Reversible Space Equals Deterministic Space

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Abstract

This paper describes the simulation of an $S(n)$ space-bounded deterministic Turing machine by a reversible Turing machine operating in space $S(n)$. It thus answers a question posed by Bennett in 1989 and refutes the conjecture, made by Li and Vitanyi in 1996, that any reversible simulation of an irreversible computation must obey Bennett’s reversible pebble game rules.

1 Introduction

A Turing Machine $M$ is reversible iff the infinite graph of all configurations of $M$ has indegree and outdegree one. Interest in reversibility arose at first in connection with the thermodynamics of computation, following Landauer’s demonstration in 1961 that, contrary to earlier intuition (see [Ne66]), physical laws do not preclude using an arbitrarily small amount of energy to perform logically reversible computing steps [La61], see [Fey96, Chapter 5]. More recently, renewed interest in the notion of reversibility was sparked by the prospect of quantum computers, whose observation-free computational steps are intrinsically reversible [De85, Sh94, Br95].

Early strategies to make a Turing machine reversible were terribly wasteful in terms of space: Lecerf’s method [Le63], rediscovered by Bennett [Be73], required space $T$ to simulate a $T(n)$-time $S(n)$-space machine reversibly in time $O(T)$. Bennett then greatly improved on this by reducing the space to $O(S \log T)$ at the expense of an increase in time to $T^{1+\epsilon}$ [Be89]. Levine and Sherman refined the analysis of Bennett’s algorithm and characterized the tradeoff between time and space even more precisely [LeSh90].

Bennett questioned [Be89] whether the reversible simulation of an irreversible computation necessarily incurs a non constant factor increase in space usage. Bennett offered both a pebble game formalizing his intuition that the space increase

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is unavoidable, and a possible source of contrary evidence arising from the surprisingly width-efficient reversible simulations of irreversible circuits. At the 1996 IEEE Computational Complexity conference, Li and Vitanvi took up Bennett’s suggestion and performed an in-depth analysis of Bennett’s pebble game [LiVi96a, LiVi96b]. They proved that any strategy obeying Bennett’s game rules indeed requires the extra $\Omega(\log T)$ multiplicative space factor, and they exhibited a trade-off between the need for extra space and the amount of irreversibility (in the form of irreversibly erased bits) which might be tolerated from the simulation. Li and Vitanvi then conjectured that all reversible simulations of an irreversible computation obey Bennett’s pebble game rules, hence that all such simulations require $\Omega(S \log T)$ space.

Here we refute Li and Vitanvi’s conjecture: Using a strategy which of course does not obey Bennett’s game rules, we reversibly simulate irreversible space $S$ computations in space $S$. Our strategy is the extreme opposite of Lererf’s “space-hungry” method: While we scrupulously preserve space, time becomes exponential in $S$. We offer two reasons to justify interest in such a “time-hungry” method. First, the new method is proof that Bennett’s game rules do not capture all strategies, leaving open the possibility that, unobstructed by Li and Vitanvi’s lower bounds, more efficient reversible simulations of irreversible computation should exist. Secondly, for problems in DSPACE$(\log)$, Bennett’s simulation uses space $(\log^2)$, while our new method uses only $\log n$ space and polynomial time. This could be interesting in the context of quantum computing, for then, space seems to be more of a concern than time. (Storing many entangled qubits seems more difficult than applying basic unitary transformations.)

As a side effect, our result implies the reversible $O(S^2(n))$ space simulation of NSPACE$(S(n))$ by Crescenzi and Papadimitriou [CrPa95].

Section 2 in this paper contains preliminaries and discusses the notion of reversibility. Section 3 presents our main result, first in detail in the context of linear space, and then in the more general context of any space bound. Section 4 concludes with a discussion.

2 Preliminaries

We assume familiarity with basic notions of complexity theory such as can be found in [HoUl79]. We refer to the finite set of states of a Turing machine as to its set of “local states”. Turing machine tapes extend infinitely to the right, and unused tape squares contain the blank symbol $B$. We assume that, when computing a function $f$ on input $x$, a Turing machine halts in a unique final configuration.

2.1 Reversible Turing machines

If a Turing machine $M$ is deterministic, then each node in the configuration graph of $M$ has outdegree at most one. A deterministic TM is reversible if this restriction holds also for the indegree.
Definition. A Turing machine is reversible iff the infinite graph of $M$'s configurations, in which an arc $(C, C')$ indicates that $M$ can go from configuration $C$ to configuration $C'$ in a single transition, has indegree and outdegree at most one. 

The above definition of reversibility does not address the question of whether the reverse computation necessarily halts. The usual assumption, sometimes implicitly made, is that the reverse computation is required to halt. But one could also consider a weaker notion of reversibility in which the reverse computation may run forever. In the sequel, we enforce halting of the reverse computations, unless we explicitly state otherwise.

Without restricting its computational power, we can separate in a deterministic machine the actions of moving and writing. A transition is either moving (i.e. the tape head moves), or stationary. Each moving transition must be oblivious (i.e. it depends only on the local state and not on the symbol read from the tape). That is, a moving transition has the form $p \rightarrow q, \pm 1$ meaning that from state $p$ the machine makes one step to the right (+1) resp. to the left (-1) and changes into state $q$ without reading or writing any tape cell. A stationary (or writing) transition has the form $p, a \rightarrow q, b$ meaning that in state $p$ the machine overwrites an $a$ by a $b$ and changes into state $q$ without moving the head.

Following Bennett [Be89], we impose the following restrictions on the transitions of a Turing machine with separated moving and writing steps and claim that these are sufficient to imply reversibility. We require that no pair of transitions intersect, in the following sense. We say that two stationary transitions intersect if their execution leaves the machine in the same local state with the same symbol under the tape head. We say that two moving transitions intersect if they lead from different local states to the same local state. Finally, we say that a stationary transition and a moving transition intersect if they lead to the same local state.

We can extend these syntactic restrictions on the transitions of a machine to the case of a multi-tape machine, but these become trickier to describe. Intuitively however, we only require that the local state and symbols under the heads uniquely determine the most recent transition.

2.2 Computing functions reversibly

Unlike in the deterministic computation of a function $f$ on input $x$, the tape content beyond the value of $f(x)$ at the end of a reversible computation is a concern. In any reversible computation model (even other than Turing machines), one must know the content of a memory cell in order to use this cell in some useful computation later. This is because erasing is a fundamentally irreversible action. Since spoiled memory is no longer useful, it is important that the memory be restored to its initial state at the end of a reversible computation.

Two notions of memory "cleanliness" have been studied in the literature: These correspond to input-saving and to input-erasing Turing machines [Be89]. In an input-saving computation, the final tape content includes $x$ as well as $f(x)$. In an input-erasing computation, only $f(x)$ remains on the tape.
In this paper, we observe that reversibly computing an arbitrary function $f$ in an input-erasing way is possible, without first embedding $f$ in an injective function. When discussing space bounds that are at least linear, we thus adopt the input-erasing mode of computing $f$, even when $f$ is arbitrary. Our reversible machine on input $x$ potentially cycles through all the inverse images of $f(x)$: the lack of injectivity of $f$ only translates into the fact that the machine cannot tell which of these inverse images was its actual input $x$. (This is no problem in the weak model of reversibility which allows the reverse computation to run forever. In the stronger model, care is needed, as explained at the end of the next section.) When discussing sublinear space bounds, we are forced to equip our Turing machines with a read-only input tape, which in effect implies the input-saving mode of computation.

3 Main result

In Section 3.1, we prove in detail that bijective functions computable in space $n$ can be computed reversibly with no additional space. Then, in Section 3.2, we generalize our simulation to the cases of non-bijective functions, and of general (even non-constructive) space bounds.

3.1 Bijective linear-space computable functions

**Theorem 3.1** Any bijective function computed in space equal to the input length can be computed reversibly in the same space.

**Proof.** We begin by describing the idea intuitively. As with Bennett’s reversible simulations of irreversible computations, our high level strategy is simple, but care is needed when filling in the details because the syntactic conditions required at the transition function level can be tricky to enforce and verify.

The main idea for simulating a machine without using more space is to reversibly cycle through the configuration tree of the machine. For our purposes, it will suffice to consider the configuration tree as an undirected tree, in which each edge is duplicated. We will then in effect perform an Euler tour of the resulting tree. A similar technique was used by Sipser [Si80] to simulate an $S(n)$ space-bounded Turing machine by another $S(n)$ space-bounded machine which never loops on a finite amount of tape.

Let $G_\infty(M)$ be the infinite configuration graph of a single worktape linear space deterministic Turing machine $M$. Write $C_0(w) = (B_{q_{0^+}}) \uparrow w_1 \downarrow w_2 \cdots \uparrow w_n \downarrow$ for the initial configuration of $M$ on input $w = w_1 w_2 \cdots w_n \in \Sigma^*$, that is, the local initial state of $M$ is $q_{0^+}$, $M$’s input is placed between a left marker $\uparrow$ and a right marker $\downarrow$, and the tape head of $M$ is initially scanning a blank symbol $B$ immediately to the left of the left marker (these initial conditions are chosen for convenience later). By convention, $M$ on input $w$ will eventually halt in a unique local state with $B \uparrow f(w) \downarrow$ on its tape. Consider the weakly connected component\(^1\) $G_w$ of $G_\infty(M)$ which contains $C_0(w)$.

\(^1\)Induced by the connected component in the associated undirected graph.
and which contains no configuration of $M$ using more than linear space between the left and right markers. Without loss of generality we make the following assumptions concerning $M$ and $G_w$:

- $M$'s first transition from $q_0^\rightarrow$ is a right head motion into local state $q_0$, and from then on, $M$ never moves to the left of $\|$.
- $M$ never moves to the right of $\|$, hence the finite graph $G_w$ contains all the relevant configurations of $M$ on input $w$.
- The indegree of $C_0(w)$ is zero. This is done by preventing the deterministic machine $M$ from ever transiting back into its initial local state $q_0^\rightarrow$.
- The outdegree of any final configuration of $M$ is zero.
- $G_w$ contains no directed cycle. In other words, we assume that $M$'s computation on $w$ necessarily ends in a final configuration. Note that some linear space configurations of $M$ could participate in directed cycles, but that these could not be weakly connected to $C_0(w)$.
- $G_w$ is acyclic even when its arcs are replaced by (undirected) edges. This follows from our previous assumption because $M$ is deterministic and hence the directed $G_w$ has outdegree one.

We think of $G_w$ as a tree with a final configuration as root at the bottom, and with $C_0(w)$ as one of its leaves on top. Observe that the irreversibility of $M$ translates precisely into the fact that $G_w$ is a tree and not simply a line. Our idea is to design a reversible Turing machine $R$ whose configurations on input $w$ will form a line, which will include, among other configurations, a representation of sufficiently many configurations of $G_w$ to reach the final configuration of $M$ in $G_w$. An obvious idea to design such an $R$ is to have $R$ perform an Euler tour of $G_w$ (more precisely, of the undirected tree obtained from $G_w$ by replacing each directed arc by two undirected edges). The difficulty is to ensure reversibility of $R$ at the transition function level.

To simplify the presentation of the machine $R$, we will make use of a construction developed in [CoMc87] for the purpose of showing that permutation representation problems are logspace-complete. We now recall this construction by an example. Denote by $T$ the tree with nodes $\{1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7\}$ and with edges $\{a, b, c, d, e, f\}$ depicted on Figure 1. $|\Omega_T|$ equals twice the number of edges in the tree, Let $\Omega_T = \{e_1, e_3, f_2, f_1, b_3, b_6, c_4, c_6, d_5, d_6, a_6, a_7\}$ be the set of “edge ends”. Note that each edge has two “ends”, hence $|\Omega_T|$ equals twice the number of edges in the tree. Two permutations on $\Omega_T$ will be constructed. We first construct the “rotation permutation” $\pi_T$. To define $\pi_T$, fix, locally at each node $N$ in the tree, an arbitrary ordering of the “edge ends incident with $N$”. Then let $\pi_T$ be the product, over each node $N$, of a cycle permuting the edge ends incident with $N$ according to this
ordering. In our example,

$$\pi_T = (b_3 e_3)(c_4 f_1)(a_6 b_5 c_5 d_5),$$

where we have chosen the alphabetical ordering of the incident edges as the local ordering at each node. We then construct the “swap permutation” $$\sigma_T$$, defined simply as a product of as many transpositions as there are edges in $$T$$:

$$\sigma_T = (e_1 e_3)(f_2 f_1)(b_3 b_5)(c_4 c_5)(d_5 d_6)(a_6 a_7).$$

Our interest lies in the permutation $$\pi_T \sigma_T = (e_1 e_3 b_6 c_4 f_2 a_6 d_5 d_6 a_7 a_6 b_3)$$. Although we have described the construction of $$\pi_T$$ and $$\sigma_T$$ in the context of a simple example, the construction as it applies to a general tree $$T$$ should be clear. Among the properties of $$\pi_T \sigma_T$$ proved in [CoMc87], we will only make use of the property that $$\pi_T \sigma_T$$ is a single cycle which includes precisely all the elements in $$\Omega_T$$. Our reversible Turing machine $$R$$ will simulate the computation of $$\pi_{G_w} \sigma_{G_w}$$. In this way, $$R$$ will traverse the computation tree of $$M$$ on input $$w$$, by traversing the cycle $$\pi_{G_w} \sigma_{G_w}$$ (reversibly, $$\pi_{G_w} \sigma_{G_w}$$ being a permutation of $$\Omega_{G_w}$$). Since the unique final configuration of $$M$$ present in $$G_w$$ is necessarily the final configuration reached by $$M$$ on input $$w$$, $$R$$ can reach the same final decision as that reached by $$M$$ on input $$w$$.

In terms of the above construction, we now complete the description of the reversible machine $$R$$ simulating the reversible machine $$M$$ computing a bijective function $$f : \Sigma^* \rightarrow \Sigma^*$$ in linear space. We assume that $$R$$’s input tape is also $$R$$’s (only) worktape. The initial configuration of $$R$$ will have $$B \uparrow w \uparrow$$ on its tape, with $$R$$’s tape head under the leftmost $$B$$, and the final configuration of $$R$$ will have $$B \uparrow f(w) \uparrow$$ on its tape.

To simplify the exposition of our construction, we further assume that the moving steps of $$M$$ are distinguishable syntactically from the writing steps of $$M$$, and that these alternate. In other words, the state set of $$M$$ consists in a set $$Q$$ of stationary states together with two disjoint copies of $$Q$$, denoted $$Q^-$$ and $$Q^+$$, such that the

Figure 1: Example
transition function \( \delta \) imposes an alternation between moving steps and stationary steps. Specifically, \( \delta(q,a) \in (Q^+ \cup Q^-) \times \Gamma \) for each \( q \in Q \) and \( a \in \Gamma \), and for all \( q \in Q \) we have \( \delta(q^+) = q, +1 \) as well as \( \delta(q^-) = q, -1 \); hence, in a moving step, there is no “real” change of state. In the sequel we use names like \( p \) or \( q' \) to denote elements of \( Q \).

Our reversible algorithm consists in iterating an “Euler stage”, which we now describe. The simple setup of this process will be discussed afterwards. We first describe the local state set of \( R \). The basic local states of \( R \) will consist in three components:

First component: symbol \( \sigma \) (for swap) or \( \pi \) (for rotation) indicating which of the two permutations between edge ends is to be applied next.

Third component: symbol \( s \) or \( t \) indicating whether it is the source or the target of the current directed edge, in the configuration tree \( G_w \), which is the current edge end.

Second component: piece of local information which, together with the current tape of \( R \) and the third component just described, uniquely identifies the current directed edge (and thus the current edge end). This second component is an ordered pair of items, each item itself a state-symbol pair. The first item in the ordered pair pertains to the source configuration of the directed edge. The second item pertains to the target configuration of the directed edge. Redundancy is built into this representation in order to simplify our construction. The specifics of the second component are given below. A stationary (resp. moving) edge is an edge out of a configuration of \( M \) in which the state is stationary (resp. moving):

- **Second component, for a stationary directed edge.** A stationary transition will be represented by the second component \( [q b, q'] \) (resp. \( [q b, q'] \)), indicating that \( M \) in state \( q \) reading \( b \) would replace \( b \) with \( b' \) and enter state \( q' \) (resp. \( q' \)). In both configurations of \( M \) participating in this transition, the head position is that of the head of \( R \), and the tape symbols away from the head of \( M \) are given by the corresponding symbols away from the head of \( R \).

- **Second component, for a moving directed edge.** Recall that \( M \) alternates between moving and stationary states. A moving transition would thus be represented by a second component \( [q^+ a, q b] \) or \( [q^- a, q b] \) indicating that \( M \) in state \( q^+ \) (resp. \( q^- \)) positioned over a symbol \( a \) moves (without reading the \( a \)) one cell to the left (resp. right) which contains a \( b \). The representation is completed by equating the head position of \( M \) and the symbols away from the head of \( M \), in the current edge end (specified by the third component of the basic state of \( R \)), to the head position of \( R \) and the symbols away from the head of \( R \).
This completes the description of the basic local states of $R$. Additional auxiliary states will be introduced as needed in the course of the construction.

**Euler stage:** At the beginning of an Euler stage, $R$ internally represents some edge end $ee \in \Omega_{G_w}$. The goal of the stage is to replace $ee$ with $\sigma_{G_w}(\pi_{G_w}(ee))$. This is done in two substages distinguishing between the swapping of edge ends by $\sigma$ and the rotation of edge ends around a configuration by $\pi$. In the following we will consider the cases where no left or right endmarker is involved. The appropriate changes to deal with these are straightforward\(^2\).

**Part 1:** Realization of $\sigma$.

**Case 1:** Moving edges. The $\sigma$-permutation of an end of a moving edge simply requires exchanging $s$ and $t$ to reflect the fact that the ends (of the directed edge which itself remains the same) are swapped, and performing a head motion to maintain the correct representation of the edge. When the current edge end is the source of the edge, the head motion is that made when $M$ traverses the edge. When the current edge end is the target of the edge, the direction of the move is reversed:

\[
\begin{align*}
\langle \sigma, [q^{-}a, qb], s \rangle &\rightarrow \langle \pi, [q^{-}a, qb], t \rangle, -1 \\
\langle \sigma, [q^{-}a, qb], s \rangle &\rightarrow \langle \pi, [q^{-}a, qb], t \rangle, +1 \\
\langle \sigma, [q^{-}a, qb], t \rangle &\rightarrow \langle \pi, [q^{-}a, qb], s \rangle, +1 \\
\langle \sigma, [q^{-}a, qb], t \rangle &\rightarrow \langle \pi, [q^{-}a, qb], s \rangle, -1 \\
\end{align*}
\]

**Case 2:** Stationary edges. The $\sigma$-permutation of either end of a stationary edge of $M$ results in a stationary transition of $R$. Note that this is the only situation in which $R$ actually modifies its tape:

\[
\begin{align*}
\langle \sigma, [qb, q^{+}b'], s \rangle, b &\rightarrow \langle \pi, [qb, q^{+}b'], t \rangle, b' \\
\langle \sigma, [qb, q^{+}b'], s \rangle, b &\rightarrow \langle \pi, [qb, q^{+}b'], t \rangle, b' \\
\langle \sigma, [qb, q^{+}b'], t \rangle, b' &\rightarrow \langle \pi, [qb, q^{+}b'], s \rangle, b \\
\langle \sigma, [qb, q^{+}b'], t \rangle, b' &\rightarrow \langle \pi, [qb, q^{+}b'], s \rangle, b \\
\end{align*}
\]

**Part 2:** Realization of $\pi$. While realizing the permutation $\sigma$ was very easy, the construction for $\pi$ is more involved. In a way similar to above, here we distinguish between rotating around a moving edge end (i.e. an edge end containing a moving state), and rotating around a stationary edge end.

**Case 1:** Rotation around moving configurations. We only treat the case of a right-moving state $q^{+} \in Q^{+}$. The left-moving case is dual. Rotation around a right-moving configuration involves the source end $q^{-}b'$ of the second component $[q^{+}b', q'c]$ of a basic state of $R$, if $c$ is the tape symbol to the right of $b'$, and it also involves the $k$ edges $[qb_i, q^{-}b'], 1 \leq i \leq k$. Here $(qb_i)_{1 \leq i \leq k}$ is the ordered sequence of all possible predecessors of $q^{+}b'$ w.r.t. $\delta$ (see Figure 2). Observe that $k = 0$ is possible. We then define the steps of $R$ in the following way:

\(^2\)For example, the assumption that $M$ never moves to the right of $\overline{z}$ implies that, when the $b$ depicted on the right hand side diagram of Figure 2 equals $\overline{z}$, $R$ must be defined as if the transition from $q^{-}c$ to $qb$ were absent. This is required in order to prevent $R$ from wandering away into an irrelevant and potentially infinite part of the configuration graph of $M$.\]
Figure 2: The cases arising in PART 2, handling the $\pi$-permutation (rotation). The diagram on the left depicts a rotation around a moving configuration. The diagram on the right depicts a rotation around a stationary configuration having a successor.

**Subcase 1.1**: $k = 0$. Then the single incident edge end remains unchanged:

$$\langle \pi, [q' \rightarrow b', q' c], s \rangle, b' \rightarrow \langle \sigma, [q' \rightarrow b', q' c], s \rangle, b'$$

**Subcase 1.2**: $k \geq 1$. We cycle through all target edge ends of edges originating from predecessors of $q' \rightarrow b'$, all the way down to the target edge end of the edge from $q_1 b_1$. The latter is mapped to the edge end of the edge leading from configuration $q' \rightarrow b'$ to its successor, which in turn is mapped to the target edge end of the edge leading from $q_k b_k$ to $q' \rightarrow b'$. To realize this, we need some auxiliary states which are named according to our case analysis.

**Group 1.1**: This group of instructions implements the core of the Euler tour idea, in that it is precisely here that a forward computation of the deterministic machine $M$ is changed into a backward computation. For each “inner” edge end $q_i b_i$, $2 \leq i \leq k$ we set:

$$\langle \pi, [q_i b_i, q' \rightarrow b'], t \rangle, b' \rightarrow \langle \sigma, [q_{i-1} b_{i-1}, q' \rightarrow b'], t \rangle, b'$$

**Group 1.2**: The “edge end” $q_1 b_1$ is mapped to the “successor edge end”:

$$\langle \pi, [q_1 b_1, q' \rightarrow b'], t \rangle \rightarrow \langle 1.2.1, q' \rightarrow b', +1 \rangle$$

$$\langle 1.2.1, q' \rightarrow b', c \rangle \rightarrow \langle 1.2.2, q' \rightarrow b', c \rangle, c$$

$$\langle 1.2.2, q' \rightarrow b', c \rangle \rightarrow \langle \sigma, [q' \rightarrow b', q' c], s \rangle, -1$$

**Group 1.3**: The “successor edge end” is mapped to the edge end of the edge
from the last predecessor $q_k b_k$:

$\langle \sigma, [q^{-} b', q' c], s \rangle \rightarrow \langle \iota1.3.1, q^{-}, b', c \rangle, +1$

$\langle \iota1.3.1, q^{-} b', c \rangle, c \rightarrow \langle \iota1.3.2, q^{-} b' \rangle, c$

$\langle \iota1.3.2, q^{-} b' \rangle \rightarrow \langle \sigma, [q_k b_k, q^{-} b'], t \rangle, -1$

**Case 2:** Rotation around stationary configurations. We only define the transitions below for $q \in Q$ and $b \in \Gamma$ such that $\delta(q, b)$ is defined and $b$ is not an endmarker (the Euler tours of inaccessible portions of the configuration graph of $M$ may thus get broken up into incomplete segments). Then there are precisely three edge ends incident with $qb$, corresponding to the successor edge and to the two predecessor edges induced by $q^{-}$ and $q^{-}$ (see Figure 2). We map the target corresponding to the predecessor $q^{-}$ to the target corresponding to the predecessor $q^{-}$:

**Group 2.1** :

$\langle \pi, [q^{-} c, q b], t \rangle \rightarrow \langle \iota2.1.1, q, b, c \rangle, +1$

$\langle \iota2.1.1, q, b, c \rangle, c \rightarrow \langle \iota2.1.2, q, b \rangle, c$

$\langle \iota2.1.2, q, b \rangle \rightarrow \langle \iota2.1.3, q, b \rangle, -1$

$\langle \iota2.1.3, q, b \rangle \rightarrow \langle \iota2.1.4, q, b \rangle, -1$

$\langle \iota2.1.4, q, b, a \rangle \rightarrow \langle \iota2.1.5, q, b, a, a \rangle$

$\langle \iota2.1.5, q, b, a \rangle \rightarrow \langle \sigma, [q^{-} a, q b], t \rangle, +1$

Let $\delta(q, b) = (q^{-}, b')$ (resp. $\delta(q, b) = (q^{-}, b')$) for some $b' \in \Gamma$ and some $q' \in Q$. Group 2.2 maps the target end of the edge from the predecessor $q^{-} a$ to the source edge end of the edge towards the successor $q^{-} b'$ (resp. $q^{-} b'$):

**Group 2.2** :

$\langle \pi, [q^{-} a, q b], t \rangle \rightarrow \langle \iota2.2.1, q, a, b \rangle, -1$

$\langle \iota2.2.1, q, a, b \rangle, a \rightarrow \langle \iota2.2.2, q, b \rangle, a$

$\langle \iota2.2.2, q, b \rangle \rightarrow \langle \sigma, [q b, q^{-} b'], s \rangle, +1$

(resp. $\langle \iota2.2.2, q, b \rangle \rightarrow \langle \sigma, [q b, q^{-} b'], s \rangle, +1$)

**Group 2.3** finally maps the source edge end of the “successor edge” to the target edge end of the edge from $q^{-}$:

**Group 2.3** :

$\langle \pi, [q b, q^{-} b'], s \rangle \rightarrow \langle \iota2.3.3, q, b \rangle, +1$

(resp. $\langle \pi, [q b, q^{-} b'], s \rangle \rightarrow \langle \iota2.3.3, q, b \rangle, +1$)

$\langle \iota2.3.3, q, b, c \rangle \rightarrow \langle \iota2.3.4, q, b, c \rangle, c$

$\langle \iota2.3.4, q, b, c \rangle \rightarrow \langle \sigma, [q c, q b], t \rangle, -1$

**SETUP:** Our Turing machine input conventions and the assumption made about $M$’s first transition were chosen in such a way as to yield a sufficient amount of
information to determine an initial local state of $R$ which, together with $R$'s initial
tape content, correctly represents an accessible edge end of $M$ on input $w$. Given
the choices made, "setting up" then merely reduces to defining the initial local state
of $R$ as $(\sigma, [q_0^B, B, g_0^I], s)$.

**TERMINATION:** $R$ halts when the current edge end involves the unique final
local state $q_f$ of $M$. This necessarily happens. (To see this, note that by [CoMc87],
an edge into the unique final configuration of $M$ necessarily becomes the current
edge at some time $t$ during the computation of $R$. Now suppose that the current
dge *end* of the current edge at time $t$ does not involve $q_f$. Either the permutation
simulated at time $t - 1$ was the swap permutation $\sigma$, or the permutation to be applied
at time $t$ is $\sigma$. In the former case, the current edge end at time $t - 1$ must have
involved $q_f$, and in the latter case, the current edge end at time $t + 1$ will involve
$q_f$.) In this way, $R$ cuts out of the Euler tour on $G_w$ the chain beginning at the
initial configuration of $M$ and ending at the (unique) configuration in $G_w$ without
a successor which marks the end of the computation of $M$.

It can be (somewhat tediously) checked that the machine $R$ constructed above
satisfies Bennett's local reversibility conditions, implying that $R$ is reversible. This
completes the proof of Theorem 3.1. \[\footnote{1} \]

**3.2 Generalizations**

The proof of Theorem 3.1 does not rely on the injectivity of the function being
computed, as we now argue in the case of the weak model of reversibility allowing
reverse computations to run forever:

**Corollary 3.2** Any function computable in space $n$ can be computed in space $n$ with
a reversible TM.

**Proof.** Recall the proof of Theorem 3.1. The potential difficulty which now arises
is that $G_w$, and hence also the Euler tour of $G_w$, will in general contain more than
one legal initial configuration of $M$ (i.e. $R$ may traverse more than one configuration
of $M$ of the form $(B^B, \dagger x \dagger$ for some string $x$). But such configurations are handled
just like many other indegree-zero nodes in $G_w$ (for example, when realizing the
rotation $\pi$ around $(B^B, \dagger x \dagger$, the case $k = 0$ in the left part of Figure 2 applies).
Hence, having many initial configurations affects neither the reversibility of $R$, nor
the reachability by $R$ of the unique final configuration of $M$ on input $w$. The only
consequence of the non-injectivity is that, upon halting, $R$ has lost track of $w$, and
hence, of the true initial configuration from which it started. \[\footnote{1} \]

We can also adapt the above simulation to the case of general (non linear and
not necessarily constructible) space bounds. We make use of the standard technique
for avoiding constructibility, as applied for example by Sipser [Si80]:

**Theorem 3.3** Any function $f$ computable irreversibly in space $S(n)$ can be com-
puted by a reversible Turing machine in the same space.
Proof. Recall the proof of Theorem 3.1. To meaningfully discuss non-constructible space bounds, we must drop the assumption that the space allotted to the irreversible machine \( M \) is delimited by a right marker \( \dagger \). Hence \( M \)'s initial configuration \( C_0(w) \) on input \( w \) is now \( (B_{q_0}) \dagger w \), and \( G_w \) is defined as the weakly connected component containing \( C_0(w) \) and pruned of any configuration of \( M \) which uses more than \( S(|w|) \) space. We maintain all other assumptions on \( M \) however, in particular, those involving the left marker \( \ddagger \), the initial state \( q_0^\dagger \), and the acyclicity of \( G_w \). Finally, we maintain \( R \)'s input convention\(^3\), that is, \( R \)'s initial configuration includes the right marker \( \dagger \).

Then, \( R \) will proceed initially exactly as in Theorem 3.1, under the tentative assumption that \( M \) will never move past the first blank to the right of its input (\( R \) remembers the position of this blank using its own right marker \( \ddagger \)). If \( R \)'s tentative assumption is correct, then \( R \) completes the simulation as in Theorem 3.1. Otherwise, at some point, \( M \) attempts to “overwrite \( R \)'s right marker”. In that case, \( R \) considers \( M \)'s transition as undefined, but \( R \) does not halt. \( R \) instead remembers that this has occurred, bounces back from this dead end\(^4\), and carries on until some initial configuration of \( M \), which may or may not be the initial configuration of \( M \) on \( w \), is encountered (i.e. until some current edge end is found to involve \( q_0^\dagger \)). At this point, \( R \) shifts its right marker \( \dagger \) one square to the right, and proceeds under the revised assumption that \( M \) will not exceed the new space bound (now enlarged by one).

Although \( R \) periodically restarts its computation (progressively enlarging its allotted space) from an initial configuration which may or may not be legal and which may or may not correspond to the “true” initial configuration of \( M \) on \( w \), we claim that \( R \) eventually computes \( f(w) \) correctly. This is because any one of the initial configurations encountered, while \( R \) unsuccessfully operated within a given space bound, necessarily led \( M \) to the same fateful configuration in which \( M \) tried to “write over \( R \)'s right marker” for the first time within that round. Hence, all these initial configurations, upon restarting with a larger allotted space, lead \( M \) to the common fateful configuration (which now has a valid successor). All these initial configurations thus eventually lead \( M \) to the same final \( f(w) \). Hence \( R \) computes \( f(w) \) correctly, and thus, obviously, within space \( S(|w|) \).

We leave the detailed verification that \( R \) is reversible to the reader. This completes the proof. \( \blacksquare \)

Remark. Theorem 3.3 applies as well when the machine is equipped with a read-only input tape (implying that the input-saving mode of computation is used), in which case we can assume for example that a work tape contains \( B \dagger \ddagger \) initially. A read-only input tape is required, for example, to meaningfully discuss sublinear space bounds. Hence, the results of Theorem 3.3 hold as well when \( S(n) \) is sublinear, and in particular, when the space bound is \( \log n \).

\(^3\)The reader should not be alarmed by the fact that \( M \) and \( R \) have different input conventions; a superficially different convention, common to both machines, could be devised.

\(^4\)In other words, the edge just traversed, leading to \( q_b \) on the right hand side diagram of Figure 2, is considered as the only edge into \( q_b \).
Remark. To fulfill the claim that we refute Li and Vitanyi’s conjecture, we must use the same model of reversibility as they. Hence we must justify that Corollary 3.2 and Theorem 3.3 hold in the stronger model in which reverse computations are required to halt. Corollary 3.2 and Theorem 3.3 do hold in the stronger model, when the input-saving mode is used, because the reverse computation can then detect the forward computation’s initial configuration. This completely takes cares of sublinear space bounds. For space bounds $S(n) \geq n$, in the input-erasing mode, we arrange for the reversible machine operating on a length-$n$ input to count, during the Euler tour, the number of initial configurations encountered involving inputs of length $n$. The reverse computation then decreases this counter, and halts when the counter reaches zero. This counting requires an additional $\log n$ bits to store the length of the input and some further bits to represent the counter. Since the number of initial configurations counted is at most $2^n$, this counting incurs an additive space cost of at most $\log n + n$, which is within $O(S(n))$.

In combination with Savitch’s theorem, our result implies the reversible simulation of nondeterministic space by Crescenzi and Papadimitriou:

**Corollary 3.4** [CrPa95] Any language in $\text{NSPACE}(S(n))$ is accepted by a reversible $\text{TM}$ using $O(S^2(n))$ space. ■

4 Discussion

In this paper we showed determinism to coincide with reversibility for space. Meanwhile, the relativization results of Frank and Ammer suggest that deterministic computation cannot reversibly be simulated within the same time and space bounds if the time is neither linear nor exponential in the space [FrAm97].

It is interesting to compare our result with the equivalence of deterministic time and reversible time, which is simply shown by storing the whole computational history on a separate write-only tape [Le63, Be89]. It is remarkable that this is the very same construction which proves the equivalence of nondeterministic time and symmetric$^5$ time [LePa82]. This duality of the pairs nondeterminism versus symmetry and determinism versus reversibility is tied to the question of whether transitions can be regarded as directed or as undirected: This makes no difference if the indegree of every configuration is at most one.

The duality mentioned above and our new results point to the question of the relationship between nondeterministic space and symmetric space. In this case however, some recent results like the inclusion of symmetric logspace in parity logspace, $\text{SC}^2$, or $\text{DSPACE}(\log^{1/3} n)$ [KaWi93, Ni92, ArTaWiZh97] suggest that the computational power of nondeterministic space and symmetric space differ.

We mention in passing that in the case of time bounded auxiliary pushdown automata the situation is the opposite. While nondeterminism and symmetry coincide

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$^5$A nondeterministic machine is symmetric if each transition can be done in both directions: forward and backward.
for these devices, there seems to be no obvious way to simulate determinism in a reversible way [Alla97].

Finally, we would like to mention that a further obvious consequence of our result is the observation that there are no space-bounded one-way functions.

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References


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