

# Contents

Chapter 1. Introduction	1
1.1. The setting, the motivation, and the goal of the paper	1
1.2. The main result: The polynomial rates of rare transitions and the underlying slowdown mechanism	3
1.3. The hierarchy of time scales and clusters of accessibility	4
1.4. The structure of the paper	5
Acknowledgments	5
Chapter 2. The typical behavior	7
2.1. Notation	7
2.2. Exiting a neighborhood of a saddle	8
2.3. Dynamics along heteroclinic connections	13
2.4. A heteroclinic chain	14
Chapter 3. Some notation and terminology	19
Chapter 4. Two saddles	21
Chapter 5. Heteroclinic chains of arbitrary length	31
5.1. Introduction	31
5.2. The new sequence of effective exponents and the main result	32
5.3. Proof of (5.5) in Theorem 5.1 (2)	35
5.4. Proof of (5.7) in Theorem 5.1 (2)	54
Chapter 6. Long-term asymptotics of diffusions near heteroclinic networks	61
Chapter 7. Proofs in the rectified coordinates	67
7.1. Basic estimates	67
7.2. Estimating the stopped process $N$	71
7.3. The setting in the rectified coordinates	79
7.4. Proofs of lemmas in the rectified coordinates	80
Chapter 8. Proofs in the original coordinates	85
8.1. Diffusion along a heteroclinic orbit	85
8.2. Proofs of lemmas from Chapters 4 and 5 in the original coordinates	91
8.3. Proof of Lemma 5.9	100
Chapter 9. Gaussian approximation for the stopped process $U^1$	107
9.1. Approximation by the process stopped at a deterministic time	108
9.2. Gaussian approximation for the deterministically stopped process	109

Chapter 10. Local limit theorems	115
10.1. Exit times	115
10.2. Atypical exit locations	116
10.3. Typical exit locations	125
Chapter 11. Density estimates	131
11.1. The general setting and the main result	132
11.2. Preliminaries	133
11.3. Derivative estimates	136
11.4. Malliavin matrix estimates	145
11.5. Proof of Lemma 11.2	154
Bibliography	155