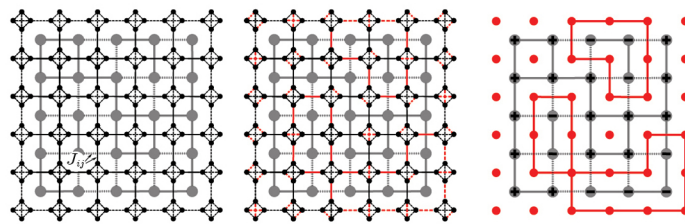


Spin Glass Theory and Far Beyond

Replica Symmetry Breaking After 40 Years



Editors

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*This volume is dedicated to Miguel Virasoro, our dear friend, who has helped
this field reach so far beyond what one could have expected.*

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Preface

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About sixty years ago, the anomalous magnetic response of some magnetic alloys drew the attention of theoretical physicists. It soon became clear that their understanding would require to develop a new branch of statistical physics for disordered and strongly interacting systems. As physical materials, spin glasses were found to be as useless as they were exotic. They were nevertheless recognized as paradigmatic examples of *complex* systems.

Theoretical efforts to describe spin glasses took speed with the complete formulation of *replica symmetry breaking* by Giorgio Parisi in 1979 [1, 2] and the discovery of its physical content in the following years. The book *Spin glass theory and beyond* [3] (familarly known as the *Beyond*), published in 1987, presented the concepts and consequences of replica symmetry breaking, as well as a first look at some applications that one could foresee at that time. Indeed, in the introduction to that book, the authors wrote “We are firmly convinced that the techniques developed for spin glasses: the replica theory, the TAP approach and the cavity method can be applied to a myriad of other problems that otherwise are difficult to handle”. It turns out that the set of ideas and techniques that originated from spin glasses have since given rise to an intellectual *cornucopia* [4]; it has led to a huge number of applications to problems as diverse as neural networks, amorphous solids, biological molecules, social and economic interactions, information theory and constraint satisfaction problems.

In 2019, some of us co-organized a conference to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the complete formulation of replica symmetry breaking theory. Within this context, the idea emerged of inviting colleagues to participate in a collective effort at writing a new book, the *Far Beyond* that would give an idea of the development of the field after the release of the *Beyond*. Of course, the recognition of the importance of these ideas by the Nobel committee in 2021 gave further momentum to the project, and eventually led to its completion.

This book aims at presenting an overview of the broad scope of applications of spin glass theory. We tried to invite as many as possible of the researchers that have contributed to these applications over the last decades, and we asked them to present the connection between spin glasses and their own research field in a pedagogical way, having in mind a reader with a good scientific background (not necessarily in physics), but generally unfamiliar with the specific field. We have striven for an encyclopedic work, in which a reader can find a general description of the ideas, together with a set of references to a more technical and complete discussion. The reader who wants to follow the technical developments, or get deeper into one of the presented subjects, is invited to study first some of the available textbooks, e.g. [3, 5–8].

The book is organized into thematic chapters. Some chapters contain a single contribution, coauthored by a small set of colleagues. Other chapters contain several distinct (but related) contributions, each written by one or a few authors. In the latter case, we added a short introductory paragraph to describe the contributions and their articulation. In the spirit of an encyclopedia, each chapter can be read independently of the others, so the reader can pick those chapters that are closer to their interests.

A final chapter, written by Giorgio Parisi, describes his own perspective on the state and direction of the field.

We are grateful to all the hundred and one authors who accepted to embark on this challenging endeavor with us.

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Contents

<i>Preface</i>	vii
<i>Patrick Charbonneau, Enzo Marinari, Marc Mézard, Federico Ricci-Tersenghi, Gabriele Sicuro and Francesco Zamponi</i>	
1. Simulated Annealing, Optimization, Searching for Ground States	1
<i>Sergio Caracciolo, Alexander Hartmann, Scott Kirkpatrick and Martin Weigel</i>	
2. Beyond the Ising Spin Glass I	21
<i>m</i> -Vector, Potts, <i>p</i> -Spin, Spherical, Induced Moment, Random Graphs <i>David Sherrington and Jairo R. L. de Almeida</i>	
3. Beyond the Ising Spin Glass II	37
Spin glass without replicas <i>J. Michael Kosterlitz</i>	
4. Renormalization Group in Spin Glasses	45
<i>Tom Lubensky, Tamás Temesvári, Imre Kondor and Maria Chiara Angelini</i>	
5. Numerical Simulations and Replica Symmetry Breaking	69
<i>Víctor Martín-Mayor, Juan J. Ruiz-Lorenzo, Beatriz Seoane and A. Peter Young</i>	
6. The High-dimensional Landscape Paradigm: Spin-Glasses, and Beyond	95
<i>Valentina Ros and Yan V. Fyodorov</i>	
7. Universal Aspects of the Structural Glass Transition from Density Functional Theory	115
<i>Theodore R. Kirkpatrick and Dave Thirumalai</i>	

8.	Non-Perturbative Processes in Glasses	135
	<i>Peter G. Wolynes and Tommaso Rizzo</i>	
9.	Dynamical Mean-Field Theory and the Aging Dynamics	157
	<i>Andrea Crisanti, Silvio Franz, Jorge Kurchan and Andrea Maiorano</i>	
10.	Dynamical Heterogeneity in Glass-Forming Liquids	187
	<i>Giulio Biroli, Kunimasa Miyazaki and David R. Reichman</i>	
11.	The Kauzmann Transition to an Ideal Glass Phase	203
	<i>Chiara Cammarota, Misaki Ozawa and Gilles Tarjus</i>	
12.	The Gardner Glass	219
	<i>Pierfrancesco Urbani, Yuliang Jin and Hajime Yoshino</i>	
13.	The Jamming Transition and the Marginally Stable Solid	239
	<i>Francesco Arceri, Eric I. Corwin and Corey S. O'Hern</i>	
14.	From Polymers to the KPZ Equation	255
	<i>Victor Dotsenko, Pierre Le Doussal and Henri Orland</i>	
15.	Emergent Dynamics in Glasses and Disordered Systems: Correlations and Avalanches	277
	<i>Annette Zippelius, Matthias Fuchs, Alberto Rosso, James P. Sethna and Matthieu Wyart</i>	
16.	Replica Symmetry Breaking in Random Lasers: Experimental Measurement of the Overlap Distribution	307
	<i>Claudio Conti, Neda Ghofraniha, Luca Leuzzi and Giancarlo Ruocco</i>	
17.	Anderson Localization on the Bethe Lattice	335
	<i>Saverio Pascazio, Antonello Scardicchio and Marco Tarzia</i>	
18.	Quantum Glasses	353
	<i>Leticia F. Cugliandolo and Markus Müller</i>	
19.	The Cavity Method: From Exact Solutions to Algorithms	375
	<i>Alfredo Braunstein and Guilhem Semerjian</i>	

20. Message Passing and Its Applications	389
<i>Florent Krzakala, Manfred Opper and David Saad</i>	
21. Information and Communication	405
<i>Yoshiyuki Kabashima and Toshiyuki Tanaka</i>	
22. The Mighty Force: Statistical Inference and High-Dimensional Statistics	423
<i>Erik Aurell, Jean Barbier, Aurélien Decelle and Roberto Mulet</i>	
23. Disordered Systems Insights on Computational Hardness	453
<i>David Gamarnik, Cris Moore and Lenka Zdeborová</i>	
24. Neural Networks: From the Perceptron to Deep Nets	477
<i>Marylou Gabrié, Surya Ganguli, Carlo Lucibello and Riccardo Zecchina</i>	
25. From the Statistical Physics of Disordered Systems to Neuroscience	499
<i>Nicolas Brunel, Rémi Monasson, Haim Sompolinsky and J. Leo van Hemmen</i>	
26. Statistical Physics of Biological Molecules	523
<i>Simona Cocco, Andrea De Martino, Andrea Pagnani, Martin Weigt and Felix Ritort</i>	
27. Application of Spin Glass Ideas in Social Sciences, Economics and Finance	561
<i>Jean-Philippe Bouchaud, Matteo Marsili and Jean-Pierre Nadal</i>	
28. Complex Dynamics in Ecological Systems and Animal Behavior	581
<i>M. Cristina Marchetti, Irene Giardina and A. Altieri</i>	
29. Optimization of Random High-Dimensional Functions: Structure and Algorithms	609
<i>Antonio Auffinger, Andrea Montanari and Eliran Subag</i>	
30. Rigorous Results in the Sherrington–Kirkpatrick Model	635
<i>Wei-Kuo Chen, Dmitry Panchenko and Francesco Guerra</i>	
31. Random Energy Models: Broken Replica Symmetry and Activated Dynamics	657
<i>Bernard Derrida, Peter Mottishaw and Véronique Gayraud</i>	

32.	Rigorous Results: Random Constraint Satisfaction Problems	679
	<i>Amin Coja-Oghlan, Allan Sly and Nike Sun</i>	
33.	Metastates and Replica Symmetry Breaking	697
	<i>C. M. Newman, N. Read and D. L. Stein</i>	
34.	Future Perspectives	719
	<i>Giorgio Parisi</i>	