

The skein algebra of the 4-punctured sphere from curve counting

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Greater Washington Topology Seminar
October 23, 2020

- Talk based on the recent preprint [arXiv:2009.02266](https://arxiv.org/abs/2009.02266).
- Main result: proof of a conjecture in the paper "On multiplying curves in the Kauffman bracket skein algebra of the thickened four-holed sphere" (Bakshi, Mukherjee, Przytycki, Silvero, Wang, 2018) on the positivity of some basis of the Kauffman bracket skein algebra of the 4-punctured sphere.
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- Skein algebras of topological surfaces.
- Conjectural positive bases of skein algebras.
- Results for the skein algebra of the 4-punctured sphere (and of the 1-punctured torus).
- Algorithm: scattering diagrams and broken lines for the skein algebra of the 4-punctured sphere.
- The "quantum mirror" of the cubic surface (computations in higher genus log Gromov-Witten theory).

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- The Kauffman bracket skein module (Przytycki, Turaev, 1988) of an oriented 3-manifold \mathbb{M} is the $\mathbb{Z}[A^{\pm}]$ -module generated by isotopy classes of framed links in \mathbb{M} satisfying the skein relations

$$\begin{array}{c} \diagup \diagdown \\ \diagdown \diagup \end{array} = A \begin{array}{c} \diagdown \diagup \\ \diagup \diagdown \end{array} + A^{-1} \begin{array}{c} \diagup \diagdown \\ \diagup \diagdown \end{array} \quad \text{and} \quad L \cup \bigcirc = -(A^2 + A^{-2}) L.$$

- The diagrams in each relation indicate framed links that can be isotoped to identical embeddings except within the neighborhood shown, where the framing is vertical.
- The skein module of $\mathbb{M} = \mathbb{R}^3$ is $\mathbb{Z}[A^{\pm}]$ (generated by the empty link). The class of a framed link $L \subset \mathbb{R}^3$ in $\mathbb{Z}[A^{\pm}]$ is the Kauffman bracket polynomial of L (equivalent to the Jones polynomial).

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- Given an oriented 2-manifold \mathbb{S} , one can define a natural algebra structure on the Kauffmann bracket skein module of the 3-manifold $\mathbb{M} := \mathbb{S} \times (-1, 1)$: given two framed links L_1 and L_2 in $\mathbb{S} \times (-1, 1)$, and viewing the interval $(-1, 1)$ as a vertical direction, the product $L_1 L_2$ is defined by placing L_1 on top of L_2 .
- We denote by $\text{Sk}_A(\mathbb{S})$ the resulting associative $\mathbb{Z}[A^\pm]$ -algebra with unit. The skein algebra $\text{Sk}_A(\mathbb{S})$ is in general non-commutative.

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- We consider the case where \mathbb{S} is the complement $\mathbb{S}_{g,\ell}$ of a finite number ℓ of points in a compact oriented 2-manifold of genus g .
- A multicurve on $\mathbb{S}_{g,\ell}$ is the union of finitely many disjoint compact connected embedded 1-dimensional submanifolds of $\mathbb{S}_{g,\ell}$ such that none of them bounds a disc in $\mathbb{S}_{g,\ell}$. Identifying $\mathbb{S}_{g,\ell}$ with $\mathbb{S}_{g,\ell} \times \{0\} \subset \mathbb{S}_{g,\ell} \times (-1, 1)$, a multicurve on $\mathbb{S}_{g,\ell}$ endowed with the vertical framing naturally defined a framed link in $\mathbb{S}_{g,\ell} \times (-1, 1)$.

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Isotopy classes of multicurves form a basis of $\text{Sk}_A(\mathbb{S}_{g,\ell})$ as $\mathbb{Z}[A^\pm]$ -module.

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The skein algebra as deformation quantization of the SL_2 character variety

- $\text{Ch}_{SL_2}(\mathbb{S}_{g,\ell})$: the SL_2 -character variety of the $\mathbb{S}_{g,\ell}$, affine variety of finite type over \mathbb{Z} obtained as affine GIT quotient by the SL_2 conjugation action of the affine variety of representations of the fundamental group $\pi_1(\mathbb{S}_{g,\ell})$ into SL_2 .
- For every γ multicurve on $\mathbb{S}_{g,\ell}$ with connected components $\gamma_1, \dots, \gamma_r$, the map sending a representation $\rho: \pi_1(\mathbb{S}_{g,\ell}) \rightarrow SL_2$ to $\prod_{j=1}^r (-\text{tr}(\rho(\gamma_j)))$ defines a regular function f_γ on $\text{Ch}_{SL_2}(\mathbb{S}_{g,\ell})$.

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The map $\gamma \mapsto f_\gamma$ defines a ring isomorphism between the specialization $\text{Sk}_{-1}(\mathbb{S}_{g,\ell})$ of the skein algebra at $A = -1$ and the ring of regular functions of $\text{Ch}_{SL_2}(\mathbb{S}_{g,\ell})$.

Classical limit of the skein relation: for every $M, N \in SL_2$,

$$\text{tr}(M) \text{tr}(N) = \text{tr}(MN) + \text{tr}(M^{-1}N).$$

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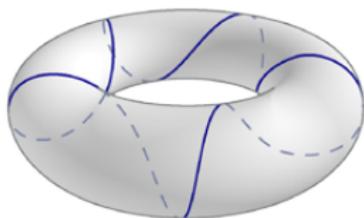
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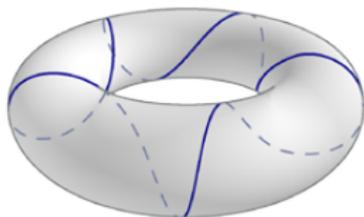
Example: closed torus



- On the closed torus $\mathbb{S}_{1,0}$, isotopy classes of multicurves are in bijection with

$$B(\mathbb{Z}) := \mathbb{Z}^2 / \langle \pm id \rangle \simeq \{(m, n) \in \mathbb{Z} \times \mathbb{Z}_{\geq 0} \mid m \geq 0 \text{ if } n = 0\}.$$

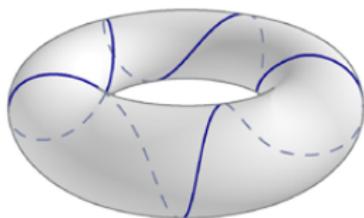
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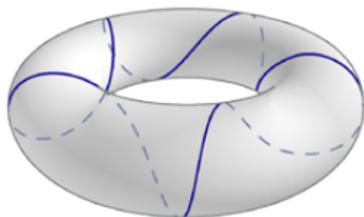
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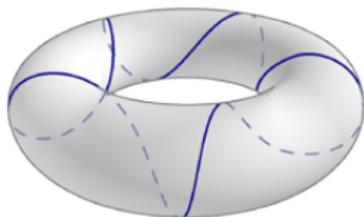
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Structure constants and positive bases

- The structure constants $C_{j,k}^l \in R$ of a basis $\{e_j\}_{j \in J}$ of an algebra \mathcal{A} over a ring R are defined by

$$e_j e_k = \sum_{l \in J} C_{j,k}^l e_l.$$

- For the skein algebra, $R = \mathbb{Z}[A^\pm]$.

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A basis $\{e_j\}_{j \in J}$ of the skein algebra $\text{Sk}_A(\mathbb{S}_{g,\ell})$ is called *positive* if its structure constants belong to $\mathbb{Z}_{\geq 0}[A^\pm]$, i.e. are Laurent polynomials in A with positive coefficients.

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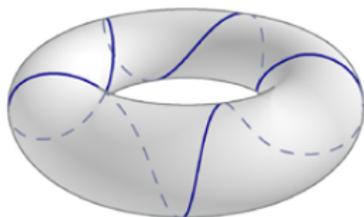
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Example: closed torus



- One crossing to resolve:

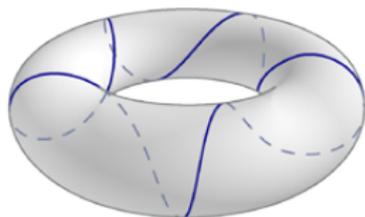
$$\gamma_{(1,0)}\gamma_{(0,1)} = A\gamma_{1,1} + A^{-1}\gamma_{(-1,1)}.$$

- Two crossings to resolve:

$$\gamma_{(0,1)}\gamma_{(2,1)} = A^{-2}\gamma_{(2,2)} + A^2\gamma_{(2,0)} - 2A^{-2} - 2A^2.$$

- Conclusion: the basis of multicurves is not positive in general.

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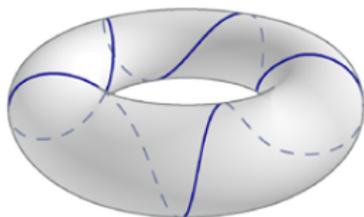
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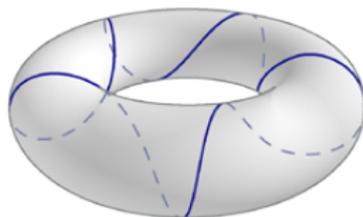
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The bracelets basis

- Let $T_n(x)$ be the Chebyshev polynomials defined by

$$T_0(x) = 1, T_1(x) = x, T_2(x) = x^2 - 2,$$

and for every $n \geq 2$,

$$T_{n+1}(x) = xT_n(x) - T_{n-1}(x).$$

Writing $x = \lambda + \lambda^{-1}$, we have $T_n(x) = \lambda^n + \lambda^{-n}$ for every $n \geq 1$.

- Given an isotopy class γ of multicurve on $\mathbb{S}_{g,\ell}$, one can uniquely write γ in $\text{Sk}_A(\mathbb{S}_{g,\ell})$ as $\gamma = \gamma_1^{n_1} \cdots \gamma_r^{n_r}$ where $\gamma_1, \dots, \gamma_r$ are all distinct isotopy classes of connected multicurves and $n_j \in \mathbb{Z}_{>0}$, and we define

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$$\mathbf{T}(\gamma) := T_{n_1}(\gamma_1) \cdots T_{n_r}(\gamma_r).$$

- $\{\mathbf{T}(\gamma)\}_\gamma$: *bracelets basis* of the skein algebra $\text{Sk}_A(\mathbb{S}_{g,\ell})$.

The bracelets basis

- Let $T_n(x)$ be the Chebyshev polynomials defined by

$$T_0(x) = 1, T_1(x) = x, T_2(x) = x^2 - 2,$$

and for every $n \geq 2$,

$$T_{n+1}(x) = xT_n(x) - T_{n-1}(x).$$

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- Any hope of positivity?

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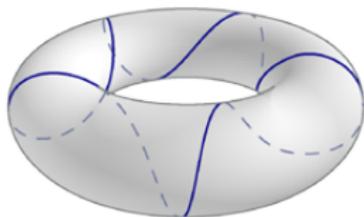
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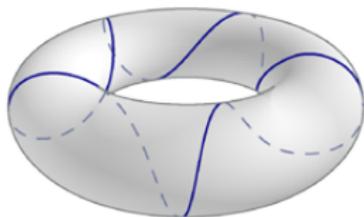
Example: closed torus



- As $T_1(x) = x$ and $T_2(x) = x^2 - 2$,

$$\begin{aligned}\mathbf{T}(\gamma_{(0,1)})\mathbf{T}(\gamma_{(2,1)}) &= T_1(\gamma_{(0,1)})T_1(\gamma_{(1,0)}) = \gamma_{(0,1)}\gamma_{(1,0)} \\ &= A^{-2}\gamma_{(2,2)} + A^2\gamma_{(2,0)} - 2A^{-2} - 2A^2 = A^{-2}(\gamma_{(2,2)} - 2) + A^2(\gamma_{(2,0)} - 2) \\ &= A^{-2}T_2(\gamma_{(1,1)}) + A^2T_2(\gamma_{(1,0)}) = A^{-2}\mathbf{T}(\gamma_{(2,2)}) + A^2\mathbf{T}(\gamma_{(2,0)})\end{aligned}$$

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- Positive!

Conjectural positivity of the bracelets basis

Conjecture (Dylan Thurston, 2013)

For every g and ℓ , the bracelets basis $\{\mathbf{T}(\gamma)\}_\gamma$ of $\text{Sk}_A(\mathbb{S}_{g,\ell})$ is positive.

Theorem (Dylan Thurston, 2013)

For every g and ℓ , after setting $A = 1$, the structure constants of the bracelets basis $\{\mathbf{T}(\gamma)\}_\gamma$ of $\text{Sk}_A(\mathbb{S}_{g,\ell})$ are non-negative.

Theorem (Frohman, Gelca, 2000)

The bracelets basis $\{\mathbf{T}(\gamma)\}_\gamma$ of $\text{Sk}_A(\mathbb{S}_{1,0})$ of the closed torus $\mathbb{S}_{1,0}$ is positive. In fact, for every $p_1, p_2 \in B(\mathbb{Z})$,

$$\mathbf{T}(\gamma_{p_1})\mathbf{T}(\gamma_{p_2}) = A^{\det(p_1,p_2)}\mathbf{T}(\gamma_{p_1+p_2}) + A^{-\det(p_1,p_2)}\mathbf{T}(\gamma_{p_1-p_2}).$$

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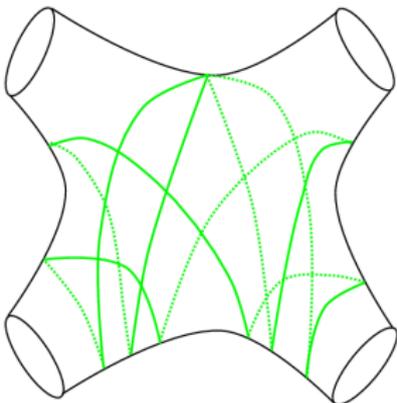
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Main result

Theorem (B, 2020)

The bracelets bases $\{\mathbf{T}(\gamma)\}_\gamma$ of the skein algebras $\text{Sk}_A(\mathbb{S}_{0,4})$ and $\text{Sk}_A(\mathbb{S}_{1,1})$ of the 4-punctured sphere and the 1-punctured torus are positive.

Unlike the case of the closed torus $\mathbb{S}_{1,0}$, there does not seem to exist a simple closed formula for the structure constants of the bracelets basis of $\text{Sk}_A(\mathbb{S}_{0,4})$ and $\text{Sk}_A(\mathbb{S}_{1,1})$.

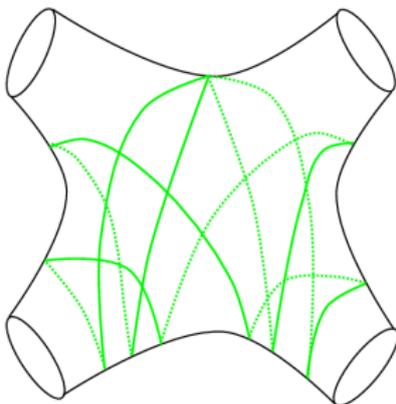


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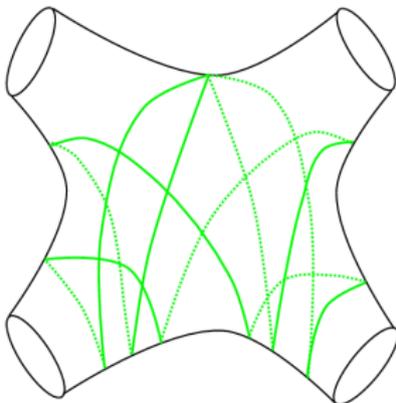
4-punctured sphere

- Focus on the case of the 4-punctured sphere $\mathbb{S}_{0,4}$.
- Peripheral curves a_1, a_2, a_3, a_4 , in the center of $\text{Sk}_A(\mathbb{S}_{0,4})$, so we can view $\text{Sk}_A(\mathbb{S}_{0,4})$ as a R -module, where $R = \mathbb{Z}[A^\pm][a_1, a_2, a_3, a_4]$.
- Isotopy classes of multicurves in $\mathbb{S}_{0,4}$ without peripheral connected components are in bijection with

$$B(\mathbb{Z}) := \mathbb{Z}^2 / \langle \pm id \rangle \simeq \{(m, n) \in \mathbb{Z} \times \mathbb{Z}_{\geq 0} \mid m \geq 0 \text{ if } n = 0\}.$$

(View $\mathbb{S}_{0,4}$ as a $\mathbb{Z}/2\mathbb{Z}$ -quotient of a 4-punctured torus)

- $\{\gamma_p\}_{p \in B(\mathbb{Z})}$ is a basis of $\text{Sk}_A(\mathbb{S}_{0,4})$ as R -module.



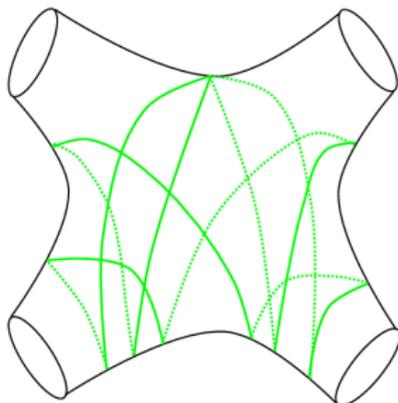
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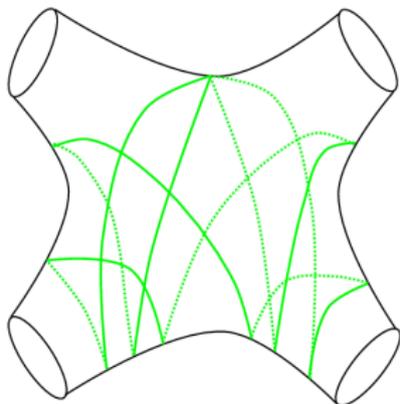
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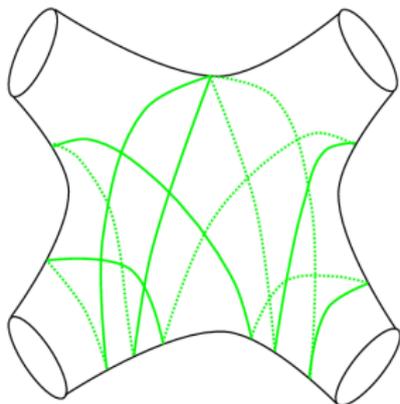
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- $$\mathbf{T}(\gamma_{(1,0)})\mathbf{T}(\gamma_{(0,1)}) = A^2\mathbf{T}(\gamma_{(1,1)}) + A^{-2}\mathbf{T}(\gamma_{(-1,1)}) + R_{1,1}.$$

- $$\mathbf{T}(\gamma_{(1,1)})\mathbf{T}(\gamma_{(-1,1)}) = A^{-4}\mathbf{T}(\gamma_{(2,0)}) + A^4\mathbf{T}(\gamma_{(0,2)}) + A^{-2}R_{1,0} + A^2R_{0,1} + y.$$

Theorem (Bullock-Przytycki, 2000)

$\text{Sk}_A(\mathbb{S}_{0,4})$ is generated as R -algebra by $\gamma_{v_1} := \gamma_{(1,0)}$, $\gamma_{v_2} := \gamma_{(0,1)}$, $\gamma_{v_3} = \gamma_{(-1,1)}$, with the relations

$$A^{-2}\gamma_{v_1}\gamma_{v_2} - A^2\gamma_{v_2}\gamma_{v_1} = (A^{-4} - A^4)\gamma_{v_3} - (A^2 - A^{-2})R_{1,1},$$

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Setting $A = -1$, we get that the ring of regular functions on the SL_2 character variety $\text{Ch}_{SL_2}(\mathbb{S}_{0,4})$ is generated as $\mathbb{Z}[a_1, a_2, a_3, a_4]$ -algebra by $\gamma_{v_1} := \gamma_{(1,0)}$, $\gamma_{v_2} := \gamma_{(0,1)}$, $\gamma_{v_3} = \gamma_{(-1,1)}$, with the cubic relation

$$\gamma_{v_1}\gamma_{v_2}\gamma_{v_3} = \gamma_{v_1}^2 + \gamma_{v_2}^2 + \gamma_{v_3}^2 + R_{1,0}\gamma_{v_1} + R_{0,1}\gamma_{v_2} + R_{1,1}\gamma_{v_3} + y - 4.$$

In other words, $\text{Ch}_{SL_2}(\mathbb{S}_{0,4})$ is a 4-parameters families of affine cubic surfaces (complement of a triangle of lines in a projective cubic surface)(known at the end of the 19th century: Vogt, Fricke-Klein). Think about the skein algebra $\text{Sk}_A(\mathbb{S}_{0,4})$ as a family of non-commutative cubic surfaces.

$PSL_2(\mathbb{Z})$ action

- The mapping class group of $\mathbb{S}_{g,\ell}$ (group of isotopy classes of orientation-preserving diffeomorphisms) acts on $Sk_A(\mathbb{S}_{g,\ell})$. As the mapping class group of $\mathbb{S}_{0,4}$ contains a copy of $PSL_2(\mathbb{Z})$, we get an action on $PSL_2(\mathbb{Z})$ on $Sk_A(\mathbb{S}_{0,4})$ by R -algebra automorphisms.
- For every $p \in B(\mathbb{Z}) = \mathbb{Z}^2 / \langle \pm id \rangle$ and $M \in PSL_2(\mathbb{Z})$, we have $M \cdot \gamma_p = \gamma_{M \cdot p}$.
- Generators of $PSL_2(\mathbb{Z})$:

$$S = \begin{pmatrix} 0 & -1 \\ 1 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \quad \text{and} \quad T = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 1 \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}.$$

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Scattering diagram

We have $B(\mathbb{Z}) \subset B$, where

$$B := \mathbb{R}^2 / \langle \pm id \rangle \simeq \{(x, y) \in \mathbb{Z} \times \mathbb{Z}_{\geq 0} \mid x \geq 0 \text{ if } y = 0\}.$$

"Scattering diagram": attach a power series to every ray in B with rational slope of primitive direction $(m, n) \in B(\mathbb{Z})$

$$f_{m,n} = \sum_{k \geq 0} c_k z^{-(km, kn)} \in R[[z^{-(m,n)}]].$$



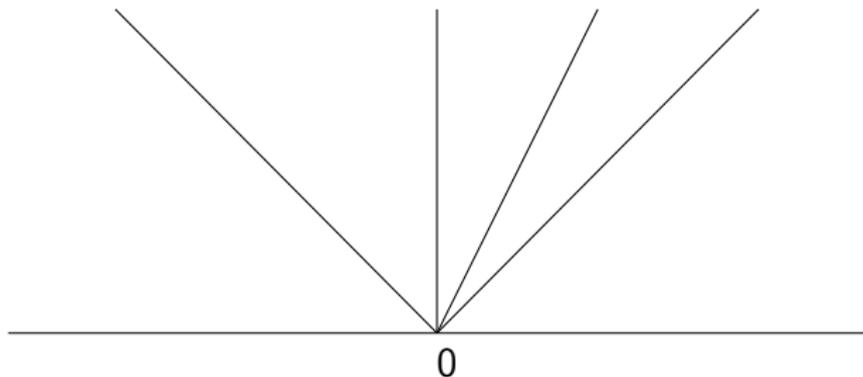
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Broken lines

- γ broken line in \mathcal{D} of asymptotic direction $p \in B(\mathbb{Z})$ and endpoint Q
- Continuous piecewise integral affine line, bending along rays of rational slopes, decorated by monomials.
- Monomial attached to the linearity domain L of the form $c_L z^{p_L}$, where $c_L \in R$, and $-p_L \in \mathbb{Z}^2$ parallel to the direction of L .
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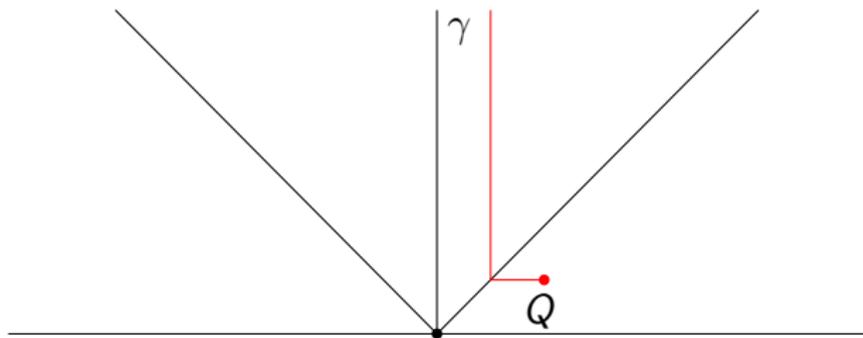
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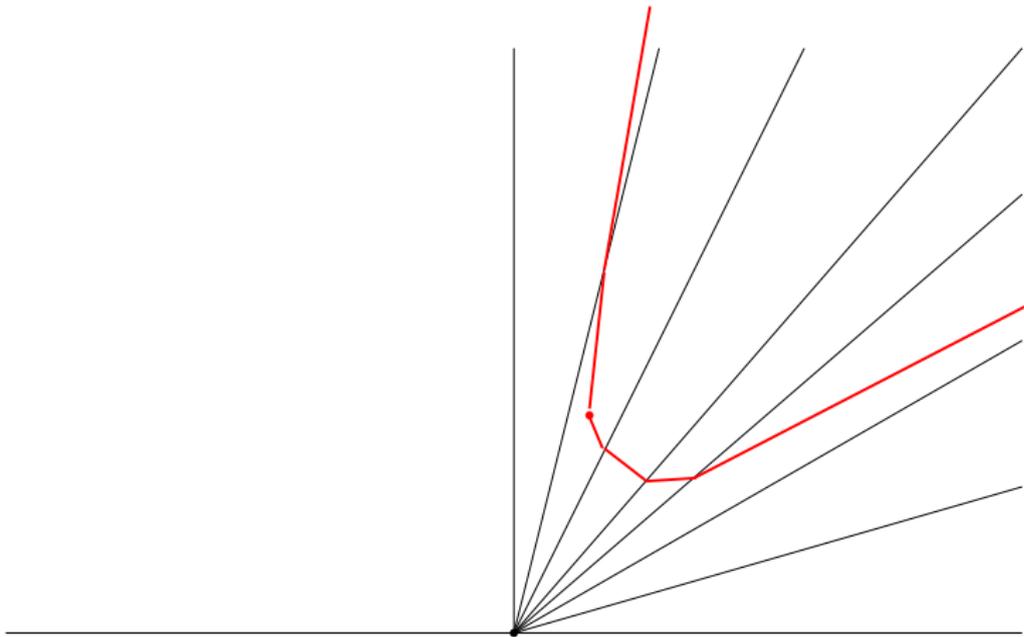
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- Bending formula for a broken line passing between the domains of linearity L and L' by bending along $\mathbb{R}_{\geq 0}(m, n)$.
- Write $m_L = c_L z^{p_L}$, $m_{L'} = c_{L'} z^{p_{L'}}$, $N = |\det((m, n), p_L)|$, and $f_{m,n} = \sum_{k \geq 0} c_k z^{-(km, kn)}$, then there exists a monomial $d_\ell z^{-\ell(m,n)}$ in the series

$$\sum_{\ell \geq 0} d_\ell z^{-\ell(m,n)} := \prod_{j=0}^{N-1} \left(\sum_{k \geq 0} c_k A^{4k(j - \frac{N-1}{2})} z^{-k(m,n)} \right),$$

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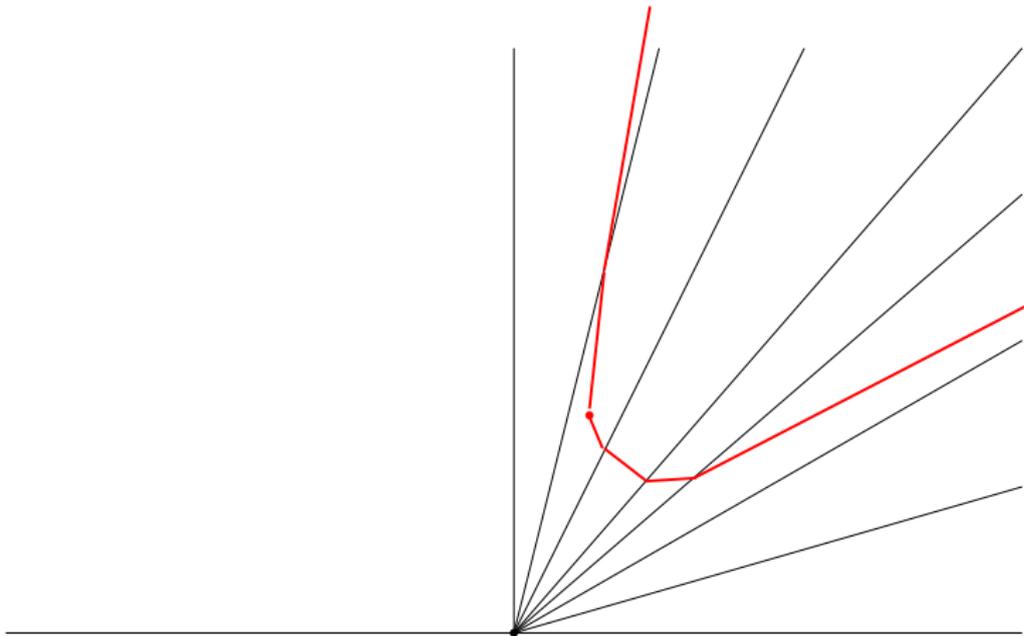
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For every $p_1, p_2, p \in B(\mathbb{Z})$ and $Q \in B$ generic close to p , define

$$C_{p_1, p_2}^{\mathcal{D}, p}(Q) := \sum_{(\gamma_1, \gamma_2)} c(\gamma_1)c(\gamma_2)A^{2\det(s(\gamma_1), s(\gamma_2))} \in R,$$

where the sum is over pairs (γ_1, γ_2) of quantum broken lines for \mathcal{D} with charges p_1, p_2 and common endpoint Q , such that writing $c(\gamma_1)z^{s(\gamma_1)}$ and $c(\gamma_2)z^{s(\gamma_2)}$ the final monomials, we have $s(\gamma_1) + s(\gamma_2) = p$.

A scattering diagram \mathfrak{D} is *consistent* if for every $p_1, p_2, p \in B(\mathbb{Z})$, $C_{p_1, p_2}^{\mathfrak{D}, p}(Q)$ does not depend on the choice of the point Q , and the product on the free R -module

$$\mathcal{A}_{\mathfrak{D}} := \bigoplus_{p \in B(\mathbb{Z})} R \vartheta_p$$

defined by

$$\vartheta_{p_1} \vartheta_{p_2} = \sum_{p \in B(\mathbb{Z})} C_{p_1, p_2}^{\mathfrak{D}, p} \vartheta_p$$

is associative.

Strategy: construct a consistent scattering diagram \mathfrak{D} and an isomorphism

$$\varphi: \mathcal{A}_{\mathfrak{D}} \rightarrow \text{Sk}_A(\mathbb{S}_{0,4})$$

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Scattering diagram

- Notations:

$$F(r, s, y, x) := 1 + \frac{rx(1+x^2)}{(1-A^{-4}x^2)(1-A^4x^2)} + \frac{yx^2}{(1-A^{-4}x^2)(1-A^4x^2)} \\ + \frac{sx^3(1+sx+x^2)}{(1-A^{-4}x^2)(1-x^2)^2(1-A^4x^2)}.$$

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$$R_{1,0} := a_1a_2 + a_3a_4, \quad R_{0,1} := a_1a_3 + a_2a_4, \quad R_{1,1} := a_1a_4 + a_2a_3, \\ y := a_1a_2a_3a_4 + a_1^2 + a_2^2 + a_3^2 + a_4^2 + (A^2 - A^{-2})^2.$$

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The scattering diagram \mathfrak{D} is consistent.

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There exists an isomorphism

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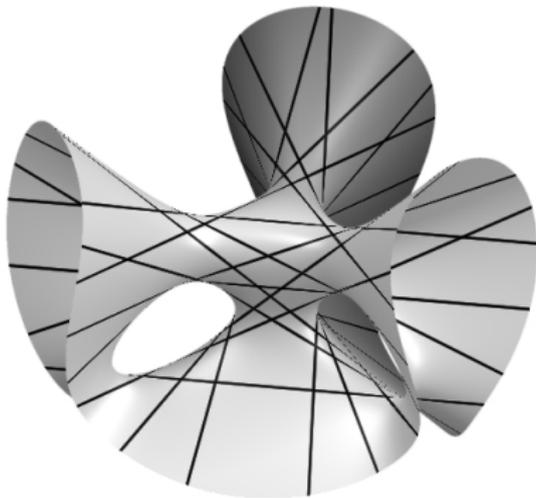
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- This 4-parameters family of affine cubic surfaces is the mirror family of the log Calabi-Yau surface (Y, D) , where Y is a smooth projective surface in \mathbb{P}^3 over \mathbb{C} and D is a triangle of lines on Y . (Gross-Hacking-Keel (2011), Gross-Hacking-Keel-Siebert (2019)). Construction in terms of scattering diagrams constructed in terms of genus 0 log Gromov-Witten invariants of (Y, D) .
- "Quantum mirror" (B. (2018)): construction of a deformation quantization of the mirror family of Gross-Hacking-Keel using higher genus log Gromov-Witten invariants of (Y, D) .
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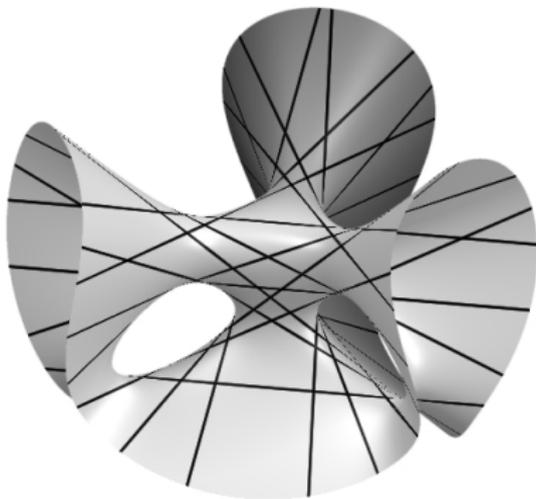
Cubic surfaces

Y : smooth projective cubic surface in \mathbb{P}^3 over \mathbb{C} . It is known since Cayley and Salmon (1849) that Y contains 27 lines and that they are 45 triangle configurations of lines. We fix $D = D_1 \cup D_2 \cup D_3$ one of such triangle. The divisor D is anticanonical, and so the pair (Y, D) is log Calabi-Yau.

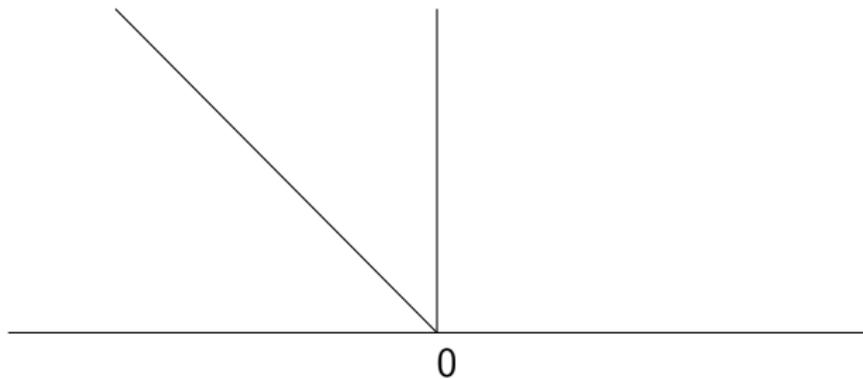


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$B := \mathbb{R}^2 / \langle \pm id \rangle$ is the dual intersection complex of (Y, D) . The set $B(\mathbb{Z})$ of integral points define tangency conditions for curves in (Y, D) .



- $g \geq 0$, $\beta \in NE(Y)$, $\nu \in B(\mathbb{Z})$: $N_{g,\nu}^\beta \in \mathbb{Q}$, log Gromov-Witten invariant counting genus g stable maps to (Y, D) of class β with contact order ν with D , and insertion of $(-1)^g \lambda_g$. “counts” of genus g holomorphic curves in Y of class β intersecting D in a single point (logarithmic Gromov-Witten invariants).
- Define a scattering diagram $\mathfrak{D}_{(Y,D)}$ on B over $\mathbb{Q}[[\hbar]][NE(Y)]$ by attaching to the ray of direction (m, n) the generating series

$$f_{m,n} := \exp \left(\sum_{k \geq 1} \sum_{\beta \in NE(Y)} \sum_{g \geq 0} 2 \sin \left(\frac{k\hbar}{2} \right) N_{g,k(m,n)}^\beta \hbar^{2g-1} t^\beta z^{-k(m,n)} \right).$$

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Theorem (B., 2018)

The scattering diagram $\mathfrak{D}_{(Y,D)}$ is consistent.

The genus 0 limit was previously known by Gross-Hacking-Keel (proof relying on the "tropical vertex" paper of Gross-Pandharipande-Siebert).

Theorem (B., 2018)

After explicit specializations and identifications of variables, we have $\mathfrak{D}_{(Y,D)} \simeq \mathfrak{D}$.

Genus 0 case treated by Gross-Hacking-Keel-Siebert (2019).

Log Gromov-Witten invariants

- $f_{1,0}$: look at curves intersecting D_1 in one point, and not intersecting D_2 and D_3 . There are such 8 = (27 - 3)/3 lines L_m , intersecting D_1 with contact order 1. There are also two such curves of class $D_2 + D_3$, intersecting D_1 with contact order 2 (strict transforms of the 2 conics passing through 4 given points and tangent to one given line in \mathbb{P}^2).

$$f_{(1,0)} =$$

$$\frac{\prod_{m=1}^8 (1 + t^{L_m} z^{-(1,0)})}{(1 - A^{-4} t^{D_2+D_3} z^{-(2,0)})(1 - t^{D_2+D_3} z^{-(2,0)})^2 (1 - A^4 t^{D_2+D_3} z^{-(2,0)})}$$

where $A^4 = q = e^{i\hbar}$.

- The numerator comes from multicovers of the 8 lines L_m and the denominator comes from multicovers of the 2 curves of class $D_2 + D_3$.
- Multicover contributions of lines are "easy" (quiver moduli: point). Multicover contributions of curves of class $D_2 + D_3$ are more subtle (quiver moduli: \mathbb{P}^1).

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- $PSL_2(\mathbb{Z})$ of log birational automorphisms of (Y, D) : S acts by cyclic permutation of D_1, D_2, D_3 , and T acts by blow-up of $D_1 \cap D_2$ and blow-down of D_3 .
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Thank you for your attention!