\tau_0, \tau_1].$$

Consequently the marked measured distance of G/L from the unit mixed interval is bounded by a constant times the one-time normalized heat deficit to power $1/3$.

14 The fraction supplied by a shortest path

Normalize $L = 1$. Let $u(t, x) = (e^{-tH_G}1)(x)$ and $U(t, s)$ be the integral of the top s arclength mass of $u(t, \cdot)$, for $0 \leq s \leq 1$. Use U_I for the corresponding integral on I_1. For a regular heat level z, write $s = |\{u(t) > z\}|$ and define

$$A(t, s) = \sum_{u(t,x)=z} |u_x(t, x)|, \qquad B(t, s) = \sum_{u(t,x)=z} |u_x(t, x)|^{-1}.$$

At positive time the level and coarea results of Lemmas 5.1–5.2 and Theorem 5.3 apply. The inverse distribution derivative is $-1/B$ at almost every mass coordinate, while

$$-U_t(t, s) = A(t, s) = \int_{\{u(t)>z\}} -u_t(t, x)\, dx.$$

Since the datum-one heat profile is nonincreasing in time, $s \mapsto A(t, s)$ is nonnegative and nondecreasing by the nested sets in this integral. The positive source in the exact mass-coordinate heat equation for $U_I - U$ is $d(t, s) = A(t, s) - 1/B(t, s)$.

At each $t > 0$ choose a shortest path γ from a nearest Dirichlet vertex to a maximizer of $u(t, \cdot)$. It has length at most R and covers every intermediate level. At a regular level define

B_γ as the sum of inverse slopes on the crossings belonging to γ. Then $0 < B_\gamma \le B$ and $A \ge 1/B_\gamma$, since the sum of slopes includes any one crossing on the path. Hence

$$d(t,s) \ge A(t,s)\, m(t,s), \qquad m(t,s) = 1 - \frac{B_\gamma(t,s)}{B(t,s)} \in [0,1]. \tag{67}$$

In changing between levels and mass coordinates, the absolute differential of s is $B\,dz$. Coarea on the path therefore gives

$$\int_0^1 (1 - m(t,s))\, ds = \int B_\gamma(t,z)\, dz = |\gamma| \le R.$$

Critical and vertex levels have zero mass measure, and no monotonicity along the path is needed. In particular $\int m(t,s)\, ds \ge \beta$.

Since $sA(t,s)$ is nonnegative and nondecreasing, its integral against $m(t,s)$ is at least its integral over $(0,\beta)$. Indeed the removed mass inside $(0,\beta)$ is no greater than the added mass outside it, where the integrand is larger. Thus (67) gives

$$\int_0^1 s\, d(t,s)\, ds \ge \int_0^\beta s\, A(t,s)\, ds. \tag{68}$$

The path is chosen only to prove this inequality at each time. The functions remaining in (68) have the measurable versions established in the source theorem.

15 The exact fixed-inradius envelope

We prove Theorem 13.1. Work at unit length and take $0 < \beta < 1$. Put $b = 1 - m = B_\gamma/B$. The coarea bound and (67) are equivalently

$$0 \le b \le 1, \qquad \int_0^1 b(t,s)\, ds \le R, \qquad bU_t - U_{ss} \le 0.$$

We compare this profile with a fixed coefficient $b_*(s) = \mathbf{1}_{(\beta,1)}(s)$.

Let $v_*(t,x)$ be the heat profile for the physical interval $[0,R]$ with endpoint atom β, so $\beta v_{*,t}(t,R) = -v_{*,x}(t,R)$. In the mass coordinate set

$$U_*(t,s) = \begin{cases} s\, v_*(t,R), & 0 \le s \le \beta, \\ \beta v_*(t,R) + \displaystyle\int_{1-s}^{R} v_*(t,x)\, dx, & \beta \le s \le 1. \end{cases}$$

On the second interval the physical heat equation and endpoint condition give $U_{*,t} = -v_{*,x}(t,1-s) = U_{*,ss}$. On the first $U_{*,ss} = 0$. The value and first spatial derivative match at β, so $b_* U_{*,t} - U_{*,ss} = 0$. Both endpoints have the mass-coordinate conditions $U_*(t,0) = 0$, $U_{*,s}(t,1) = 0$, and $U_*(t,1) = Q_{R,\beta}(t)$. As $t \downarrow 0$, $U_*(t,s) \to s$ uniformly by continuity in the physical $L^2(dx + \beta\delta_R)$ norm.

For the graph put $F = b_* U_t - U_{ss}$. On compact positive time strips it is bounded by the graph profile regularity. At regular mass coordinates it obeys

$$F \le (b - b_*)A \tag{69}$$

because $U_t = -A$. On the interval $(\beta,1)$ let $K_\beta(h;x,s)$ and $S_\beta(h)$ be the heat kernel and semigroup with Robin condition $f'(\beta) = f(\beta)/\beta$ and Neumann condition $f'(1) = 0$. The section $K_\beta(h;1,s)$ is positive and nondecreasing in s. To see monotonicity, evolve smooth nonnegative nondecreasing profiles with integral one, supported near 1 and constant in a

smaller neighborhood of 1. Their spatial derivatives solve the heat equation with nonnegative value $f(h,\beta)/\beta$ at β and zero at 1. The maximum principle preserves nonnegativity of the derivative. Let the initial profiles converge to the point mass at 1 and use kernel continuity and symmetry. Positivity at the Robin endpoint follows from the strong principle and boundary Hopf lemma, since a zero there would force zero inward derivative. Extend the section to the full mass interval by

$$\widetilde{K}_\beta(h;1,s) = \begin{cases} (s/\beta)K_\beta(h;1,\beta), & 0 \le s \le \beta, \\ K_\beta(h;1,s), & \beta \le s \le 1. \end{cases}$$

This extended section is nondecreasing and positive when $s > 0$ and $h > 0$.

On the left segment $-U_{ss} = F$ with $U(t,0) = 0$. Integrating once against s gives

$$U_s(t,\beta) - U(t,\beta)/\beta = -\frac{1}{\beta}\int_0^\beta sF(t,s)\,ds.$$

The derivative at the interface agrees on both sides by the mass-coordinate Sobolev regularity. In the weak heat equation on $(\beta,1)$ the negative of this Robin inhomogeneity acts as the boundary source. In fact integrating by parts against a test function φ brings $-U_s(t,\beta)\varphi(\beta)$ to the right side. Thus the volume and boundary sources together give, for $0 < a < t_0$,

$$\begin{aligned} &U(t_0,1) - U_*(t_0,1) \\ &\quad = \left[S_\beta(t_0-a)(U(a,\cdot) - U_*(a,\cdot))\right](1) + \int_a^{t_0}\int_0^1 \widetilde{K}_\beta(t_0-t;1,s)\,F(t,s)\,ds\,dt. \end{aligned}$$

Here the initial data are restricted to $[\beta,1]$. The boundary point functional produces $K_\beta(h;1,\beta)$ by the weak semigroup formula. The integrals are finite on fixed positive time strips. The volume term is bounded by sub-Markovianity, and the boundary term is integrable near the final time by the $O(h^{-1/2})$ fixed-interval kernel bound, for instance by comparison with the reflected Neumann kernel.

For every source time the product $A(t,s)\widetilde{K}_\beta(t_0-t;1,s)$ is nonnegative and nondecreasing in s. Among fractions between zero and one of integral at most $1-\beta$, its weighted integral is maximized by b_*, by moving any available mass towards larger s. Therefore (69) makes each time slice of the source pairing nonpositive. Let $a \downarrow 0$. The initial term tends to zero by uniform convergence of both profiles to s and the Robin contraction property. This proves the envelope without imposing a time-zero bound on the signed volume or boundary source.

For strictness, the selected path has complement of positive length when $\beta > 0$. On any open edge subinterval in that complement the heat profile is strictly concave at each positive time. A positive measure of regular levels therefore has a crossing of nonzero slope off the path. There $A > 1/B_\gamma$, so $bU_t - U_{ss} < 0$. The kernel section is positive, and the time-slice pairing is strictly negative. Retaining any compact subinterval of $(0,t_0)$ of positive length gives a strictly negative Duhamel integral after letting $a \downarrow 0$. The brooms of Section 7 converge to the endpoint-mass content at fixed L,R, proving the sharpness claim and the stated time uniformity. At $R = L$ use the ordinary interval comparison. Scaling proves Theorem 13.1.

The same endpoint model maximizes every positive integral of the heat content at fixed L,R, whenever the model's integral is finite. Positivity gives the upper bound, and the same brooms give equality in the supremum by dominated convergence. In particular for any $a > 0$ and $z \ge 0$ the spectral quadratic $\langle 1, (H_G+z)^{-a}1\rangle$ has exactly this extremal model, by integration against $t^{a-1}e^{-zt}/\Gamma(a)$. The comparison is strict for finite graphs with $R < L$. The model has a positive spectral gap by the Dirichlet anchor, so these integrals are finite even at $z = 0$.

16 The cubic one-time bound on general graphs

Write $\Delta_G(t) = Q_{I_1}(t) - Q_G(t)$ and let $K(h; x, s)$ be the unit mixed-interval heat kernel in mass coordinates, Dirichlet at 0 and Neumann at 1. By Theorem 5.3,

$$\Delta_G(t_0) = \int_0^{t_0} \int_0^1 K(t_0 - t; 1, s) d(t, s)\, ds\, dt.$$

For any $0 < T < \tau_0$, define

$$c_0 = \min_{\tau_0 - T \le h \le \tau_1,\, 0 \le s \le 1} \frac{K(h; 1, s)}{s} > 0,$$

interpreting the quotient by its inward derivative at 0, as in (30). Restrict the nonnegative source to $0 < t < T$ and use (68). For $a > 0$, local absolute continuity of $U(t, s)$ gives $\int_a^T A(t, s)\, dt = U(a, s) - U(T, s)$ for almost every s. As $a \downarrow 0$, $U(a, s) \to s$ uniformly, by L^2 continuity of the heat semigroup at datum one and the concentration integral's L^1 Lipschitz bound. Tonelli then yields

$$\Delta_G(t_0) \ge c_0 \int_0^\beta s\,[s - U(T, s)]\, ds \ge c_0 \int_0^\beta s\,[s - U_I(T, s)]\, ds. \tag{70}$$

The last step is the source theorem's concentration comparison. The interval's datum-one heat profile has maximum $\theta_T < 1$ at any $T > 0$, by the strong maximum principle after reflection at the Neumann endpoint. Consequently $U_I(T, s) \le \theta_T s$ and

$$\Delta_G(t_0) \ge \frac{c_0(1 - \theta_T)}{3} \beta^3.$$

Taking $T = \tau_0/2$ and rescaling completes the heat bound. The marked measured comparison follows from $d_m(G/L, I_1) \le 2\beta$ in Section 4. The exact cubic pitchfork example in Theorem 10.1 shows sharpness of the exponent. Inequality (70) gives the cubic endpoint directly from the ordinary interval kernel. The sharp envelope also implies the endpoint using the positive endpoint-model variation in Section 7.1.

17 First p-eigenvalues at finite edge count

A broom B consists of a stem of length $a > 0$, with a Dirichlet condition at its root, and Neumann arms of lengths $b_i > 0$ at the other stem endpoint. We use the continuous edgewise $W^{1,p}$ energy with the natural Kirchhoff flux at the junction. Write $L = a + \sum_i b_i$, $b = \max_i b_i$, $R = a + b$, and $\delta = L - R > 0$. Its first eigenvalue $\lambda(B)$ is the minimum of $\int |f'|^p / \int |f|^p$ over nonzero rooted trials. Throughout $1 < p < \infty$ and $q = p/(p - 1)$.

For the linear case Kennedy [12, Proposition 1.4(i)] constructed the equal-arm sequence and proved its monotonicity and endpoint-mass limit. The linear secular equation also appears in the symmetric dumbbell setting of [15, Lemma 7.6]. Kennedy's Lemma 3.6 compares allocations between the two equilateral clusters of a dumbbell. We keep the Dirichlet inradius fixed and allow all individual arm lengths, and hence the stem length, to vary.

Theorem 17.1. *Suppose $n \ge 2$ and $\delta/(n - 1) < R$. Among all brooms with total length L, Dirichlet inradius R, and at most n arms, the unique minimum up to isometry is attained at B_n, with n equal arms of length $\delta/(n - 1)$. In particular the minimum decreases strictly as the feasible arm cap increases.*

Proof. For a positive increasing solution on an edge, the coordinate $m = |u'|^{p-2}u'/(\lambda u^{p-1})$ satisfies $m' = -(1 + c_\lambda m^q)$, where $c_\lambda = (p-1)\lambda^{q-1}$. Define

$$F_\lambda(s) = 1 + c_\lambda s^q, \qquad \Phi_\lambda(s) = \int_0^s F_\lambda(t)^{-1}\,dt, \qquad S_\lambda = \Phi_\lambda(\infty), \qquad A_\lambda = \Phi_\lambda^{-1}.$$

Here S_λ is the length of the mixed interval with first eigenvalue λ. If λ_0 is the first mixed eigenvalue of the unit interval, $S_\lambda = (\lambda_0/\lambda)^{1/p}$.

The nonnegative first eigenfunction is concave on each edge since its flux is nonincreasing. A zero at the junction would force all outgoing derivatives to be nonnegative and hence zero by Kirchhoff. Concavity would then make the eigenfunction identically zero. The arm fluxes are nonnegative, with zero flux at the tips. The stem flux is positive by Kirchhoff. The stem thus has coordinate $A_\lambda(S_\lambda - a)$ at the junction and the arms have $A_\lambda(b_i)$. The flux relation is

$$S_\lambda = a + \Phi_\lambda\left(\sum_i A_\lambda(b_i)\right). \tag{71}$$

The signed arm-minus-stem flux mismatch increases strictly with λ on the domain $a, b_i < S_\lambda$. The arms increase with c_λ since Φ_λ decreases with it. The stem decreases by the identity $a = \int_{m_{\text{stem}}}^\infty F_\lambda(t)^{-1}\,dt$.

Fix λ at the first eigenvalue of a competitor. To bound the arm sum at its given longest length b, keep one longest arm and distribute the remaining length δ with cap b. The convexity of A_λ gives

$$\sum_i A_\lambda(b_i) \le M(b) = (j+1)A_\lambda(b) + A_\lambda(\delta - jb), \qquad j = \lfloor \delta/b \rfloor.$$

Indeed transferring mass from a smaller unsaturated length to a larger unsaturated length increases the sum until all but one lengths are zero or b. Across the intervals where j is constant,

$$M'(b) \le 1 + (j+1)c_\lambda A_\lambda(b)^q < F_\lambda(M(b)).$$

For $j \ge 1$ the strict inequality follows from $q > 1$. For $j = 0$ use $M(b) > A_\lambda(b)$. The formulas agree at the transition points, so $-b + \Phi_\lambda(M(b))$ decreases strictly with b below S_λ. The arm cap forces $b \ge b_* = \delta/(n-1)$, with equality only for the stated equal arms. At b_* the right side of (71) is at least the right side for the competitor, strictly unless $b = b_*$. If $R - b_* \ge S_\lambda$, the turning length at the eigenvalue of B_n is larger than S_λ, so its eigenvalue is smaller. If $R - b_* < S_\lambda$, the signed mismatch at λ is nonnegative and the strictly increasing mismatch gives the asserted comparison. □

18 Convergence to the endpoint-mass model

Let $\lambda_* = \lambda_p(L, R)$ be the minimum of the same quotient on the rooted interval $[0, R]$ with speed measure $dx + \delta\delta_R$, where δ_R denotes the unit mass at R. Normalize its eigenfunction g by $g(R) = 1$. It is the exact infimum at fixed (L, R) over finite graphs Section 11. Equivalently $S_{\lambda_*} = R + \Phi_{\lambda_*}(\delta)$. For brooms with $b \to 0$ at fixed L, R, convergence to λ_* follows from the envelope and the trial given by restricting g to the stem and extending constantly over the arms.

Theorem 18.1. *As the longest arm $b \to 0$ at fixed L, R,*

$$\lambda(B) - \lambda_* = \frac{(p-1)\lambda_*^q \delta^q}{\delta + \int_0^R g^p}\, b + o(b).$$

For the joint limit normalize $L = 1$, put $\beta = 1 - R$, and assume $b + \beta \to 0$. Uniformly in all arm distributions,

$$\lambda(B) - \lambda_* = \frac{p(p-1)\lambda_0^q}{q+1}\left[(\beta+b)^{q+1} - \beta^{q+1} - \sum_i b_i^{q+1}\right] \times \bigl(1 + O_p((b+\beta)^q)\bigr).$$

In particular, for equal arms, if $\beta \downarrow 0$ and $n \to \infty$ at any relative rates, the gap is asymptotic to $p(p-1)\lambda_0^q \beta^{q+1}/(n-1)$.

Proof. At fixed L, R, for λ near λ_* denote by $m_\lambda(R)$ the stem coordinate at R, which is positive in this neighborhood. Its value at λ_* is δ. The arm sum is $\delta + b + O(b^q)$ since $A_\lambda(t) = t + O(t^{q+1})$ and the sum of arm lengths is $\delta + b$. The stem coordinate at length $R - b$ is $m_\lambda(R) + bF_\lambda(m_\lambda(R)) + O(b^2)$. For the stem solution $u_\lambda(R) = 1$, its endpoint flux $\lambda m_\lambda(R) = \int |u_\lambda'|^p - \lambda \int u_\lambda^p$ has derivative $-\int u_\lambda^p$, by the Euler equation under zero trace variations at both endpoints. The positive flux makes the separated solution smooth in λ here. Thus $\partial_\lambda m_\lambda(R)$ equals $-(\delta + \int g^p)/\lambda_*$ at λ_*. Equating the fluxes yields the first formula.

For the joint result let $X = b + \beta$, $m = \min(b, \beta)$ and $k = q + 1$. For λ in a compact neighborhood of λ_0 put $u = \sum_i A_\lambda(b_i)$ and $H = \Phi_\lambda(\beta) + b - \Phi_\lambda(u)$. We prove

$$H = \frac{c_\lambda}{k}\left[X^k - \beta^k - \sum_i b_i^k\right] + O_p(mX^{2q}). \tag{72}$$

Use $A_\lambda(t) = t + c_\lambda t^k/k + O_p(t^{2q+1})$ and $\Phi_\lambda'(s) = 1 - c_\lambda s^q + O_p(s^{2q})$. If $b \le \beta$, the arm expansion has total remainder $O_p(Xb^{2q}) = O_p(bX^{2q})$ and $u - X = O_p(Xb^q)$. Integrate Φ_λ' from β to u. The interval has length $O(b)$, and replacing u^k by X^k costs $O_p(X^{q+1}b^q) = O_p(bX^{2q})$. This gives (72).

If $b \ge \beta$, single out an arm of length b. Then $d = A_\lambda(b) = b + O_p(b^k)$ and $u - d = \beta + c_\lambda(\sum_i b_i^k - b^k)/k + O_p(\beta^{2q+1})$. Integrate from d to u using $\Phi_\lambda(d) = b$. The integral of s^q on this segment differs from $\int_b^X s^q\,ds$ by $O_p(\beta X^{2q})$. Indeed the left endpoint shift is $O_p(b^k)$, the length error is $O_p(\beta^k)$, and the derivative of s^q on the combined range is $O_p(X^{q-1})$. Combining with the expansion of $\Phi_\lambda(\beta)$ gives (72).

The bracket in (72) is bounded below by $(q-1)m\max(b,\beta)^q$. For $b \le \beta$ use $\sum_i b_i^k \le Xb^q \le 2\beta^q b$, and for $b \ge \beta$ use $\sum_i b_i^k \le b^k + \beta^k$, in each case expanding X^k from the larger length by convexity. The remainder in (72) is therefore relative $O_p(X^q)$.

The model root satisfies $D(\lambda_*) := S_{\lambda_*} - R - \Phi_{\lambda_*}(\beta) = 0$, and the finite root satisfies $D(\lambda(B)) = -H$ with H evaluated there. Both eigenvalues tend to λ_0: the length-only bound [13] gives $S \le 1$, and the stem is at least $1 - X$. The flux expansions give $S = 1 + O_p(X^{q+1})$ for both roots. Between them $D' = -1/(p\lambda_0) + O_p(X^{q+1})$, by differentiating the integral for $\Phi_\lambda(\beta)$. The mean-value theorem now proves the relative estimate. For equal arms the bracket is $(\beta+b)^{q+1} - \beta^{q+1} - (\beta+b)b^q$, asymptotic to $(q+1)\beta^q b$ as $b/\beta \to 0$. □

19 An inverse-edge bound on arbitrary graphs

Let G now be any finite connected compact metric graph of length L, with a nonempty Dirichlet vertex set D and inradius $R = \max_y \operatorname{dist}(y, D)$ in $(0, L)$. Write λ_G for its first p-eigenvalue, $k_G = 2\,\mathrm{b}_1(G) + \ell(G)$ for twice its cycle rank plus its number of leaves, and E for its number of edges. Kennedy's linear comparison [12, Lemma 4.1] uses a graph-dependent arm threshold involving the minimum edge length. Here the constants depend only on L, R, p.

Theorem 19.1. *There is $c > 0$ depending only on L, R, p such that*

$$\lambda_G - \lambda_* \geq \frac{c}{k_G} \geq \frac{c}{2E}.$$

Both inverse powers are sharp. More precisely, for any nonnegative first eigenfunction f with maximum one at x, and any shortest path γ from D to x, setting $e = \lambda_G - \lambda_*$,

$$R - |\gamma| + \int_{G\setminus\gamma} \operatorname{dist}(y, x)\, dy \leq Ce$$

with C depending only on L, R, p.

Proof. Put $r = |\gamma|$, $\lambda_r = \lambda_p(L, r)$, and let g_r be the radius-r model eigenfunction normalized by $g_r(r) = 1$. The bound $e > 0$ and the monotonicity of λ_r in r are in Section 11. The flux equation $m_{\lambda_r}(r) = L - r$ and the derivatives from Sections 1–2 show that λ_r has strictly negative derivative near R. Indeed its defining equation has r-derivative $1 - F_\lambda(m_\lambda(r)) < 0$ and λ-derivative strictly negative. As the Rayleigh quotient on γ gives $\lambda_G \geq \lambda_r$, this bounds $R - r$ by Ce near R. Monotonicity and $R - r \leq R$ extend the estimate to the full range of e.

The same path quotient gives the nonnegative defect

$$D_\gamma = \int_\gamma |f'|^p - \lambda_r \left(\int_\gamma f^p + L - r \right) \leq Le, \qquad \int_{G\setminus\gamma} (1 - f^p) \leq Le/\lambda_*.$$

To see both upper bounds, use the total energy $\lambda_G \int_G f^p$ and $\int_\gamma f^p + L - r = \int_G f^p + \int_{G\setminus\gamma}(1 - f^p)$. For sufficiently small e, $r \geq R/2$ and the total energy is at most $L(\lambda_* + 1)$. Hölder's inequality from $f(x) = 1$ gives $f \geq 1/2$ on a terminal segment of γ of a fixed positive length ℓ_0. There $v = f g_r'/g_r \geq d > 0$ uniformly because $g_r \leq 1$ and $g_r' \geq g_r'(r) = [\lambda_r(L - r)]^{1/(p-1)}$.

Test the model with f^p/g_r^{p-1}, whose trace is zero at the root and one at the terminal point. This is admissible: both functions have bounded derivatives near the root, $g_r'(0) > 0$, and the quotient f/g_r and the test derivative are bounded there. The Picone identity [16] gives

$$D_\gamma = \int_0^r \left(|f'|^p + (p - 1)|v|^p - p|v|^{p-2} v f' \right) ds.$$

Convexity makes the integrand nonnegative everywhere and at least a positive constant where $v \geq d$ and $|f'| < d/2$. In particular the low-speed subset of the terminal segment has length at most $C_0 e$.

For $y \notin D$ take another shortest Dirichlet path σ to y. Its model Rayleigh bound, with its own actual endpoint value included in the atom, gives

$$\int_\sigma |f'|^p \geq \lambda_* \left(\int_\sigma f^p + (L - |\sigma|) f(y)^p \right).$$

This also holds for a zero restriction. Hence the energy outside σ is at most $Le + \lambda_* L(1 - f(y)^p)$. Set $s_y = e + 1 - f(y)^p$ and choose H with $(d/2)^p(H - C_0) > L(1 + \lambda_*)$. If $H s_y \leq \ell_0$, then σ meets the terminal segment of γ of length $H s_y$ in positive arclength: otherwise the segment spends energy at least $(d/2)^p(H s_y - C_0 e)$ outside σ. For a common point z, its distance to D is its coordinate on either path, by shortestness. It is within $H s_y$ of x and within $R - r + H s_y$ of y. It follows that $\operatorname{dist}(y, x) \leq C s_y$. When $H s_y > \ell_0$ or e is large, increase C using the diameter bound L. Integration off γ, with the mass deficit above, proves the moment bound.

For completeness the ball about x has length at most $k_G t$ at radius t, a local form of the radius–length bound in [17, Theorem 1]. At a regular level t of distance from x, cut at the intersection points. The ball is connected by shortest paths. If the outside components have N_i boundary points, Euler characteristic gives

$$\mathrm{b}_1(G) = \mathrm{b}_1(\overline{B}) + \sum_i \big(\mathrm{b}_1(G_i) + N_i - 1\big).$$

For $N_i \geq 2$, $N_i \leq 2(N_i - 1)$. If $N_i = 1$ a tree outside component has an original leaf, since a nontrivial tree has at least two leaves. Otherwise it has a cycle. Thus the total number of level crossings is at most k_G; distance has derivative of absolute value one almost everywhere on each edge, so integration of the level count proves the ball estimate. The off-path length is at least $\delta = L - R$. Layer cake now bounds its moment below by

$$\int_0^{\delta/k_G} (\delta - k_G t)\, dt = \delta^2/(2k_G).$$

Also $k_G \leq 2E$ by Euler's formula and $\ell(G) \leq |V(G)|$ for at least two vertices. With one vertex every edge is a loop, so $k_G = 2E$. The moment inequality proves both lower bounds. □

The equal brooms in Theorem 18.1 have $k_G = E = n + 1$ and show sharpness of the power. Kennedy also proposes linear stowers approaching the endpoint model [12, Remark 1.5(a)]. Here m loops of length $2b$ on the junction of a rooted stem of length $R - b$, with $b = \delta/(2m - 1)$, give the same first eigenvalue as the $2m$-arm broom. Cutting each loop at its midpoint relaxes the equality of that pair of endpoint traces. Conversely, a ground state of the equal-arm broom has equal arm profiles by the scalar flux relation with prescribed junction value, so it reglues with the same quotient. These loops have $m + 1$ edges and therefore give half the leading edge-count gap of the equal-arm sequence at the same asymptotic edge count.

20 Sharp nonlinear heat content at fixed length and inradius

Let G be a finite connected compact metric graph of total length $L > 0$, with a nonempty set D of Dirichlet vertices. Its Dirichlet inradius is $R = \max_{x \in G} \operatorname{dist}(x, D)$. Write $\phi(a) = |a|^{p-2}a$ and $\nu = 1/(p - 1)$. The energy $\mathcal{E}_p(u) = p^{-1} \int_G |u'|^p$ is defined on continuous edgewise $W^{1,p}$ functions vanishing on D and extended by $+\infty$ in $L^2(G)$. Its subgradient evolution is $u_t = \Delta_p u$, with Kirchhoff flux at vertices outside D. Write $Q_G(t) = \int_G S_G(t)1$.

The comparison space I_* is $[0, R]$ with speed measure $\mu_* = dx + \beta\delta_R$, where $\beta = L - R$, and energy $p^{-1} \int_0^R |u'|^p$. The form domain imposes a Dirichlet trace at zero and identifies the atomic coordinate with the trace at R when $\beta > 0$. Denote its flow by $S_*(t)$ and its heat content by $Q_*(t) = \int S_*(t)1 \, \mathrm{d}\mu_*$. For $\beta = 0$ this is the mixed Dirichlet–Neumann interval. A shortest path of length $R = L$ exhausts every edge of G. Along that path no other Dirichlet mark can occur because its initial point is nearest to the terminal point. Thus $R = L$ reduces to the mixed interval.

In either model the implicit step $J_h f$ minimizes

$$\frac{1}{2} \int |u - f|^2 \, \mathrm{d}\mu + h\mathcal{E}_p(u), \qquad h > 0. \tag{73}$$

Here μ is arclength on G and μ_* on I_*. We use superscripts $G, *$ to distinguish the two resolvents. The boundary relation on I_* is $\phi(u'(R)) = \beta(f(R) - u(R))/h$. The dynamic condition is $\beta u_t(R) = -\phi(u'(R))$, read as the zero flux condition when $\beta = 0$.

The interval with an endpoint mass gives the exact all-time envelope for the linear datum-one flow (Section 13). The same geometry appears in the joint length and inradius first p-eigenvalue bound with L^p normalization (Section 11). Here the p-energy generates a flow in L^2, and the stationary rescaling has a linear right-hand side. The coarea and implicit-step comparison are related to Vázquez's nonlinear mass symmetrization [23, Sections 4, 7 and 8]. We use the budget on one shortest path to compare the total masses at the endpoint of the mass interval.

Theorem 20.1 (One implicit step)**.** *For $1 < p < \infty$ and $h > 0$, the sharp upper bound at fixed L, R is*

$$\sup_G \int_G J_h^G 1 = \int J_h^* 1 \, \mathrm{d}\mu_*.$$

For $1 < p \le 2$ and $R < L$, every finite graph gives strict inequality. For $p > 2$ and $R < L$, finite brooms attain equality for sufficiently small h. For every $p > 2$ and every $0 < R < L$, there are a finite broom and a step h for which the graph's integral over its highest s mass exceeds the corresponding interval integral for all sufficiently small $s > 0$.

Theorem 20.2 (Early heat content)**.** *Let $p > 2$ and define*

$$c_p = \frac{p-2}{2p(p-1)}, \qquad F(\eta) = \int_\eta^\infty [c_p(\eta_*^2 - \xi^2)]_+^{1/(p-2)} \, \mathrm{d}\xi, \qquad F(0) = 1,$$

where the normalization determines $\eta_* > 0$. For every $0 < t < (R/\eta_*)^p$,

$$\sup_G Q_G(t) = Q_*(t) = L - t^{1/p} \int_0^{\eta_*} F(\eta) \, \mathrm{d}\eta.$$

At each such time the supremum is attained by a finite broom when $R < L$.

Theorem 20.3 (Late heat content)**.** *Let $p > 2$, $\alpha = (p-2)^{-1}$, and $C = \alpha L R^{p-1}$. There is a unique positive weak profile g_G off D satisfying $-\Delta_p g_G = \alpha g_G$ with the graph conditions. The interval profile g_* is the unique positive solution on $(0, R]$ of*

$$-(\phi(g_*'))' = \alpha g_*, \qquad g_*(0) = 0, \qquad \phi(g_*'(R)) = \alpha\beta g_*(R).$$

Set $M_G = \int_G g_G$ and $M_* = \int g_* \, \mathrm{d}\mu_*$. For every $t > 0$,

$$(t + C)^{-\alpha} M_G \le Q_G(t) \le t^{-\alpha} M_G.$$

The same bounds hold for Q_*, M_*. At fixed L, R, $\sup_G M_G = M_*$, with strict inequality for each finite graph if $R < L$. In particular,

$$(1 + C/t)^{-\alpha} M_* \le t^\alpha \sup_G Q_G(t) \le M_*.$$

The extremal late-time coefficient is approached by equal-arm brooms.

The early-time result uses the constant-boundary similarity front of Pascal [22], also given in Hinton, Collis and Sader [20, Appendix A, (A3)–(A6)]. The separable large-time mechanism is classical in smooth Euclidean domains [21, Theorems 1.1 and 1.3, $m = 1$] and fits the abstract theory of homogeneous gradient flows [18]. The late-time geometric result optimizes the stationary profile mass over the graph class.

21 Coarea with a shortest-path budget

The energies are proper, convex, lower semicontinuous and densely defined in their L^2 spaces. For lower semicontinuity, use the Dirichlet anchor and the compact embedding of bounded edgewise $W^{1,p}$ families into continuous functions, including convergence of endpoint traces. Density on I_* follows by prescribing the value at R in a collar of arbitrarily small arclength. The convex subgradients are maximal monotone. In particular $S(t)f = \lim_{n\to\infty} J_{t/n}^n f$ in L^2 [19], including for the datum one. Testing a resolvent difference with its positive part shows order preservation. Testing with the negative part and the excess above one gives $0 \le J_h f \le 1$ for $0 \le f \le 1$. The datum-one iterates decrease by order preservation.

For a nonnegative function u, write $U(s)$ for the integral of its highest s mass, counting a suitable fraction of a level set when it has positive mass. Thus $U'(s)$ is the decreasing quantile. Consider a graph step $u = J_h^G f$ in the datum-one sequence. On an oriented edge $j = \phi(u')$ satisfies $j' = (u - f)/h \le 0$. The flux is absolutely continuous and u' is continuous on each edge. The profiles are edgewise concave and the vertex and critical values form a finite set. At a regular level z, put $s = |\{u > z\}|$. Integration over the superlevel set, using Kirchhoff flux at vertices, gives

$$A(s) = \int_{\{u>z\}} \frac{f-u}{h} = \sum_{u=z} |u'|^{p-1}, \qquad B(s) = \sum_{u=z} |u'|^{-1}.$$

Within a plateau mass interval use nested portions of that plateau to pad the top sets. Indeed $f - u = 0$ on each nontrivial edge plateau by the Euler equation. In this way A is defined throughout, is nonnegative and nondecreasing, and satisfies

$$A = (s - U)/h \quad (f = 1), \qquad A \le (F_0 - U)/h \quad \text{in general,}$$

where F_0 is the concentration integral of f. The second bound follows by maximizing the integral of f among sets of mass s.

Choose a maximizer of u and a shortest path γ to it from the nearest Dirichlet mark. Then $|\gamma| \le R$. At regular levels B_γ is the inverse-slope sum along that path, and set $b(s) = B_\gamma/B$. On a plateau mass interval b is the fraction of the total plateau mass on γ. Coarea and this plateau accounting give $0 \le b \le 1$ and $\int_0^L b(s)\,\mathrm{d}s = |\gamma| \le R$. The quantile is Lipschitz. In fact traversal of any intermediate level band along γ requires arclength at least the level width divided by the largest edge slope. At regular levels $-U'' = 1/B$ and a path crossing gives $A^\nu \ge 1/B_\gamma$. On plateau mass intervals $U'' = 0$. We have therefore shown

$$-U'' \le bA^\nu, \qquad U(0) = 0, \quad U'(L) = 0. \tag{74}$$

These identities are in $W^{2,\infty}(0, L)$ and hold almost everywhere. They also hold for an edgewise concave stationary profile with nonnegative source q and Kirchhoff flux, using $A(s) = \int_{\text{top } s} q$, provided q vanishes on plateaus. If a regular level has an additional crossing off the path, $A^\nu > 1/B_\gamma$ and the inequality is strict.

22 The endpoint comparison for a single step

Let U be the graph concentration integral for datum one and V that of the interval with the atom. The interval profile is increasing in physical x because its flux decreases and is nonnegative at R. Thus, writing $v = J_h^* 1$,

$$V(s) = \begin{cases} s\,v(R), & 0 \le s \le \beta, \\ \beta v(R) + \displaystyle\int_{L-s}^{R} v(x)\,\mathrm{d}x, & \beta \le s \le L. \end{cases}$$

Integration to R, including the endpoint flux, gives $-V'' = b_* A_*^\nu$, where $b_* = \mathbf{1}_{(\beta,L)}$ and $A_* = (s - V)/h$. Its derivatives match at β and $V(0) = V'(L) = 0$.

Set $W = U - V$. Subtracting the equations gives $-W'' \le (b - b_*)A^\nu + b_*(A^\nu - A_*^\nu)$. For $\delta > 0$, use $\Phi_\delta(x) = (x + \delta)^\nu - \delta^\nu$. It approximates the power uniformly on the bounded range of the arguments. Its divided difference evaluated at A, A_*, divided by h, is bounded and nonnegative, denoted c_δ. Since $A - A_* = -W/h$,

$$-W'' + b_* c_\delta W \le (b - b_*)A^\nu + o_\delta(1). \tag{75}$$

Let K_δ solve the homogeneous equation on the left with $K_\delta(0) = 0$, $K_\delta'(L) = 1$. Start the ODE with unit derivative at zero. The nonnegative potential makes the solution positive, increasing and convex up to L. Rescaling its derivative at L gives $0 \le K_\delta(s) \le s$. Integration of (75) against K_δ gives $W(L)$ on the left. The weight $K_\delta A^\nu$ is nonnegative and nondecreasing. For any such weight P, $\int_0^L (b - b_*)P \le 0$, since one can bound the integrand using $P(\beta)$ on both sides of β and use $\int b \le R$. Letting $\delta \downarrow 0$ proves the upper bound in Theorem 20.1.

For $1 < p \le 2$ the unregularized power has bounded divided differences. In that case the maximum of the graph solution is strictly below one. If it were one at a vertex, Kirchhoff would force every outward derivative to vanish. At an interior maximum the derivative already vanishes. The edge system $u' = \phi^{-1}(j)$, $j' = (u - 1)/h$ is locally Lipschitz for $\nu \ge 1$. The constant solution starting from $(u, j) = (1, 0)$ therefore propagates along a path to D, a contradiction. If $R < L$, there is an open edge segment off γ. It is strictly concave by $u < 1$, so there is a noncritical subsegment contributing crossings off γ on a positive measure set of mass coordinates. The strict defect in (74), integrated against the positive unregularized Green section, gives strictness of the mass bound.

For sharpness when $\beta > 0$, take n equal arms of length $\ell_n = \beta/(n - 1)$ beyond a stem of length $R - \ell_n$ rooted at the sole Dirichlet mark, for n large enough. These graphs have length L and inradius R. The minimized objectives in (73) are uniformly bounded by the zero trial. Stems extended constantly to R are bounded in $W^{1,p}(0, R)$, hence compact in $C[0, R]$. Every arm differs from the junction value by at most a uniform multiple of $\ell_n^{1-1/p}$. Since $n\ell_n \to \beta$, their quadratic penalty tends to the atomic penalty. Lower semicontinuity bounds the limiting stem energy. Conversely, restrict the interval minimizer to the shortened stem and extend constantly over the arms to obtain the upper bound on the minimized objectives. Uniqueness identifies every such limit with v; the arm estimate also gives convergence of total masses.

22.1 Compact implicit fronts and loss of concentration order

Let $p > 2$ and $m = p/(p - 2)$. The deficit $w = 1 - J_h 1$ solves $(\phi(w'))' = w/h$ with value one at the Dirichlet marks. The half-line decreasing compact front and its length are

$$w(x) = (1 - x/d_h)_+^m, \qquad d_h = m[2h(p - 1)/p]^{1/p}.$$

This follows by integrating $(p - 1)|w'|^p/p = w^2/(2h)$ on its positive part. If d_h is shorter than a broom's stem, extend this profile by zero before the junction. It also gives the deficit on I_* with zero value and flux at R. The two deficits have equal integrals, proving finite-graph equality for small steps.

For the concentration claim fix a broom of stem length $a > 0$ and $n \ge 2$ arms of length $b > 0$ with $a + b = R$ and $a + nb = L$. Put $q = p/(p - 1)$. For a junction deficit $r \in (0, 1)$, the compact arm fronts penetrate by $d_h r^{1/m}$. Kirchhoff at the branch multiplies their individual flux by n on the stem, so the stem first integral is

$$\frac{p - 1}{p}|w'|^p = \frac{w^2 + (n^q - 1)r^2}{2h}.$$

The corresponding stem length is the continuous strictly decreasing function

$$a_n(r, h) = \frac{d_h}{m} \int_r^1 [w^2 + (n^q - 1)r^2]^{-1/p} \, \mathrm{d}w$$

with endpoint values $d_h, 0$. At $d_h = R$, put $r_b = (b/R)^m$. Then $a_n(r_b, h) < a_1(r_b, h) = R - b = a$, whereas $a_n(0, h) > a$. Thus the unique solution of $a_n(r, h) = a$ has penetration strictly less than b. This persists for $d_h > R$ sufficiently close to R. The joined stem and compact arm

profiles satisfy the weak resolvent equation and are identified by uniqueness. In particular $J_h^G 1 = 1$ on positive arclength.

At these same steps the interval deficit at R is positive. A zero endpoint deficit would force zero flux there and hence the zero-constant first integral on the interval, with a nonzero front of length $d_h > R$. Since $J_h^* 1$ is increasing, its maximum is below one. This yields the reversal of the concentration order at small positive masses, while the sharp total-mass comparison holds.

23 The early heat envelope

First compare any graph to the mixed interval of length L. For the respective datum-one implicit iterates denote the concentration integrals by U_i, V_i. The interval iterates are increasing in physical x because their flux decreases to zero at the Neumann endpoint. Integration to that endpoint and (74) on the graph give

$$-V_i'' = [(V_{i-1} - V_i)/h]^\nu, \qquad -U_i'' \le [(U_{i-1} - U_i)/h]^\nu.$$

The iterates decrease, so the bracketed quantities are nonnegative. If $U_{i-1} \le V_{i-1}$, the graph right-hand side is no larger where $U_i > V_i$. Testing the difference with $(U_i - V_i)_+$ and using the mixed traces in (74) yields $U_i \le V_i$. Initially both concentration integrals are s. Concentration integrals are uniformly Lipschitz in the L^1 norm of their profiles, by the supremum characterization. The exponential formula passes their order to the heat flow.

For $p > 2$ let F, η_* be as in Theorem 20.2 and put $v = -F'$. The deficit $w(t,x) = F(x/t^{1/p})$ has boundary value one and compact support in $x \le \eta_* t^{1/p}$. On its positive part the identity $(v^{p-1})' = -\eta v/p$ gives $w_t = \Delta_p w$. The deficit and flux vanish at the moving front, giving a weak solution after extension by zero. Its initial deficit is zero in L^2 on any bounded interval. In the power-law fluid notation of [20, Appendix A], the power index is $n = p - 1$; the exact normalized profile is the same [22]. For example, $p = 3$ gives $\eta_*^3 = 18$.

Until the front reaches R, the complement $1 - w$ satisfies the mixed condition on the length-L interval and the dynamic endpoint condition on I_*. These solutions are identified by uniqueness. To see this within the gradient flow, the trial has L^2 time derivative on compact positive time intervals, satisfies the Euler identities there, and is continuous to the datum at time zero. Both solutions have deficit integral $t^{1/p} \int_0^{\eta_*} F$. The mixed-interval concentration bound thus bounds $Q_G(t)$ by $Q_*(t)$ on the stated time window. At any fixed time in this window choose a broom in the preceding sequence with stem longer than the front. On the entire preceding time interval the complement of the same deficit, extended by one past the front, satisfies every vertex condition. It has the same heat content, proving attainment.

24 The sharp late-time coefficient

24.1 Positive profiles and a common time shift

For $p > 2$, minimize the functional

$$\mathcal{E}_p(f) - \frac{\alpha}{2} \int f^2 \, \mathrm{d}\mu$$

on each domain of the energy. The Dirichlet anchor bounds $\|f\|_\infty$ by $R^{1-1/p} \|f'\|_p$, which gives coercivity since $p > 2$. Compactness and lower semicontinuity give a nonnegative minimizer. The minimum is negative by a small nonzero trial. If a component separated by Dirichlet marks were zero, a small trial supported inside it would strictly decrease the functional. The Euler equation gives edgewise concavity; an interior zero forces zero throughout its edge. At

a nonmarked zero vertex all outward derivatives are nonnegative, and Kirchhoff forces all to vanish. Concavity then propagates zero on every incident edge. Together these facts give positivity off D. On I_* the same variational argument gives a positive profile on $(0, R]$: a zero at R would also have zero flux and force zero throughout by concavity. Variation gives the specified stationary equations including the atom.

Let f be any of these positive profiles, or any positive weak solution of the same equations. Testing with f gives $\int |f'|^p = \alpha \int f^2 \, \mathrm{d}\mu$. Write $m_f = \|f\|_\infty$. By a shortest path to a maximizer and Hölder's inequality,

$$m_f^p \le R^{p-1} \int |f'|^p \le \alpha L R^{p-1} m_f^2, \qquad m_f^{p-2} \le C.$$

The same argument on I_* uses the interval length R and the total mass L. By homogeneity, $(t+c)^{-\alpha} f$ is an exact heat solution for $c > 0$. With $c = C$ its initial value is at most one. In the other direction use the initial datum $\min(1, nf)$. Its flow is bounded above by $(t+n^{-(p-2)})^{-\alpha} f$. It converges to the datum-one flow in L^2 by the positive profile and contraction. The resulting squeeze is

$$(t + C)^{-\alpha} f \le S(t)1 \le t^{-\alpha} f. \tag{76}$$

For a fixed graph or interval, $t^\alpha S(t)1$ converges in L^2 to every positive weak profile by (76). This proves uniqueness in that full class. Integration gives the two time-shift bounds in Theorem 20.3.

24.2 Optimization in mass coordinates

Assume $\beta > 0$. Let U, V be the concentration integrals of the graph and interval stationary profiles. On graph edges the flux is strictly decreasing and the profile has no nontrivial plateaus. In (74) use $q = \alpha g_G$ to get $A = \alpha U$. On the interval the positive endpoint flux and the decreasing flux give a physically increasing profile. Its concentration integral starts with the linear part $[0, \beta]$ and integration to the endpoint, including the atom, gives the precise equation

$$-U'' \le b(\alpha U)^\nu, \qquad -V'' = b_*(\alpha V)^\nu, \qquad U(0) = V(0) = U'(L) = V'(L) = 0.$$

The graph inequality is strict on a set of positive measure because a noncritical open subsegment off γ gives additional crossings.

Set $W = U - V$ and

$$a = b_* \alpha^\nu \frac{U^\nu - V^\nu}{U - V},$$

using the derivative at coincidence. On (β, L) both U, V are separated from zero, so a is bounded. For $x > 0$ the divided difference of x^ν with its value at 1 is less than 1, also at coincidence, because $0 < \nu < 1$. Hence

$$-W'' - aW \le (b - b_*)(\alpha U)^\nu, \qquad -V'' - aV > 0 \quad \text{on } (\beta, L).$$

Although the potential in the linearized operator has negative sign, its mixed Green section is positive and increasing. To prove this, solve $Y'' = -aY$, $Y(0) = 0$, $Y'(0) = 1$. On $(0, \beta)$ both Y and V are positive linear functions. Until any first positive zero of Y, the Wronskian $Y'V - YV'$ has derivative $Y(-V'' - aV) \ge 0$. Thus Y/V is nondecreasing and bounded below away from zero by its value on $(0, \beta)$, ruling out a first zero. The strictly positive Wronskian derivative on (β, L) and $V'(L) = 0$ give $Y'(L) > 0$. Since $Y'' \le 0$, $Y' \ge Y'(L) > 0$. Now $K = Y/Y'(L)$ has $K'(L) = 1$ and is increasing and positive for $s > 0$.

Multiplying the inequality for W by K and integrating by parts yields $W(L)$ on the left. The nonnegative weight $K(\alpha U)^\nu$ is increasing, so the path budget gives $\int_0^L K(b - b_*)(\alpha U)^\nu \le 0$

as in the one-step case. The strict graph defect gives $W(L) < 0$. This proves the strict profile mass bound when $R < L$.

For sharpness use the equal-arm brooms. The uniform supremum bound and testing identity give uniformly bounded energies for their stationary profiles. The stem compactness and arm estimate of the resolvent argument apply to the stationary functionals. In particular the arm integrals of f and f^2 tend to $\beta f(R)$ and $\beta f(R)^2$ for every subsequential stem limit. The kinetic energy has the lower limit bound on the stem, while restriction of the interval minimizer to the shortened stem, with constant recovery on the arms, supplies the upper bound on the minimized objectives. The limiting function minimizes the interval functional and is nonzero since the minimum is negative. Positivity and uniqueness identify it as g_*. It follows that $M_G \to M_*$ on the broom sequence. Taking the supremum in (76) proves the two bounds on $t^\alpha \sup_G Q_G(t)$. In particular its relative deficit from M_* is at most $\alpha C/t$.

25 Scope

The results apply to finite compact connected unweighted metric graphs with positive edge lengths, a nonempty Dirichlet vertex set and standard Kirchhoff conditions elsewhere; loops, multiple edges and a disconnected Dirichlet-cut interior are included. The stationary envelope holds for every fixed $1 < p < \infty$, and the resolvent, heat and stability results concern the linear case $p = 2$ with initial datum one. On this whole class the endpoint-mass interval is the exact heat envelope at every positive time (Section 13), and the heat deficit at a fixed positive time controls the marked measured distance to the mixed interval with the exponent $1/3$ (Section 16), which the pitchfork profile shows is sharp; Section 8 gives explicit constants for every smaller exponent. Section 11 gives the sharp first p-eigenvalue bound at fixed length and inradius for every $1 < p < \infty$, and Section 17 its sharp inverse-edge rate. Sections 20–24 treat the p-Laplacian heat flow from datum one. On rooted trees and on graphs with exact root-preserving tree quotients, the sharp heat envelope holds at every positive time and the cubic reserve and the exponent $1/3$ itself hold uniformly; on quotients the resistance height refines the envelope. Weighted trees with matching multiplicities $c_e \geq 1$ obey the same heat envelope in terms of their total mass and their resistance or physical height. The positive response comparison behind these results is preserved by parallel merging, common-stem attachment and ancestor-to-descendant mass relocation.

Editions and the companion paper. This is the third edition of this article. The third edition adds Sections 17–24 on finite edge counts and the nonlinear heat flow. The second edition added Sections 11–16, which extend the heat envelope and the cubic stability exponent from rooted trees to all finite connected graphs and add the sharp first p-eigenvalue bound. It is a separate work from the companion paper [A], Archive edition 3 of 1 November 2026, which proves the length-only all-times heat-content comparison together with general-data concentration, single-time equality and a double-Dirichlet comparison under a bridge condition. The overlapping material of this article, namely the constant-data source argument of Section 5 and the pitchfork identity of Proposition 9.1, is identified where it occurs. The length–inradius envelopes, the rooted-tree heat envelope, the mass relocation and quotient results, the effective stability estimates and the cubic pitchfork profile are the contributions of this article beyond [A].

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assisted with the editorial revision, literature cross-checking, the statement of Lemma 7.4 and Corollary 7.11, and finite-element numerical checks of stated formulas; every proof in the article is analytic. The author takes responsibility for the mathematics and accompanying files.

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