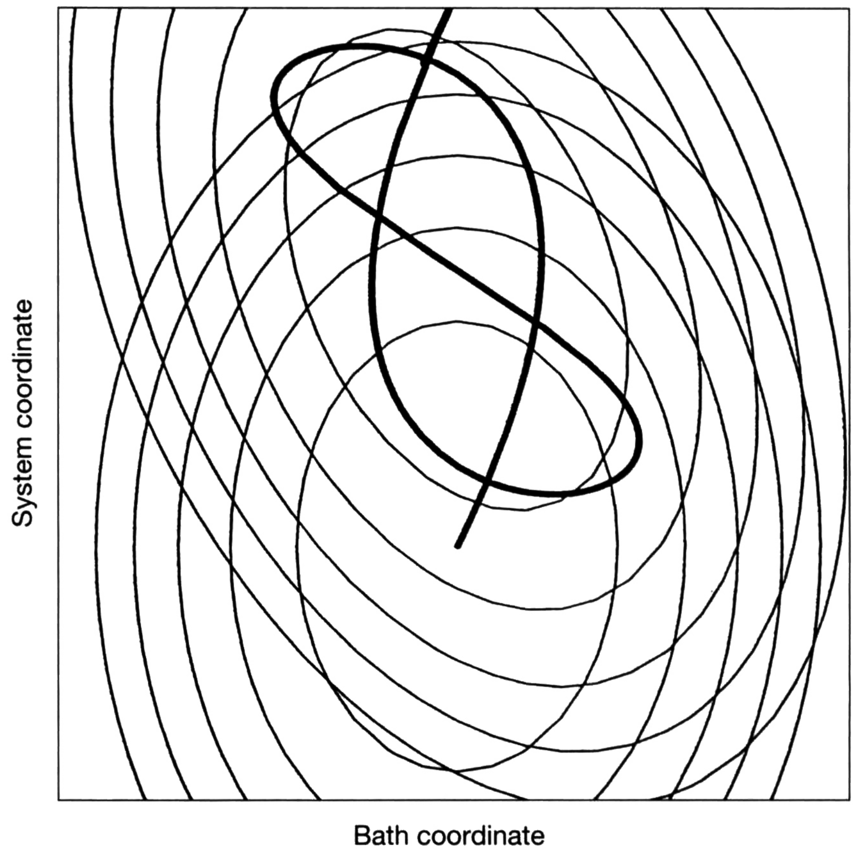
Figures appearing in EDITOR'S CHOICE *are those arising from materials research which strike the editor's fancy as being aesthetically appealing and eye-catching. No further criteria are applied and none should be assumed. When taken out of context, such figures often evoke images beyond and unrelated to the original meaning. Submissions of candidate figures are welcome and should include a complete source citation, a photocopy of the report in which it appears (or will appear), and a reproduction-quality original drawing or photograph of the figure in question.*



Children may recognize this month's EDITOR'S CHOICE as an exercise in cursive penmanship. The rest of us can't avoid noticing its similarity to the mind-wandering doodles that decorate the corners of our notepads. In fact this mirror image of an ampersand entangled in two sets of concentric ellipses is a hypothetical path traced out by coordinates that describe an optically excited solute (the "system") in a polar solvent (the "bath") shortly after the excitation occurs. The crux of the problem of theoretically simulating the evolution, relaxation, decay, and fluorescence of such excited states is the partitioning of the problem into a "system" and a "bath" such that the bath remains only weakly coupled to the system and any strong solvent couplings are redefined into the system's coordinates. L.W. Ungar and J.A. Cina (*J. Phys. Chem. A* **102** [1998] p. 7382) consider the case of a solvated and excited chromophore and examine the damping of oscillatory nonlinear optical signals using Redfield relaxation theory. It is difficult to picture how one could relax in a scintillating polar bath, but it would most certainly be damp.

SEND LETTERS TO THE EDITOR TO:

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