Measuring the Heat Capacity of Superfluid ^{4}He in the Presence of a Heat Flux Near T_λ: Progress and Prospects

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It has been predicted that the heat capacity of superfluid ^{4}He will diverge strongly at a depressed transition temperature in the presence of a constant heat flux, Q. We have built a cell to measure this effect, and have taken preliminary measurements at various heat flux values. Our data indicate an enhancement of the heat capacity that varies as a function of Q. However, the temperature dependence of our measurements leads us to believe that our initial findings were affected by spurious heat flow.

1. INTRODUCTION

There has been significant recent interest in the study of phase transitions in non-equilibrium or dynamic systems. Near the lambda point of ^{4}He, an applied heat flux, Q, induces a dynamic counterflow between the superfluid and the normal fluid, giving the system an extra degree of thermodynamic freedom. It is believed that the presence of superflow also depresses the superfluid density.

The counterflow and reduction in superfluid density depresses the transition temperature and is expected to cause the heat capacity to be enhanced.[1,2] In fact, if the heat flux is held constant during the measurement, the heat capacity is predicted to diverge.[2] Surprisingly, it is predicted that it will diverge far more strongly than its near-logarithmic behavior with no heat flux, and at a finite value of the superfluid density.

The physics in the vicinity of this strong divergence is relatively unexplored both theoretically and experimentally. Until now, there have been no experimental studies of the heat capacity of ^{4}He under a counterflow. Although there have been a number of experiments[3,4,5,6] investigating the depressed transition temperature, there is no consensus on either the meaning of the results or the notation[7] to describe them.

2. THE TRANSITION TEMPERATURE

The depressed transition temperature, $T_c(Q)$, is expected to scale with Q as $T_{\lambda_0} - T_c(Q) \sim Q^x$, where $T_{\lambda_0} = T_\lambda(Q=0)$. Theories[8] predict that $x = 1/2\nu = 0.746$, where $\nu = 0.6705$ is the correlation length exponent[9]. Haussman and Dohm[10] (HD) applied renormalization-group theory to the problem and obtained a quantitative prediction for the magnitude of the depression. However, in a prior thermal conductivity experiment, Duncan, Alhers, and Steinberg[4] (DAS) observed that the onset of thermal resistance occurred at a temperature, that we will call $T_{DAS}(Q)$, below the theoretical value of $T_c(Q)$. There are two interpretations for this discrepancy.

Because the order parameter does not go to zero at $T_c(Q)$, HD[10] likened the transition to a spinodal line of a first-order phase transition. This implies that, when approaching $T_c(Q)$ from the superfluid side, fluctuations will induce the transition to occur at a lower temperature. Liu and Ahlers[5] (LA) identify this lower temperature with $T_{DAS}(Q)$. Furthermore, they report the observation of a region of small but finite resistivity that they believe lies between $T_c(Q)$ and $T_{DAS}(Q)$. Recently, Murphy and Meyer[6] confirmed the existence of this anomalous dissipative region, but called LA's placement of the region into question.

The second interpretation proposes that the difference between experiment and theory is due to the presence of a nonsuperfluid, or normal, region in the sample. As soon as an interface enters the cell, the temperature of the superfluid far away from the normal fluid asymptotically approaches a unique temperature, $T_\infty(Q)$. Originally, HD[10] hypothesized that this was the temperature that was measured by DAS. There is recent evidence to support this interpretation. Moeur, *et. al.*[11] report the observation of a self organized critical state in non-equilibrium ^4He. They find that for $Q > 0.5\ \mu W/cm^2$, the temperature of this state, T_{SOC}, is in good agreement with $T_{DAS}(Q)$. A subsequent theory by Weichman and Miller[12] proposes that T_{SOC} should occur at $T_\infty(Q)$. It is therefore reasonable to assume that $T_{DAS}(Q)$ and $T_\infty(Q)$ are identical.

Determining the physical meaning of T_{DAS} is a matter of more than just theoretical interest. It also has important implications for the experimental investigation of the heat capacity under constant heat flow, as will be discussed below.

3. EXPERIMENTAL SETUP AND PROCEDURE

Measurements were taken in a cylindrical cell that consisted of two 6.985 cm diameter OFHC copper endplates connected by a 0.640 mm high stainless-steel sidewall (Fig. 1). The small cell height was chosen to minimize gravitational rounding of the heat capacity, yet still be large enough to avoid finite-size effects. The cell was filled with ultra-pure ^{4}He at a temperature just below T_{λ_0}, and then sealed with a mechanical valve. Heat capacity measurements were taken at constant volume.

The temperature of the helium sample was monitored with a high resolution paramagnetic salt thermometer (HRT)[13] that provided a resolution of $5 \times 10^{-11}\, K/\sqrt{Hz}$ near T_{λ_0}. The HRT was thermally connected to the helium sample through an OFHC copper knife edged ring in pressed contact with the stainless-steel sidewall. Measuring the temperature through a sidewall probe avoids the Q-dependent Kapitza resistance[14] that would affect the temperatures of the endplates.

The constant heat flux, Q, was produced by a wire heater wound around the bottom of the calorimeter. The cell was mounted on a three-stage thermal isolation system. The third stage consisted of a radiation shield that surrounded the calorimeter. During the experiment, the temperature of the shield stage was controlled to within $\pm$ 0.2 μK with another HRT.

Heat capacity measurements were taken by servoing the shield to a constant temperature so that the temperature of the helium sample drifted down through the transition at a rate of several *nK/sec*, and then applying a calorimetry heat current, Q_{cal}, so that the temperature drifted upwards at a similar rate. The heat capacity could then be calculated using the relation: $C_Q(T) = Q_{cal} / [(\partial T/\partial t)_{up} - (\partial T/\partial t)_{down}]$ where $(\partial T/\partial t)_{up}$ is the heating rate with Q_{cal} turned on, and $(\partial T/\partial t)_{down}$ is the cooling rate with Q_{cal} turned off.

In order to provide a reference for our data, C_Q, we also measured the heat capacity with no heat flux, $C_V(Q=0)$. The heat capacity measurements were taken under identical experimental conditions by alternately turning Q on and off for each heating-cooling sweep.

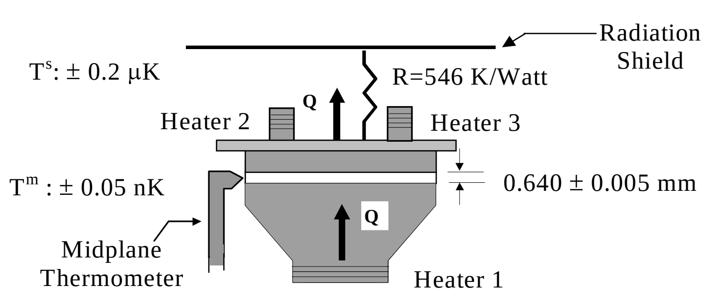

Fig. 1. Schematic diagram of the experimental cell

4. RESULTS

Data were taken at three different heat flux values, Q = 0.243 $\mu W/cm^2$, 1.12 $\mu W/cm^2$, and 3.58 $\mu W/cm^2$. The results are shown in Fig. 2a. The heat capacity at zero heat flux was compared to established results. Ahlers[15] reports that at 10 μK below the transition, and at 0.05 bar, $\gamma = C_P/C_V = 1.035$. We find that at the same temperature and approximate pressure, our measurements are smaller than C_P by a factor of 1.07. We cannot currently account for this discrepancy.

Each heat capacity curve taken at non-zero heat flux exhibits a sharp rise (sr) in slope at a distinct temperature, $T_{sr}(Q)$, that decreases with larger applied Q (indicated by arrows in Fig 2a). We believe that this rise occurs when the helium at the bottom of the cell no longer has zero resistivity. We therefore associate $T_{sr}(Q)$ with $T_{DAS}(Q)$. As the temperature rises further, a portion of Q goes into creating a temperature gradient in the dissipative layer, and less heat flows out of the top of the cell. Consequently, the magnitude of the temperature drift rate is reduced, and the heat capacity appears to be significantly enhanced. It is therefore no longer a valid heat capacity measurement, and data at temperatures greater than this sharp increase should not be considered.

By determining the physical meaning of $T_{DAS}(Q)$, we can gauge how close our heat capacity measurements can get to the transition. In the presence of gravity, the lambda point temperature in zero heat flow varies as a function of cell height, z, due to hydrostatic pressure in the fluid. All of the transition temperatures discussed in this paper lie parallel to this line

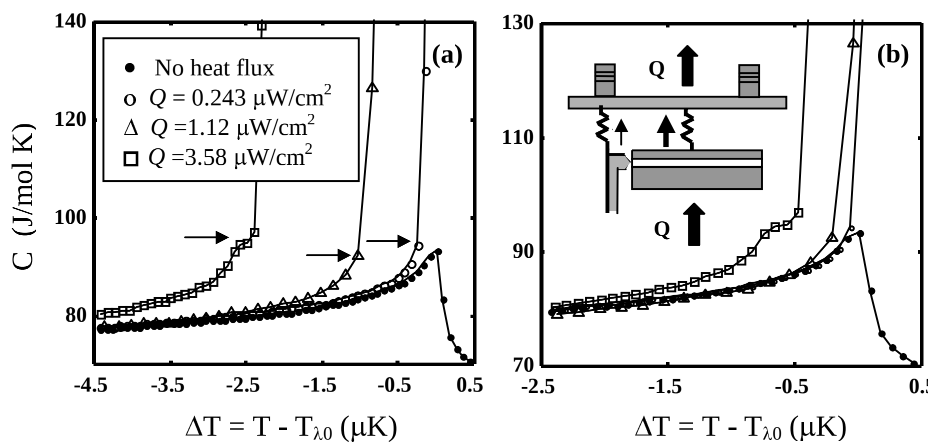

Fig 2. Heat capacity data at various heat fluxes. a) The original data. Arrows indicate where we think dissipative fluid enters the cell. Data to the right of these points should not be considered. b) The data shifted in temperature to adjust for boundary resistance. Inset: a schematic of the thermal network responsible for the temperature offset.

of critical points, $T^{z}_{\lambda 0}$. If $T^{z}_{DAS}(Q)$ is equivalent to $T^{z}_{\infty}(Q)$ (see Fig. 3a), then the cell will not contain dissipative fluid until the bottom layer of helium reaches a temperature of $T^{b}_{c}(Q)$. Up until this point, all of the helium in the cell is superfluid and uniform in temperature, and so the temperature of the midplane will also be at $T^{b}_{c}(Q)$. Afterwards, a temperature gradient interferes with the measurement. Gravity will therefore play the primary role in limiting the experiment from reaching the midplane transition temperature, $T^{m}_{c}(Q)$. If, instead, $T_{DAS}(Q)$ indicates the onset of an anomalous dissipative region below $T_c(Q)$ (see Fig. 3b), then the midplane temperature will only reach $T^{b}_{DAS}(Q) < T^{b}_{c}(Q)$ before a temperature gradient enters the cell. It should be noted that the former interpretation implies that an experiment with carefully designed time constants should see the temperature of the midplane thermometer drop, from $T^{b}_{c}(Q)$ to $T^{b}_{DAS}(Q)$, before rapidly increasing as an interface moves through the cell.

Unfortunately, our present data can not resolve which interpretation of $T_{DAS}(Q)$ is correct. We found that $T_{sr}(Q)$ is considerably lower in temperature than both $T_{DAS}(Q)$ and $T_c(Q)$. We believe that this discrepancy was due to a Kapitza offset in the temperature measurement caused by a fraction of the heat flux, Q, flowing out through the sidewall of the cell and up the niobium capillary used to shield the thermometer leads. The difference between $T_{sr}(Q)$ and $T_{DAS}(Q)$ is a linear function of Q, lending credence to this hypothesis. The apparatus is currently being modified to eliminate this effect.

The above argument warrants a reanalysis of our data by shifting the C_Q

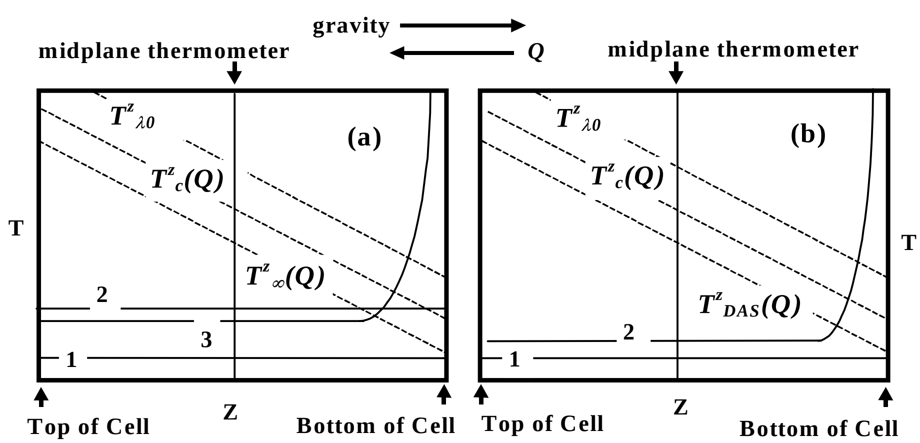

Fig. 3. Two schematic representations of thermal profiles in a cell of ^{4}He with a heat flux under the influence of gravity. The numbers represent subsequent temperature profiles when scanning up in temperature. The thermal profiles if a) $T_{DAS}=T_{\infty}$. Line 2 is the profile at the instant the bottom of the cell reaches $T_c^{b}(Q)$. Line 3 is the profile afterwards. b) T_{DAS} indicates an anomalous dissipative region. At line 1, the temperature of the cell reaches $T^{b}_{DAS}(Q)$. Then the thermal profile indicated by line 2 develops.

data in temperature relative to the data taken at zero heat flux. When the data are shifted so that $T_{sr}(Q)$ corresponds with $T_{DAS}(Q)$ (Fig. 2b), the four heat capacity curves overlap far away from $T_{\lambda 0}$, but become dependent on Q as the transition is approached. Although these preliminary results are promising, a quantitative analysis would be premature, and further experimental data are required.

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