

An Interactive Shader for Natural Diffraction Gratings

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Abstract

In nature, animals exhibit structural colors because of the physical interaction of light with the surface nanostructure of their exterior skin. In his pioneering work, J.Stam developed a reflectance model based on wave optics capturing the effect of diffraction from surface nanostructures. His model is limited by an accurate estimate of the correlation function using statistical properties of the surface's height field. We propose an adaption of his BRDF model that can handle complex natural gratings. Furthermore, we describe a method for interactively rendering of diffraction effects due to interaction of light with biological nano-structures such as snake skin. As input data, our method uses discrete height fields of natural gratings acquired by using atomic force microscopy (AFM) and employ Fourier Optics. Based on Taylor Series approximation for the phase shifts at the nanoscale surface, we leverage the precomputation of the discrete Fourier Transformations, involved in our model, to achieve interactive rendering speed (about 5-15 fps). We demonstrate results of our approach using surface nano-structures of two snake species, namely the *Elaphe* and *Xenopeltis* species, when applied to a measured snake geometry. Lastly, we evaluate the quality of our method by comparing its (peak) viewing angles with maximum reflectance for a fixed incident beam with those resulting from the grating equation at different wavelengths. We conclude that our method produces accurate results for complex, natural gratings at interactive speed.

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Chapter 1

Evaluation and Data Acquisition

1.1 Data Acquisition

Our goal is to perform physically accurate simulations of diffraction effects due to natural gratings. As for every simulation, its outcome highly depends on the input data and thus we also require measurements¹ of real natural gratings. For that purpose, samples of skin sheds of *Xenopeltis* and *Elaphe* snake species were fixed on a glass plate and then, by using an Atomic Force Microscope (AFM), their surface topography was measured and stored as grayscale images, indicating the depth. In general, an AFM is a microscope that uses a tiny probe mounted on a cantilever to scan the surface of an object. The probe is extremely close to the surface, but does not touch it. As the probe traverses the surface, attractive and repulsive forces arising between it and the atoms on the surface induce forces on the probe that bend the cantilever. The amount of bending is measured and recorded, providing a depth-map of the atoms on the surface. An Atomic force microscope is a very high-resolution probe scanings, with demonstrated resolution on the order of a fraction of a nanometer, which is more than 1000 times better than the optical diffraction limit.

1.2 Diffraction Gratings

In order to evaluate the quality of our simulations, it is important to understand what a diffraction grating actually is. An idealised diffraction grating like in figure 1.2 is made of a large number of parallel, evenly spaced slits in an opaque medium. In general, if the spacing between slits is wider than the wavelength of the incoming light, then the better we can observe how the light is diffracted on the grating. Simply speaking, each slit in the grating acts as a point light source from which light spreads and propagates in all directions. According to Huygen's Principle the outgoing light may have a different outgoing angle as it had initially. Figure 1.1 illustrates this behaviour for a monochromatic light source passing through a grating and shows that the outgoing angle will be different from the incident angle. Hence, the diffracted light is composed of the sum of interfering wave components emanating from each slit in the grating.

¹All measured data has been provided by the Laboratory of Artificial and Natural Evolution at Geneva - Website: www.lanevol.org

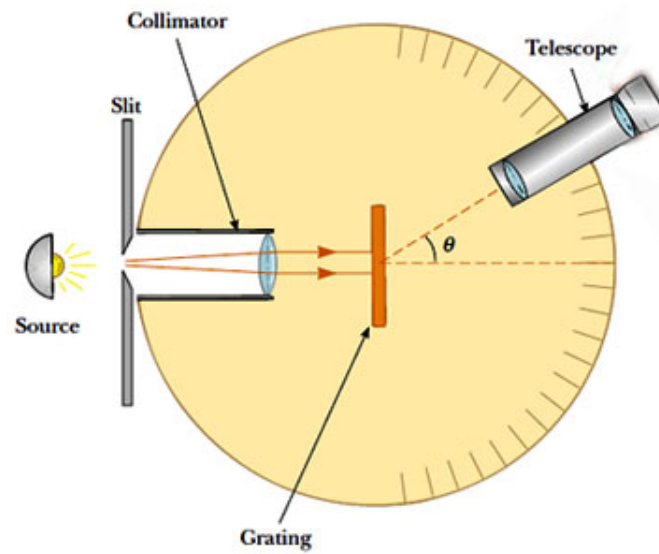


Figure 1.1: Spectrometer²: When a beam of monochromatic light passes through a grating placed in a spectrometer, images of the sources can be seen through the telescope at different angles.

Suppose that a monochromatic light source is directed at the grating, parallel to its axis as shown in figure 1.1. Let the distance between successive slits be equal the value d .

²This image has been taken from <http://h2physics.org/?cat=49>

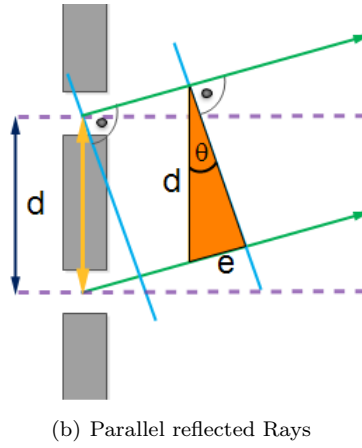
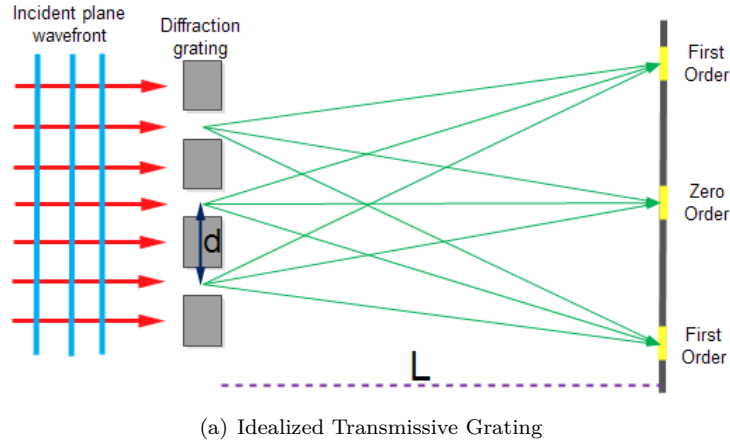
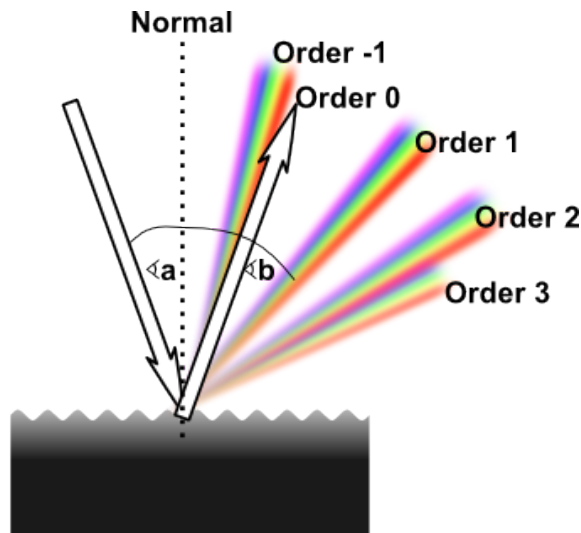


Figure 1.2: Light directed to parallel to grating

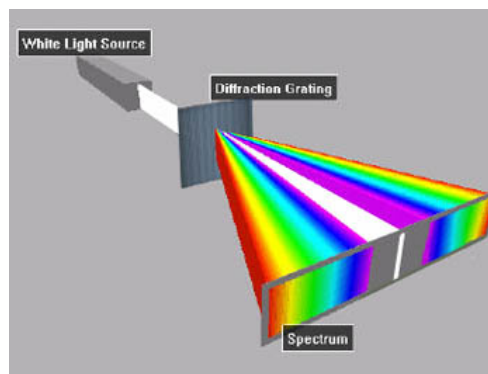
The observable diffraction pattern is the result of interference effects among outgoing wavelets according to Huygen's Principle. The path difference between waves from any two adjacent slits can be derived by drawing a perpendicular line between the parallel waves. Applying some trigonometry, this path difference is $e = d \sin(\theta)$. If the path difference equals one wavelength or a multiple of the wave's wavelength, the emerging, reflected waves from all slits will be in phase and a bright line will be observed at that point. Therefore, the condition for maxima in the interference pattern at the angle θ is:

$$d \sin(\theta) = m\lambda \quad (1.1)$$

where $m \in \mathbb{N}_0$ is the order of diffraction. Because d is very small for a diffraction grating, a beam of monochromatic light passing through a diffraction grating is split into very narrow bright fringes at large angles θ .

Figure 1.3: Different³ Orders of diffraction

When a narrow beam of white light is directed at a diffraction grating along its axis, instead of a monochromatic bright fringe, a set of colored spectra are observed on both sides of the central white band as shown in figure 1.3.

Figure 1.4: White Light beam causes coloured diffraction spectra⁴

Since the angle θ increases with wavelength λ , red light, which has the longest wavelength, is diffracted through the largest angle. Similarly violet light has the shortest wavelength and is therefore diffracted the least. This relationship between angle and wavelength is illustrated in figure 1.4. Thus, white light is split into its component colors from violet to red light. The spectrum is repeated in the different orders of diffraction, emphasizing certain colors differently, depending on their order of diffraction like shown in figure 1.3. Note that only the zero order spectrum is pure white. Figure 1.5 shows the relative intensity resulting when a beam of light hits a diffraction grating for different number of periods. From the graph we recognise that the more slits a grating

³This image has been taken from http://www.tau.ac.il/~phchlab/experiments_new/SemB01_Hydrogen/02TheoreticalBackground.html

⁴This image has been taken from <http://h2physics.org/?cat=49>

has, the sharper more slopes the function of intensity gets. This is similar like saying that, the more periods a grating has, the sharper the diffracted color spectrum gets like shown in figure 1.6.

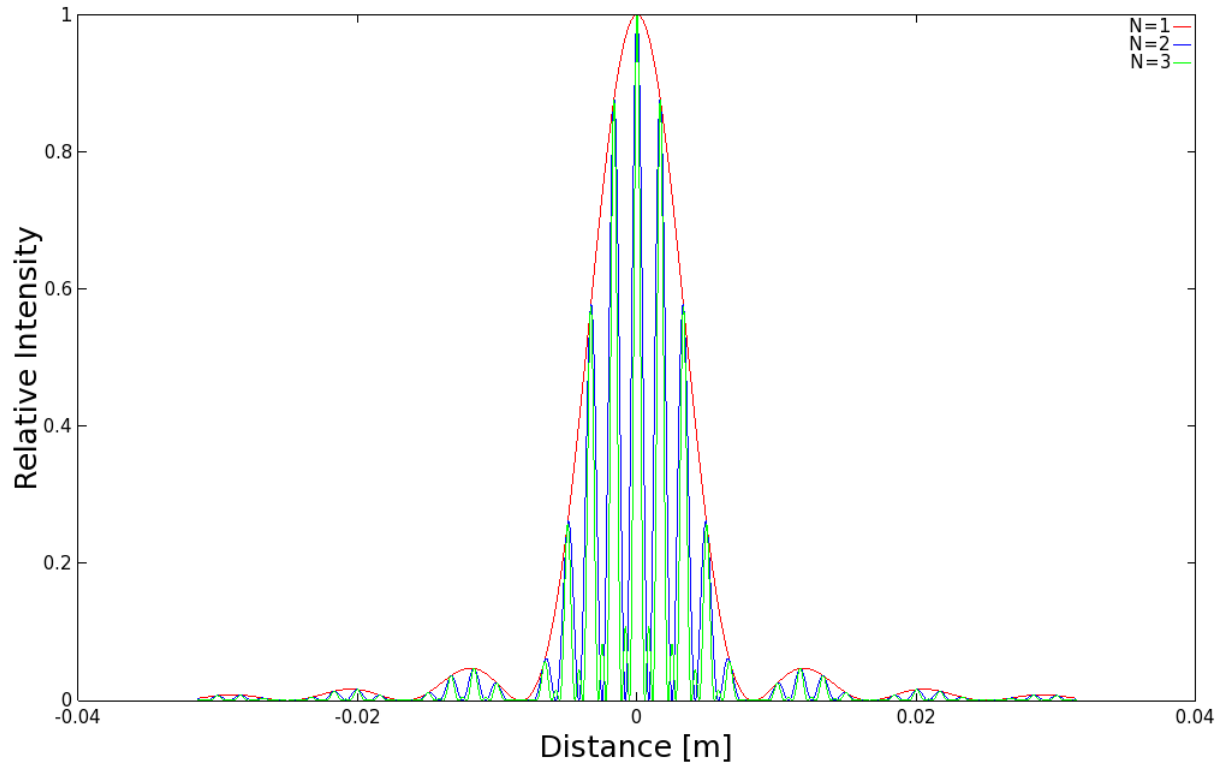


Figure 1.5: Relative intensities of a diffracted beam of light at wavelength $\lambda = 500nm$ on a grating for different number of periods N width slit width of 30 microns and slit separation of 0.15 mm each. The viewer is 0.5m apart from the grating.

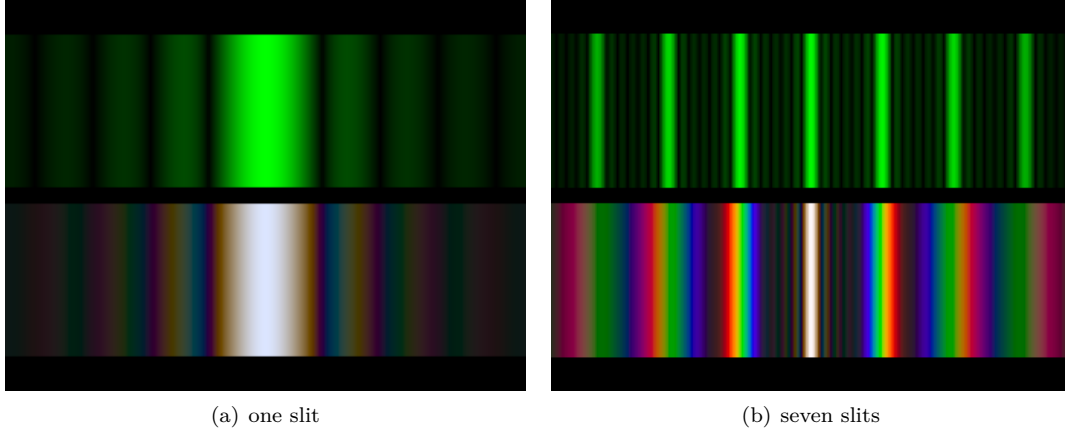


Figure 1.6: Difference of diffraction pattern⁵ between a monochromatic (top) and a white (bottom) light spectra for different number of slits.

1.3 Verifications

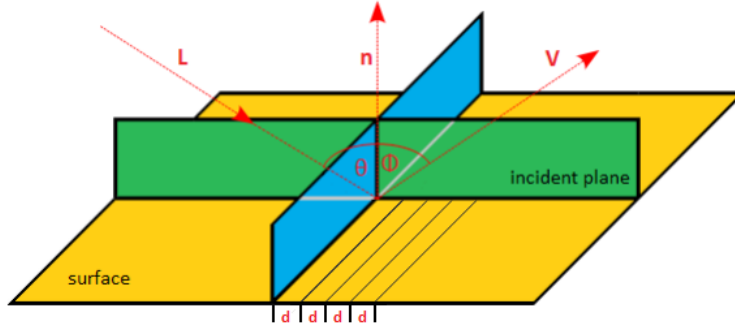


Figure 1.7: Experimental setup for evaluation: A light beam with direction L hits the surface, representing a grating pattern with periodicity d , at the incident plane relative to the surface normal n at angle θ and emerges at angle ϕ with direction V .

The physical reliability of our BRDF models has been verified by applying those on various patches which are a synthetic blazed grating, an Elaphe and a Xenopeltis snake shed sample patch. We compared the resulting response against the response resulting by the grating equation, which models the relationship between the grating spacing and the angles of the incident and diffracted beams of light. Figure 1.7 illustrates the geometrical setup for our evaluation approach: A monochromatic beam of light with wavelength λ hits a surface with periodicity d at an angle θ relative to the normal n along its incident plane. The beam emerges from the surface at the angle ϕ .

⁵These images have been taken from <http://www.itp.uni-hannover.de/~zawischa/ITP/multibeam.html>

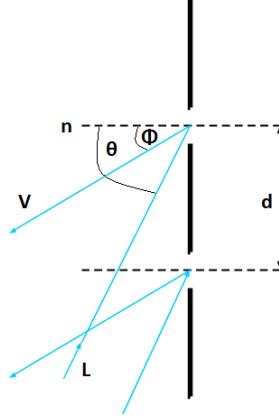


Figure 1.8: Reflecting grating: When the incident light direction is not parallel to its axis at the grating, there is another $\sin(\phi)$ involved. See also the grating equation 1.2.

The maximum in intensity is given by the grating equation derived from the equation 1.1 following figure 1.8:

$$\sin(\theta) = \sin(\phi) + \frac{m\lambda}{d} \quad (1.2)$$

In our evaluation we are interested in the first order diffraction, i.e. m equals one which. We further assume that the incident light direction ω_i is given. In contrast the direction of the reflected wave ω_r is not given. In Mathematics, a three dimensional direction vector is fully defined by two angles, i.e. it can be represented by spherical coordinates with radius $r = 1$. By convention, we denote those two vectors by θ and ϕ like in figure 1.7. Hence, θ_i , ϕ_i and ϕ_r are given constants whereas θ_r is a free parameter for our evaluation simulation. Therefore, we are going to compare the maxima for peak viewing angles corresponding to each wavelength using data produced by our method against the maxima resulting by the grating equation 1.2.

1.3.1 Numerical Comparisons

In this section we explain how we evaluated the quality of our BRDF models. For a fixed incident light direction we want to compare the peak viewing angles with maximum reflectance of our methods with those resulting from the grating equation at different wavelengths. For this purpose we implemented the corresponding BRDF model for each of our shading approaches, FLSS, NMM and PQ, in Java. By fixing the azimuth angle⁶ of the incident light L - and viewing direction V , we reduced the degrees of freedom these directions, during our evaluation. Thus, any BRDF is then defined by function that expects as input arguments a wavelength λ and the inclination angles of the incident light θ_i - and viewing direction θ_r . The return value of such a function, denoted by $BRDF(\lambda, \theta_i, \theta_r)$, is the intensity value of the corresponding BRDF at these given input arguments.

In our evaluation program we set the incident light angle θ_i equal to 75° . This allows us to remove the argument θ_i from our BRDF function. Our java program computes each $BRDF$ function at a given discrete wavelength-viewing-angle grid, denoted by $[\Lambda, \Theta]$. The wavelength space

⁶Each direction vector in space can be expressed by spherical coordinates. Then, such a unit vector is defined by a pair of two angles, the inclination and the azimuth angle. For further information, please have a look at appendix ??

$\Lambda = [\lambda_{min}, \lambda_{max}]$ and the viewing angle range $\Theta = [\alpha_{min}, \alpha_{max}]$ of our free parameter θ_r are discretized in equidistant steps whereas their step sizes. These step-sizes, denoted by $(\lambda_{step}, \alpha_{step})$, are provided as input arguments for our Java evaluation program.

Next, let us have a closer look how our discrete $[\Lambda, \Theta]$ grid is constructed. The wavelength space Λ , which is ranging from λ_{min} to λ_{max} , is discretized like the following:

$$\Lambda = \{\lambda = \lambda_{min} + k \cdot \lambda_{step} | k \in \{0, \dots, steps_\lambda - 1\}\} \quad (1.3)$$

where $steps_\lambda = \frac{\lambda_{max} - \lambda_{min}}{\lambda_{step}}$. We similarly discretise the viewing angle space Θ by setting an minimal and maximal viewing-angle boundary α_{min} and α_{max} . Then $\lceil \frac{\alpha_{max} - \alpha_{min}}{\alpha_{step}} \rceil$ is the number of angles $steps_\alpha$. And thus, our Θ space is defined like the following:

$$\Theta = \{\alpha = \alpha_{min} + k \cdot \alpha_{step} | k \in \{0, \dots, steps_\alpha - 1\}\} \quad (1.4)$$

Then, every BRDF java function is applied to the grid $[\Lambda, \Theta]$ and the resulting spectral response is stored in a matrix

$$R = \{BRDF(\lambda_i, \theta_r^j) | i \in Index(\Lambda), \quad j \in Index(\Theta)\} \quad (1.5)$$

The generation process of the evaluation plots, which we discuss in section 1.3.2, is described in algorithm 1. This algorithm takes the matrix R from equation 1.5 as input argument. For the maximal reflectance of our methods at any wavelength, it computes the corresponding peak viewing angles and compares it to the angle resulting from the grating equation.

Algorithm 1 BRDF Evaluation Graph Plotter

Input: R Matrix with *BRDF* intensity values of (Λ, Θ) grid
 Λ discretized wavelength space used to compute R
 (α_{min}) minimum value of viewing angle space Θ
 (α_{step}) discretization level of viewing angle space Θ
 d estimated periodicity of height field
 θ_i fixed incident angle

Procedure: *getMaxIntensGridPointsOf(matrix, r)* : get the column-index of the largest intensity value in the row *matrix(r, *)*

plotPoint(x, y): draw a point at (x, y)

Output: Evaluation Plot of given BRDF model applied on given heightfield

```

1: foreach  $\lambda_k \in \Lambda$  do
2:    $\tilde{\alpha} = getMaxIntensGridPointsOf(R, \lambda_k)$   $\triangleright \tilde{\alpha} \equiv$  index viewing angle of max. R
3:    $\tilde{\alpha}_{r_k} = \alpha_{min} + \alpha_{step} \cdot \tilde{\alpha}$ 
4:    $\theta_{r_k} = asin\left(\frac{\lambda}{d} - sin(\theta_i)\right)$ 
5:   plotPoint( $\lambda_k, \tilde{\alpha}_{r_k}$ )  $\triangleright$  graph resulting by our BRDF model
6:   plotPoint( $\lambda_k, \theta_{r_k}$ )  $\triangleright$  graph resulting by grating equation
7: end for

```

Algorithm 1 iterates over the wavelength space Λ and generates our evaluation plots. For any wavelength it computes the viewing angle of the the maximal reflectance and the angle resulting

from the grating equation as defined in equation 1.2. Both angles are then plotted for the current wavelength in the current iteration. In the next section we will discuss the generated evaluation plots.

1.3.2 Virtual Testbench

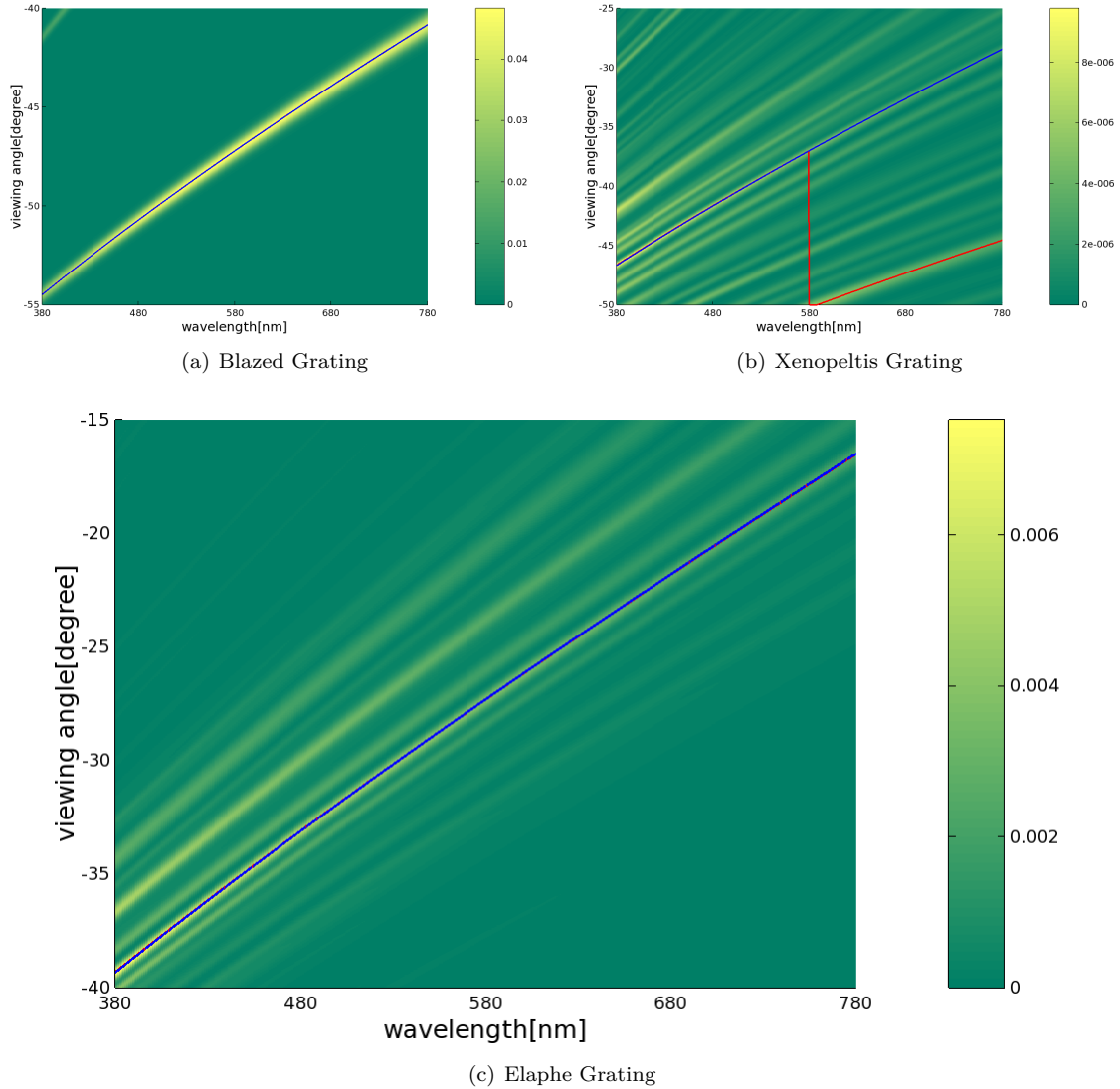


Figure 1.9: Reflectance obtained by using the shading approach described in algorithm ?? simulating a BRDF which models the effect of diffraction at different viewing angles over the spectrum of visible light.

In this section we discuss the quality of our BRDF models applied to different surface structures. For that purpose we compare the resulting relative reflectance computed as described in section

1.3.1 for each of our BRDF models to the idealized grating equation 1.2.

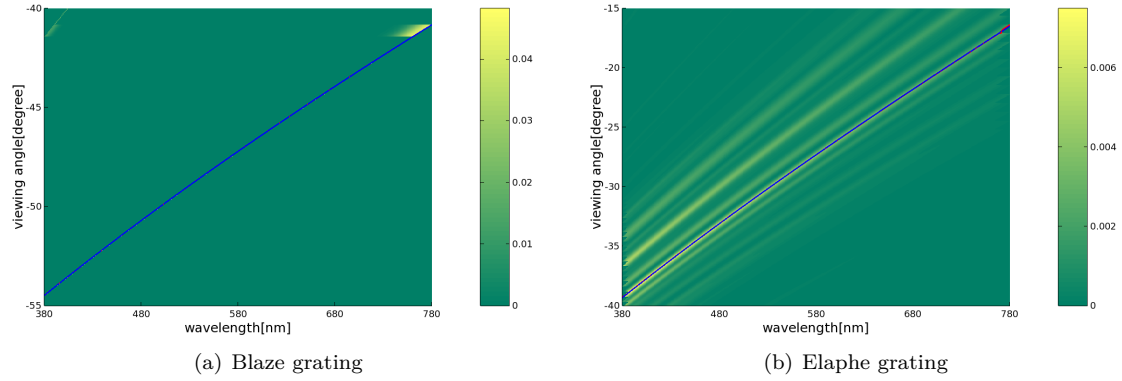
Patch	Mean[mm]	Variance[mm]	Mean[mm]	Variance[mm]
Blazed grating ??	2499.997	0.377	2499.997	0.377
Elaphe grating ??	1144.262	0.401	1144.179	0.677
Xenopeltis grating ??	1552.27	0.45	-	-

Table 1.1: Statistics of periodicity d of our used gratings ?? estimated by using the grating equation 1.2. This table was provided by Mr. D.Singh.

Figure 1.9 shows the reflectance graphs resulting by the shading approach of sampling the whole lambda space described in algorithm ?. This evaluation has been applied to different idealized periodic structures, namely to the Blaze- 1.9(a), Elaphe- 1.9(c) and Xenopeltis grating 1.9(b), using an illumination angle $\theta_i = 75$ degrees. Note that higher response values are plotted in yellow and lower values in green. For each of the graphs we determine the viewing angles with peak reflectance for various wavelengths and then plot this peak viewing angles against their wavelength as solid red curves. The blue curve represents diffraction angles for an idealized periodic structure with a certain periodicity d according to the grating equation 1.2. The corresponding periodicity for every grating structure is estimated using the precomputed response data using again the grating equation and are tabulated in table 1.1.

The red and blue curve are closely overlapping in our figures 1.9(a) and 1.9(c). For Blaze and Elaphe there is only diffraction along only along one direction perceivable. Since the Blazed grating is synthetic we use its exact periodicity to plot the blue curve instead of estimating it. The Xenopeltis grating is evaluated just along the direction for the finger like structures. For Xenopeltis it is interesting to see that the red curve for the peak viewing angle toggles between two ridges corresponding to two different periodicities. this happens because there are multiple sub regions of the nanostructure with slightly different orientations and periodicity. Each sub region carves out a different yellowish ridge. depending on the viewing angle, reflectance due to one such subregion can be higher than from the others.

Figure 1.10 shows the evaluation plots for the (N_{min}, N_{max}) shading approach which integrates over a reduced wavelength spectrum applied to the Blaze- 1.10(b) and the Elaphe-grating 1.10(b). This optimization approach is mentioned within the discussion section of the implementation chapter ?? as a run-time complexity enhancement of the whole lambda space sampling approach 1.9. The response curve again closely matches the corresponding grating equation curve for both evaluation graphs and also look similar to the corresponding evaluation plots when integrating over the whole lambda space shown previously in figure . Therefore we may assume this optimization to be valid.

Figure 1.10: Reflectance obtained using $N_{min}N_{max}$ optimization approach

Last let us consider the evaluation graphs of the PQ approach ?? in figure 1.11. The PQ approach assumes the given grating being periodically distributed on a shape's surface. For this approach we have plotted evaluation graphs of the Blaze- 1.11(a) and Elaphe grating 1.11(b). For both graphs their response curves have some similarities but also some differences compared to their corresponding grating equation curve. We could say that the response curve of the blaze grating is weakly oscillating around the grating equation curve (blue) but basically following it even there are some outliers. The response curve of the Elpahe grating is not following its corresponding first order grating equation curve rather another response curve for the PQ approach. This could be due to the assumption of the PQ approach that a given patch must be periodically distributed along the surface which is actually not that case. Nevertheless, the red curve fits one of the response curves.

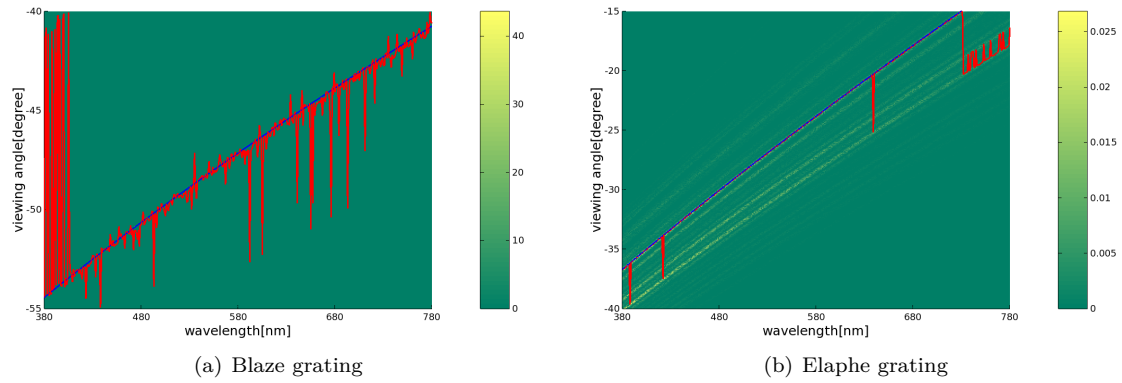


Figure 1.11: Reflectance obtained using PQ optimization approach

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