SHORT AND LONG CHAINS AT INTERFACES

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EDITIONS

FRONTIERES

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95' RENCONTRES DE MORIOND

The XXXth Rencontres de Moriond were held in 1995 in Villars-sur-Ollon, Switzerland, and in Les Arcs 1800, Savoie, France.

The first meeting took place at Moriond in the French Alps in 1966. There, experimental as well as theoretical physicists not only shared their scientific preoccupations but also the household chores. The participants in the first meeting were mainly French physicists interested in electromagnetic interactions. In subsequent years, a session on high energy strong interactions was also added.

The main purpose of these meetings is to discuss recent developments in contemporary physics and also to promote effective collaboration between experimentalists and theorists in the field of elementary particle physics. By bringing together a relatively small number of participants, the meeting helps to develop better human relations as well as a more thorough and detailed discussion of the contributions.

This concern of research and experimentation of new channels of communication and dialogue which from the start animated the Moriond meetings, inspired us to organize a simultaneous meeting of biologists on Cell Differenciation (1970) and to create the Moriond Astrophysics Meeting (1981). In the same spirit, we have started a new series on Condensed Matter Physics in January 1994. Common meetings between biologists, astrophysicists, condensed matter physicists and high energy physicists are organized to study the implications of the advances in one field into the others. I hope that these conferences and lively discussions may give birth to new analytical methods or new mathematical languages.

At the XXXth Rencontres de Moriond in 1995, four physics sessions, one astrophysics session and one biology session were held:

* January 21-28	"Dark matter in cosmology, Clocks and Tests of fundamental laws"
	"Short and long chains at interfaces"
* March 11-18	"Electroweak Interactions and Unified Theories"
	"Clustering in the universe"
* March 19-26	"QCD and High Energy Hadronic Interactions"
	" Rencontre de Biologie - Méribel "

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I sincerely wish that a fruitful exchange and an efficient collaboration between the physicists, the astrophysicists and the biologists will arise from these Rencontres as from the previous ones.

FOREWORD

Both short and long chain amphiphiles create fascinating and yet ill-understood structures at interfaces. However, approaches are often different when dealing with one or the other compounds and it seemed advantageous to organize some kind of meeting such as this, which has tried to bring together the two communities of soft condensed matter physicists dealing with surfactants and polymers. In addition to the presentation of the most recent results in each field, new interesting subjects which involve chains at interfaces, whatever their length, like mixed systems of chains, biological materials or drag reduction in flows by addition of chain molecules were also extensively debated in this meeting.

Polymers present numerous interfacial conformations according to the nature of interfaces and bulk phases. Charged species in solution have recently received lots of interest for grafted configurations as well as adsorbed/depleted ones. This interest comes both from applied problems (charged species are water soluble) and fundamental questions of coupling between the elasticity of the chain and the distributions of monomeric charges and counterions. Such results are directly related to the questions of polymer adsorption, colloidal protection or chemical synthesis in presence of polymers. Melt systems of diblocks or grafted chains, often cast in the form of thin films, can be also strongly distorted by the proximity of an interface. As a result, many experimental situations lead to local ordering or peculiar monomeric distributions which can be described by scaling or field theories (Interfacial properties of polymer solutions and polymer melts). The behaviour of chain molecules at interfaces is also essential in wetting and adhesion phenomena. Effects of flow confinement in ultra-thin films and the adhesive properties of polymers were discussed in a series of papers (Wetting, adhesion and friction).

A somewhat different situation arises for short chains at the air-solution interface (Langmuir films) where the number of defects in each chain can be very low. The positional or orientational order is now currently assessed by grazing incidence x-ray diffraction, neutron reflection and Brewster angle microscopy. Large instrument facilities are more and more essential to these investigations. The now very precise experimental results can be compared with weak crystallization Landau approaches and simulations. Theory and simulations are indeed more and more precise and therefore increasingly important. More complex systems (several chains per head, coupling between heads and chain ordering, effects of chirality) are now being also investigated. The better understanding of simple species

films allows new original investigations of their mechanical and elastic properties. In particular recent developments enable in-situ manipulation of nano-structures at interfaces (Two-dimensional assemblies of amphiphilic molecules and macromolecules, Langmuir films, membranes, copolymers...).

Mixed systems are currently studied as the perturbation of a host phase of short chains by another compound which can be a polymer chain. Another approach of this problem - possibly complementary- is a better understanding of the polydispersity in systems constructed of mixtures of diblock copolymers (Mixed polymer-surfactant systems). Of course biological systems always present mixtures of short and long chains which are now studied in this respect. For instance the behaviour of membrane proteins raises many interesting questions. A very different aspect is the understanding of molecular motors where a biological system involving a variety of chain molecules can be understood by using the theoretical tools of statistical physics (Short and long chains in biology).

Finally, another aim of the meeting was to direct attention to the problem of chains in hydrodynamic flows (Hydrodynamics and polymers: turbulence, rheology...). This question, although rather old, is generally not addressed by people of the polymer and surfactant communities. However examples such as long chains extended in strong flows seem more and more important to people dealing with either friction at interfaces or biological molecules (stretching of DNA molecules for instance).

J. Daillant, P. Guenoun, C. Marques, P. Muller

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