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BOOMERanG constraints on primordial non-Gaussianity from analytical
Minkowski functionals

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ABSTRACT
We use Minkowski functionals (MFs) to constrain a primordial non-Gaussian contribution to the cosmic microwave background intensity field as observed in the 150- and 145-GHz BOOMERanG maps from the 1998 and 2003 flights, respectively, performing for the first time a joint analysis of the two data sets. A perturbative expansion of the MF formulae in the limit of a weakly non-Gaussian field yields analytical formulae, derived by Hikage et al., which can be used to constrain the coupling parameter $f_{NL}$ without the need for non-Gaussian simulations. We find $-770 < f_{NL} < 500$ at 95 per cent CL, significantly improving the previous constraints by De Troia et al. on the BOOMERanG 2003 data set. These are the best $f_{NL}$ limits to date for suborbital probes.

Key words: methods: analytical – methods: statistical – early Universe – cosmic background radiation – cosmology: observations.

1 INTRODUCTION
Detection of non-Gaussian signals in the cosmic microwave background (CMB) anisotropy pattern can be of significant help in
discriminating between different inflationary models. The simplest inflationary models based on single-rolling scalar fields predict very small deviations from Gaussianity that cannot be usefully constrained by present-day experimental efforts (Bartolo et al. 2004). However, multifield inflationary models and other alternative scenarios allow for more relevant non-Gaussian contribution that could be in principle detected by current and forthcoming missions (Barnarande & Uzan 2002; Lyth, Ungarelli & Wands 2003). In this paper we consider only the so-called local form for primordial non-Gaussianity, which can be parametrized by means of a quadratic term in Bardeen’s curvature perturbations $\Phi(x)$ (Salopek & Bond 1990; Gangui et al. 1994; Verde et al. 2000; Komatsu & Spergel 2001):

$$\Phi(x) = \Phi_G(x) + f_{\text{NL}} \left[ \Phi_G(x)^2 - \langle \Phi_G(x)^2 \rangle \right],$$

where $\Phi_G$ is a zero mean, Gaussian random field and $f_{\text{NL}}$ is the coupling parameter that characterizes the amplitude of primordial non-Gaussianity. At present, the most stringent limits on $f_{\text{NL}}$ are derived from the Wilkinson Microwave Anisotropy Probe (WMAP) 5-yr analysis at $-4 < f_{\text{NL}} < 80$ (95 per cent CL) using an optimal (i.e. minimum variance) bispectrum based estimator (Smith, Senatore & Zaldarriaga 2009); the recently published WMAP 7-yr analysis (Komatsu et al. 2010) has yielded a comparable $-10 < f_{\text{NL}} < 74$ (again, 95 per cent CL). Many teams have further analysed the WMAP data set to yield constraints on $f_{\text{NL}}$ using a plethora of tests, including wavelet-based estimators: see e.g. Curto, Martínez-González & Barreiro (2009), Rudjord et al. (2010), Pietrobon et al. (2009), and references therein. All $f_{\text{NL}}$ limits to date are compatible with a Gaussian hypothesis. Yadav & Wandelt (2008) claimed a measure of a positive $f_{\text{NL}}$ at above 99.5 per cent CL in the WMAP 3-yr data using a bispectrum-based statistics; however, their claimed signal has not been confirmed by the WMAP 5- and 7-yr analyses (Komatsu et al. 2009; Smith et al. 2009; Komatsu et al. 2010).

On the other hand, several groups have also investigated specific signatures in the WMAP data, typically induced by low-resolution features such as anomalous spots, reporting high significance yet unmodelled detection of non-Gaussianity (Vielva et al. 2004; Creminelli et al. 2007; Cruz et al. 2007; Eriksen et al. 2007; Park, Park & Gott 2007; Ráth et al. 2009).

CMB suborbital experiments have also delivered $f_{\text{NL}}$ constraints, particularly MAXIMA (Santos et al. 2003), VSA (Smith et al. 2004), BOOMERanG (De Troia et al. 2007) and ARCHEOPS (Curto et al. 2008). Although such limits are weaker than those based on WMAP, they probe a range of angular scale that will not be accessible to space-borne observation until the advent of space-borne observations (Planck). Among suborbital probes, De Troia et al. (2007) set the most stringent $f_{\text{NL}}$ constraints to date at $\sim -800 < f_{\text{NL}} < 1050$ (95 per cent CL) from BOOMERanG 2003 (hereafter B03) data set using a pixel-space statistics based on Minkowski functionals (MFs). Such constraints were obtained using a reference Monte Carlo set composed of non-Gaussian CMB maps.

In this paper we revisit the $f_{\text{NL}}$ analysis of the BOOMERanG data set. We employ a larger data set that also includes the BOOMERanG 1998 (hereafter B98) data, allowing for a larger sky coverage and improved signal-to-noise ratio (S/N). Furthermore, we apply a different, harmonic based, MF code that overcomes a weakness of the previous B03 analysis, which used a flat-sky approximation to compute the functionals. Finally, we employ the perturbative approach developed by Hikage, Komatsu & Matsubara (2006) to quantify the contribution of primordial non-Gaussianity to MF. Hikage et al. (2008) successfully applied the perturbative method to WMAP data without the need of a large set of non-Gaussian simulations.

The plan of this paper is as follows. In Section 2 we briefly describe the BOOMERanG experiment and the two data sets it has produced as well as our data analysis pipeline. In Section 3 we apply the perturbative formulae to compute the MFs of the data and Gaussian Monte Carlo simulation maps. Furthermore in Section 4 we constrain $f_{\text{NL}}$ and in Section 5 we draw our main conclusions.

2 THE B98 AND B03 DATA SETS

BOOMERanG was launched for the first time from Antarctica in 1998 December. It has observed the sky for about 10 d, centring a target region at $\alpha \sim 5^h$ and $\delta \sim -45^\circ$ that is free of contamination by thermal emission from interstellar dust. BOOMERanG mapped this region scanning the telescope through $60^\circ$ at fixed elevation and at constant speed. At intervals of a few hours the telescope elevation was changed in order to increase the sky coverage (Crill et al. 2003). The survey region aimed at CMB observations is $\sim 5$ per cent of the sky or $\sim 1200$ deg$^2$ (Ruhl et al. 2003). The data were obtained using 16 spider-web bolometric detectors sensitive to four frequency bands centred at 90, 150, 240 and 410 GHz. Here we restrict ourselves to the 150-GHz data that have the most advantageous combination of sensitivity and angular resolution to target the CMB fluctuations. The analysis of B98 data set produced the first high-S/N CMB maps at subdegree resolution and one of the first high-confidence measurements of the first acoustic peak in the CMB anisotropy angular spectrum (de Bernardis et al. 2000).

The Gaussianity of this data set has been constrained in both pixel and harmonic space (Polenta et al. 2002; De Troia et al. 2003).

The B03 experiment has been flown from Antarctica in 2003. Contrary to B98, B03 was capable of measuring linear polarization other than total intensity (Jones et al. 2006; MacTavish et al. 2006; Montroy et al. 2006; Piacentini et al. 2006). It has observed the microwave sky for $\sim 7$ d in three frequency bands, centred at 145, 245 and 345 GHz. Here we use only the 145-GHz data, for reasons analogous to B98. These have been gathered with polarization-sensitive bolometers (PSBs), i.e. bolometers sensitive to total intensity and a combination of the two Stokes linear polarization parameters $Q$ and $U$ (Jones et al. 2003). The analysis of the data set has produced high-quality maps (Masi et al. 2006) of the southern sky that have been conveniently divided in three regions: a ‘deep’ (in terms of integration time per pixel) survey region ($\sim 90$ deg$^2$) and a ‘shallow’ survey region ($\sim 750$ deg$^2$), both at high Galactic latitudes, as well as a region of $\sim 300$ deg$^2$ across the Galactic plane. The deep region is completely embedded in the shallow region.

In this paper we apply a pixel mask to select a larger effective sky region than the one used in De Troia et al. (2007). We have been extremely careful in choosing this sky cut, rejecting regions potentially contaminated by foreground emission, which shows up clearly in the B98 higher frequency maps, and pixels falling too close to the edge of the survey region, which exhibit low S/N and potential visible artefacts. The final cut we use covers about 980 deg$^2$ or 2.4 per cent of the sky. This should be compared with the $\sim 700$ (1.7 per cent of the sky) employed for De Troia et al. (2007), which only used B03, and with the 1.2 and 1.8 per cent of the sky selected, respectively, for the B98 analyses of Polenta et al. (2002) and De Troia et al. (2003). The useful sky fraction considered in this paper is the largest ever used for BOOMERanG non-Gaussianity studies.

We analysed the temperature ($T$) data map reduced jointly from eight PSBs at 145 GHz (Masi et al. 2006) for the B03 data set and the
T map obtained from the best three of the six 150-GHz channels for B98. While we do not consider here the Stokes $Q$ and $U$ polarization maps, the B03 temperature map has been marginalized with respect to linear polarization. The maps have been produced with ROMA, an iterative generalized least-squares (GLS) map-making code specifically tuned for BOOMERanG analysis (Natoli et al. 2001; De Gasperis et al. 2005). To work, the GLS map maker needs to know the detectors’ noise power spectral densities, which is estimated directly from flight data using an iterative procedure. In the case of B03, where cross-talks among PSBs located in the same feed horn are significant, we have also estimated the corresponding noise cross-spectra (Masi et al. 2006). The timelines have been carefully flagged to exclude unwanted data; for B98, only the more conservative part of the scan surveyed at 1 degree per second (dps) is used (Crill et al. 2003) while for both data sets we have flagged all of the turn-around data. Once the B98 and B03 maps are produced, we obtain a single data map by noise-weighting the two. In doing so we treat the residual noise left in the map as white. This choice is motivated by a property of the GLS map-making procedure, which is very effective in suppressing the level of noise correlations in the data. The noise level in the B98 map roughly equals that in the B03 shallow region: at 6.7 arcmin the noise rms is about $40 \mu K$ pixel$^{-1}$.

While the B98 flight actually lasted longer than B03, we consider only three channels and the 1 dps part of the scan here.) The noise rms in the B03 deep region is $\sim 10 \mu K$ for 6.7 arcmin pixels. The joint B03/B98 map we obtain is shown in Fig. 1 in the sky cut employed for the analysis hereafter.

To probe CMB non-Gaussianity it is important to keep under control contaminations from astrophysical foregrounds, whose pattern is markedly non-Gaussian. In the region selected here, foreground intensity is known to be negligible with respect to the cosmological signal (Masi et al. 2006). We have masked all detectable sources in the observed field. To assess the robustness of our tests of Gaussianity we used a set of 1000 Monte Carlo simulation maps that mimic both the B03 and the B98 data. To produce these simulations, the following scheme is employed. The Gaussian CMB sky signal is simulated using the cosmological parameters estimated from the WMAP 1-yr data (Hinshaw et al. 2003) which fits well the BOOMERanG temperature power spectrum. This signal is smoothed according to the measured optical beam and synthesized into a pixelized sky map, using HEALPix routines (Górski et al. 2005). Taking into account the B03 and B98 scanning strategy, the signal map is projected on to eight timestreams, one for each 145-GHz detector, for B03 and on to three timestreams for the B98 150-GHz channels we consider here. Noise-only timestreams are also produced as Gaussian realizations of each detector’s noise power spectral density, iteratively estimated from flight data as explained above, fully taking into account correlated noise and, in the case of B03, also cross-talks between detectors hosted within the same optical horn. The signal and noise timelines are then added together. To reduce the simulated timelines, we follow the same steps performed when analysing real data: the timelines are then reduced with the ROMA map-making code replicating the actual flight pointing and transient flagging to produce $T$ maps jointly from three B98 channels and $T$, $Q$ and $U$ maps jointly from all eight B03 channels. We enforce that the map-making procedure is applied to simulation and observational data following the same steps.

It is worth noting that in this paper the B98 and B03 data have been used to produce a joint map for the first time.

![Figure 1](http://mnras.oxfordjournals.org/) The CMB field as seen in the B2K + B98 map, in the sky cut used for the analysis presented here. The solid line shows the boundary of the region taken in consideration for the analysis in De Troia et al. (2007).
3 PERTURBATIVE APPROACH TO MINKOWSKI FUNCTIONAL FOR A WEAKLY NON-GAUSIAN CMB FIELD

In the previous paper (De Troia et al. 2007) we have also applied simple pixel-based analysis (specifically, the normalized skewness and kurtosis) to the B03 observed field. Here we restrict ourselves to three MFs generally defined in two-dimensional maps: fraction of area $V_o$, total circumference $V_1$ and Euler characteristic $V_2$. We measure the MFs for CMB temperature maps above the threshold density $v_0$ defined as the temperature fluctuation $f \equiv \Delta T/T$ normalized by its standard deviation $\sigma \equiv \langle f^2 \rangle^{1/2}$. Following the formalism by Matsubara (2003) and Hikage et al. (2006), we can write the analytical formula for the $k$th MF of weakly non-Gaussian fields as

$$V_k(v) = \frac{1}{(2\pi)^{k+1/2}} \frac{\sigma_0}{\omega_0} \frac{\sigma_1}{\sqrt{2\sigma_0}} \frac{1}{k!} e^{-v^2/2}$$

$$\times \left\{ H_{k-1}(v) + \frac{1}{6} \sum_{n=0}^{k} \binom{k}{n} S^{(n)}(v) \right\},$$

where $H_n(v)$ are the Hermite polynomials and $\omega_0 = \pi^{k/2}\Gamma(k/2 + 1)$ gives $\omega_0 = 1$, $\omega_1 = 2$ and $\omega_2 = \pi$. The $S^{(i)}(i=0, 1, 2)$ skewness parameters, defined by

$$S^{(0)} = \frac{\langle f^3 \rangle}{\sigma_0^3},$$

$$S^{(1)} = -\frac{3}{4} \frac{\langle f^2 (\nabla f) \rangle}{\sigma_0^3},$$

$$S^{(2)} = -\frac{3}{2} \frac{\langle (\nabla f \cdot \nabla f) (\nabla^3 f) \rangle}{\sigma_0^5}.$$

The variances $\sigma_j^2$ ($j = 0, 1, 2$) are calculated from $C_j$ as

$$\sigma_j^2 = \frac{1}{4\pi} \sum_{\ell} (2\ell + 1) \langle \ell(\hat{e} \cdot \hat{e}) \rangle C_j W_\ell^2,$$

where $W_\ell$ is a window function that includes the experiment’s effective optical transfer function (assumed circularly symmetric) and low- and high-\ell cut-off as well as the filter function due to pixelization effects. Expanding the skewness parameters into spherical harmonics and using the reduced bispectrum $b_{\ell_1\ell_2\ell_3}$ as a function of $f_{NL}$ (Komatsu & Spergel 2001), we get

$$S^{(0)} = \frac{3}{2\pi \sigma_0} \sum_{\ell_1 \leq \ell_2 \leq \ell_3} l_1 l_2 l_3 b_{\ell_1\ell_2\ell_3} W_{\ell_1} W_{\ell_2} W_{\ell_3},$$

$$S^{(1)} = \frac{3}{8\pi \sigma_0^3} \sum_{\ell_1 \leq \ell_2 \leq \ell_3} \left( \ell_1 (\ell_1 + 1) + \ell_2 (\ell_2 + 1) + \ell_3 (\ell_3 + 1) \right) l_1^2 l_2 l_3 b_{\ell_1\ell_2\ell_3} W_{\ell_1} W_{\ell_2} W_{\ell_3},$$

$$S^{(2)} = \frac{3}{4\pi \sigma_0^5} \sum_{\ell_1 \leq \ell_2 \leq \ell_3} \left( \ell_1 (\ell_1 + 1) + \ell_2 (\ell_2 + 1) - \ell_3 (\ell_3 + 1) \right) l_1^2 l_2 l_3 b_{\ell_1\ell_2\ell_3} W_{\ell_1} W_{\ell_2} W_{\ell_3},$$

where

$$I_{i_1i_2i_3} = \left( \frac{(2i_1 + 1)(2i_2 + 1)(2i_3 + 1)}{4\pi} \right) \begin{pmatrix} i_1 & i_2 & i_3 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix}.$$

In the above theoretical predictions we assume a $\Lambda$CDM model with the cosmological parameters at the maximum likelihood peak from WMAP 1-yr data (Spergel et al. 2003): $\Omega_0 = 0.043$, $\Omega_{\text{cdm}} = 0.21$, $\Omega_\Lambda = 0.74$, $H_0 = 72 \text{ km s}^{-1} \text{ Mpc}^{-1}$, $n_s = 0.96$ and $\tau = 0.11$. The amplitude of primordial fluctuations has been normalized to the first peak amplitude of the temperature power spectrum, $\ell (\ell + 1) C_\ell / (2\pi) = (74.7 \mu K^2)$ at $\ell = 220$ (Page et al. 2003).

We compute the MFs of the pixelized maps by integrating a combination of first and second angular derivatives of the temperature over the sky, as described in appendix A.1. of Hikage et al. (2006). The threshold density $v$ is set in the range $-3.6$ to $3.6$, assuming 19 evenly spaced grid points. For our analysis we use maps at HEALPIX (Górski et al. 2005) resolution of $\sim 13$ arcmin ($N_{\text{side}} = 256$) and $\sim 7$ arcmin ($N_{\text{side}} = 512$).

4 CONSTRAINTS ON PRIMORDIAL NON-GAUSIANITY

We define a ‘joint’ estimator by grouping the $V_i$ values in a single, 57-element data vector $V_J = \{ V_i(v = -3.6), V_i(v = -3.2), \ldots, V_i(v = 3.6), V_i(v = -3.6), \ldots, V_i(v = 3.6) \}$. We now constrain the $f_{NL}$ parameter and estimate its best-fitting value. Starting from analytical formulae we can calculate the non-Gaussian part of the MFs using equation (2), i.e.

$$\Delta V_J(f_{NL}) = V_J(f_{NL}) - V_J(f_{NL} = 0).$$

We can then estimate our final non-Gaussian predictions as

$$\tilde{V}_J(f_{NL}) = V_J(f_{NL} = 0) + \Delta V_J(f_{NL}).$$

where $V_J(f_{NL} = 0)$ is the average MF computed from our Gaussian Monte Carlo simulations. The reason for this choice is that the Monte Carlo average provides an accurate estimate of the MFs, accounting for instrumental and coverage effect. Finally we perform a chi-squared analysis by measuring

$$\chi^2 = \sum_{J,J'} \left( V_J^{B98+B03} - \tilde{V}_J(f_{NL}) \right) C_{J,J'}^{-1} \left( V_{J'}^{B98+B03} - \tilde{V}_{J'}(f_{NL}) \right),$$

where $V_J^{B98+B03}$ denote the MFs for the joint B98 and B03 map. This expression is used to derive constraints for $f_{NL}$ and for our goodness-of-fit analysis. The full covariance matrix $C_{J,J'}$ is also estimated from Gaussian Monte Carlo simulations. We have verified that, when computing its matrix elements, one needs to take into account the correlations among different functionals not to incur in biased constraints. In Fig. 2 we plot each MF of the B98 and B03 data compared with the theoretical predictions with the best-fitting value of $f_{NL}$ for each MF. The error bars are derived as 1$\sigma$ deviations estimated from 1000 Gaussian maps with correlated noise.

We study the effect that neglecting the contribution of a range of multipoles $\ell$ has on this analysis. A low-$\ell$ cut is necessary since we are dealing with data from a suborbital experiment, which has not been designed to measure large angular scales. These cannot be constrained properly, first because of the limited angular extension of the region surveyed, and secondly because timeline filtering is applied to the data to suppress contribution from low-frequency noise and systematics. The filters are applied during the map-making stage at $\sim 70$ mHz both for B03 and B98 (Crill et al. 2003; Masi et al. 2006). While we apply the same filters in our simulations, the amount of low-$\ell$ power in the latter is somewhat different from
those exhibited by the data. This happens because the GLS map maker is more efficient in recovering the large-scale structure from the simulations, where we only add Gaussian noise with random phases, rather than from the data where the noise has a more complex structure. To account for this effect, we exploit one degree of freedom allowed by the harmonic analysis to MF pursued here: specifically, we set to zero all the power in the map below $\ell_{\text{min}}$. The left- to right-hand panels of Fig. 2 refer to three different choices: $\ell_{\text{min}} = 6, 12$ and 20, respectively. The $\ell_{\text{min}} = 6$ cut is the natural one that would arise due to limited sky coverage but in this case the MFs from data and simulations do not agree well for $V_1$ and $V_2$ (see Fig. 2). The agreement is much better for $\ell_{\text{min}} = 12$ and 20 with no appreciable difference between the two. This comes as little surprise, since a telescope scan speed in the range $0.5–1$ dps (both speeds have been employed in the data set we consider) effectively high-pass filters the data in the range $10 \lesssim \ell \lesssim 20$. (Note, however, that timeline filtering has an anisotropic effect on the sky, due to the nature of the scanning strategy employed for BOOMERanG.)

On the other hand, it is advantageous to consider also a high-$\ell$ cut $\ell_{\text{max}}$ to probe how the decreasing S/N level can affect $f_{\text{NL}}$ constraints. For the data, this can be done by varying the HEALPix resolution parameter $N_{\text{side}}$ which is linked to $\ell_{\text{max}}$ in the spherical harmonic transform. We first focus in the following on $N_{\text{side}} = 256$ with $\ell_{\text{max}} = 512$ and $N_{\text{side}} = 512$ with $\ell_{\text{max}} = 1000$; we will then also consider $N_{\text{side}} = 128$ with $\ell_{\text{max}} = 256$. Our data set is signal dominated at $\ell \simeq 500$ while begins to be noise dominated at $\ell \simeq 1000$ (Jones et al. 2006).

In Fig. 3 we show the analytical non-Gaussian corrections $\Delta V_j$ (equation 12) for each MF compared to the residuals obtained by subtracting from the B98/B03 data MFs their Monte Carlo average, that is $V_{j\text{B98+B03}} - \bar{V}_j(f_{\text{NL}} = 0)$. The error bars represent the $1\sigma$ error estimated from 1000 Gaussian Monte Carlo simulations. The analytical residuals are computed using the best-fitting value of $f_{\text{NL}}$ as obtained by minimizing the $\chi^2$ in equation (14), albeit this is done separately for each MF, ignoring (only for the sake of this plot) correlations among different functionals. The analytical $\Delta V_j$ in Fig. 3 are normalized to the maximum of their Gaussian part, while the data points are normalized to the maximum of the Monte Carlo average. We show results both for $N_{\text{side}} = 256$ (left-hand side) and for $N_{\text{side}} = 512$ (right-hand side) and for a low multiple cut at
\[ \ell_{\text{min}} = 6, 12 \text{ and } 20 \] (left- to right-hand side). The agreement of the residual plots suggests that it is safer to adopt the most conservative cut at \( \ell_{\text{min}} = 20 \). This impression is supported by goodness-of-fit analysis. To this purpose, we compute the \( \chi^2 \) value in equation (14) at best-fitting \( f_{\text{NL}} \) (for \( N_{\text{side}} = 512 \)), limiting ourselves to \( V_1 \) and \( V_2 \) that, as the residual plots in Fig. 3 show, are most sensitive to the choice of \( \ell_{\text{min}} \). We find \( \chi^2 \) of 30, 24 and 39 for \( \ell_{\text{min}} = 6, 12 \) and 20, respectively, out of 38 degrees of freedom. In this goodness-of-fit analysis it is essential to take into account the full covariance matrix \( C_{k'k} \) because the estimated values of the MF are significantly coupled. Increasing \( \ell_{\text{min}} \) further does not yield further advantage, so we focus on \( \ell_{\text{min}} = 20 \) for our final analysis. It is worth emphasizing that we apply the harmonic cut to both the data and the simulations.

Table 1 lists the confidence intervals for \( f_{\text{NL}} \) estimated from the BOOMERanG data at different \( \ell_{\text{min}} \) and \( \ell_{\text{max}} \) thresholds. The results are obtained taking into account the full covariance matrix of the \( V_k \) values, as expressed in equation (14). The MFs computed at different \( \text{HEALPix} \) resolution encode different statistical information on the underlying field and thereby combining two sets of MFs improve the limits on \( f_{\text{NL}} \). We build a global covariance matrix to take also into account correlations among the two sets. We repeat this multiresolution analysis for each \( \ell_{\text{min}} \) value considered in Table 1.

Table 2 shows in more detail the confidence intervals obtained using the multiresolution estimator. Here we focus on \( \ell_{\text{min}} = 20 \) and include also results for \( N_{\text{side}} = 128 \) or \( \ell_{\text{max}} = 256 \). At this resolution the signal is markedly suppressed by the coarse pixel window. However, strong noise suppression makes its use still beneficial in a combined multiresolution analysis.

In the conservative case of \( \ell_{\text{min}} = 20 \) using the ‘combined’ estimator for \( N_{\text{side}} = 128, 256 \) and 512, our \( \chi^2 \) analysis yields \(-450 < f_{\text{NL}} < 190 \) at 1\( \sigma \) level and \(-770 < f_{\text{NL}} < 500 \) at 95 per cent CL, while the minimum (best-fitting) value of \( f_{\text{NL}} \) is at \(-130 \).

The previous analysis performed only on the B03 data set (De Troia et al. 2007) produced limits weaker than those obtained in this paper by a factor of \( \simeq 1.45 \). One might wonder whether such an improvement derives mainly from the inclusion of the B98 data.
Table 3. Confidence intervals for $f_{NL}$ estimated separately for B98 and B03, derived $\ell_{\text{min}} = 20$ and two $\ell_{\text{max}}$ choices, as well as for their combined multiresolution analysis (see text). Both 1$\sigma$ and 2$\sigma$ intervals are given.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Data set</th>
<th>$\ell_{\text{max}} = 512$</th>
<th>$\ell_{\text{max}} = 1000$</th>
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set or from the new analysis method employed in this paper. To answer this question, we have analysed the B98 and B03 data sets separately. We find that both B98 and B03 are separately consistent with a null $f_{NL}$ hypothesis, with the confidence intervals shown in Table 3. These results show how the $f_{NL}$ results are completely dominated by the B03 data set. Since the latter is basically the same as that used in De Troia et al. (2007), we conclude that the improvement arises due to the new method of analysis employed. This might sound surprising at first glance: B98 has surveyed a larger sky area, which should help in reducing cosmic variance. However, it did so at the price of a worse S/N with respect to B03. Apparently, achieving excellent S/N is more important for the kind of $f_{NL}$ analysis employed here than enlarging the sky fraction by almost 50 per cent. This conclusion is supported by the poor performance of the $\ell_{\text{max}} = 1000$ results. In fact, the improvement with respect to the De Troia et al. (2007) analysis can be mostly ascribed to the ‘combined’ (multiresolution) approach employed in this paper: the previous analysis was limited to $N_{\text{side}} = 512$. Working with the present method only at the latter resolution, and assuming $\ell_{\text{min}} = 2$ in agreement with what was done in De Troia et al. (2007), we find that the resulting $f_{NL}$ constraints are consistent.

We can also quantify the cost of imposing a low-$\ell$ cut to the data. In fact, had we not considered an effective $\ell_{\text{min}}$ value, one would expect to reduce the confidence interval on $f_{NL}$ by $\gtrsim 1.6$ (cf. the last row in Table 1, obviously obtained not from the data but from a simulation containing a low-resolution pattern). In practice, this could be obtained by adding to the data set a low-resolution CMB field coming e.g. from the WMAP data. While this would give us tighter constraints on $f_{NL}$, we prefer to focus here on the limits one can derive from the BOOMERanG data alone. Note also that a diminished sensitivity to low-resolution features is a characteristic common to most – if not all – of the suborbital experiments. The accurate measurement of the CMB at low and high multipole with one single experiment is rather a prerogative of space-borne missions, which enjoy the necessary stability and long-term integration capability. Our analysis is the first (to our knowledge) to explicitly take into account this effect for a suborbital experiment. To explain the significant broadening of $f_{NL}$ constraints caused by the low-$\ell$ cut, one can note that for the underlying (‘local’) form of non-Gaussianity we are probing here, the low multipoles are actually very important. In fact, most of the signal in the reduced bispectrum $b_{l_{1}l_{2}r_{3}}$ lies in ‘squeezed’ $\ell$-space triangles, with one side much smaller than the other two. When probing non-Gaussianity one is basically comparing signal at the lowest multipole with two of the highest multipoles. As a result, S/N increases as $\ell_{\text{max}}/\ell_{\text{min}}$ so one can either increase $\ell_{\text{max}}$ for a given $\ell_{\text{min}}$ (which explains, e.g. the improvement of WMAP over COBE and the forecasted improvement of Planck over WMAP) or reduce $\ell_{\text{min}}$ for a given $\ell_{\text{max}}$.

We finally discuss the robustness of our analysis to the significant sky cut involved here. Hikage et al. (2008) have shown that the harmonic MF approach can be safely applied over the cut sky assumed for the standard WMAP analysis. However, the mask used here for BOOMERanG is more restrictive. Hence, we have employed a set of non-Gaussian simulations to convince ourselves that the analytical MF predictions are in agreement with simulated results even in the case of BOOMERanG. It turns out that the low-$\ell$ cut $\ell_{\text{min}} = 20$ is beneficial to the agreement, as one would naively expect because only the lowest multipoles are severely affected by the mask. Since the analytical and simulated MF are consistent, the $f_{NL}$ results need to be in agreement as well.

5 CONCLUSIONS

We have analysed data from the BOOMERanG experiment, combining for the first time the temperature maps of the 1998 and 2003 campaigns, to constrain a non-Gaussian primordial component in the observed CMB field. We focused on MFs, comparing the data to analytical perturbative corrections in order to get constraints on the non-linear coupling parameter $f_{NL}$. We have used a set of highly realistic simulation maps of the observed field generated assuming a Gaussian CMB sky, since the formalism we have adopted does not require non-Gaussian simulation maps. We studied the effect that the lack of low-resolution CMB features in the BOOMERanG data has on $f_{NL}$ constraints. We find $-450 < f_{NL} < 190$ at 68 per cent CL and $-770 < f_{NL} < 500$ at 95 per cent CL. These limits are significantly better than those published in a previous analysis limited to the BOOMERanG 2003 data ($-800 < f_{NL} < 1050$ at 95 per cent CL), and represent the best results to date for suborbital experiments and probe angular scales smaller than those accessible to the WMAP.

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