

Lectures on Vertex Operator Algebras and Conformal Blocks

BIN GUI

March 14, 2022

Contents

0	Notations	2
1	Segal's picture of 2d CFT; motivations of VOAs and conformal blocks	3
2	Virasoro relations; change of boundary parametrizations; strings vs. punctures	12
3	Definition of VOAs, I	24
4	Definition of VOAs, II: Jacobi Identity.	38
5	Consequences of Jacobi identity; reconstruction theorem	43
6	Constructing examples of VOAs	51
	Index	53
	References	54

0 Notations

- $\mathbb{N} = \{0, 1, 2, \dots\}$, $\mathbb{Z}_+ = \{1, 2, \dots\}$.
- $\mathbf{i} = \sqrt{-1}$, \mathbb{S}^1 = unit circle, $\mathbb{C}^\times = \mathbb{C} \setminus \{0\}$.
- $\mathbb{D}_r = \{z \in \mathbb{C} : |z| < r\}$, $\mathbb{D}_r^\times = \{z \in \mathbb{C} : 0 < |z| < r\}$, $\mathbb{D}_r^{\text{cl}} = \{z \in \mathbb{C} : |z| \leq r\}$
- $\mathcal{O}(X)$ is the space of holomorphic functions on a complex manifold X .
- Configuration space $\text{Conf}^n(X) = \{(x_1, \dots, x_n) \in X^n : x_i \neq x_j \text{ if } i \neq j\}$.
- z and ζ could mean either points, or the standard coordinate of \mathbb{C} , or formal variables. We will give their meanings when the context is unclear.
- All vector spaces are over \mathbb{C} , unless otherwise stated. If W is a vector space equipped with a Hermitian form $\langle \cdot | \cdot \rangle$, we let $|\cdot\rangle$ be the linear variable and $\langle \cdot |$ be the antilinear (i.e. conjugate linear) one, following physicists' convention.
- If W, W' are vector spaces, then $\text{Hom}(W, W')$ denote the space of linear operators from W to W' . We let $\text{End}(W) = \text{Hom}(W, W)$.
- We use symbols $\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle$ or (\cdot, \cdot) to denote bilinear forms (i.e., linear on both variables).
- Given a vector space W and a formal variable z ,

$$W[z] = \{\text{polynomials of } z \text{ whose coefficients are elements of } W\}$$

$$W[[z]] = \left\{ \sum_{n \in \mathbb{N}} w_n z^n : w_n \in W \right\}$$

$$W((z)) = \left\{ \sum_{n \in \mathbb{Z}} w_n z^n : w_n \in W, \text{ and } w_n = 0 \text{ when } n \text{ is sufficiently negative} \right\}$$

$$W[[z^{\pm 1}]] = \left\{ \sum_{n \in \mathbb{Z}} w_n z^n : w_n \in W \right\}.$$

Each line is a subspace of the subsequent line. In case there are several formal variables, the spaces are defined in a similar way, expect $W((\dots))$. For instance,

$$W[[z, \zeta^{\pm 1}]] := W[[z]][[\zeta^{\pm 1}]] = W[[\zeta^{\pm 1}]][[z]]$$

consists of $\sum_{m \in \mathbb{N}, n \in \mathbb{Z}} w_{m,n} z^m \zeta^n$ where each $w_{m,n} \in W$. However, note that $W((z))((\zeta))$ and $W((\zeta))((z))$ are not equal. (For instance, $\sum_{m \geq -n} \sum_{n \geq -1} z^m \zeta^n$ belongs to $\mathbb{C}((z))((\zeta))$ but not $\mathbb{C}((\zeta))((z))$.)

Elements in $W[[z^{\pm 1}]]$ are called **formal Laurent series** of z .

- We let

$$W((z_1, \dots, z_N)) = \left\{ \sum_{n_1, \dots, n_N \geq L} w_{n_1, \dots, n_N} z_1^{n_1} \cdots z_N^{n_N} \text{ for some } L \in \mathbb{Z} \right\}.$$

Then $W((z_1, z_2))$ is a proper subspace of both $W((z_1))((z_2))$ and $W((z_2))((z_1))$.

- We set

$$\text{Res}_{z=0} \sum_{n \in \mathbb{Z}} w_n z^n dz = w_{-1}. \quad (0.2)$$

This is in line with the complex analytic residue.

- A vector of $W_1 \otimes \cdots \otimes W_N$ written as w_\bullet means that it is of the form $w_1 \otimes \cdots \otimes w_N$ where each $w_i \in W_i$. Depending on the context, w_\bullet will also mean a tuple (w_1, \dots, w_N) .
- Unless otherwise stated, by a manifold, we mean one *without* boundaries. Also, “with boundaries” means “possibly with boundaries”.

1 Segal’s picture of 2d CFT; motivations of VOAs and conformal blocks

1.1

Vertex operator algebras (VOAs) are mathematical objects defined to understand and construct 2-dimensional conformal field theory (CFT for short). A CFT describes propagations and interactions of strings. There are two types of strings: closed strings $\simeq \mathbb{S}^1$ and open strings $\simeq [0, 1]$. In this course, we will mainly focus on closed strings.

Let me explain how mathematicians understand CFT. Just like any quantum field theory (QFT), in CFT we must have a Hilbert space \mathcal{H} . The vectors in \mathcal{H} are called “states”, but unlike ordinary QFT, a vector $\xi \in \mathcal{H}$ is not a state of a particle, but a state of a closed string \mathbb{S}^1 .

The most important and non-trivial part in CFT is to define/understand string interactions. According to Segal’s picture [Seg88], an interaction is uniquely determined by a compact Riemann surface Σ with boundaries $\partial\Sigma$, where $\partial\Sigma$ is a disjoint union of some circles (strings). Each string is called either an incoming string or an outgoing one. Suppose $\partial\Sigma$ has N incoming strings and M outgoing ones, then this picture describes an interaction where N strings are going inside, and M strings are going outside.

Moreover, the boundary $\partial\Sigma$ must be **parametrized**. This means that to each connected component $\partial\Sigma_i$ a diffeomorphism $\eta_i : \partial\Sigma_i \xrightarrow{\sim} \mathbb{S}^1$ is associated. The orientation on $\partial\Sigma_i$ defined by pulling back the one of \mathbb{S}^1 along η_i is assumed to be the opposite of the one defined in Stokes’ theorem, shown as follows



1.2

Unless otherwise stated, we assume that the boundary parametrization is also **analytic**. Roughly speaking, this means that Σ can be obtained by removing some

open discs from a compact Riemann surface C (without boundary) such that the parametrizations of $\partial\Sigma$ are given by local holomorphic functions of C .

Here is a more rigorous explanation. By a **local coordinate** η of C at $x \in C$, we mean η is a holomorphic injective function on a neighborhood U of x such that $\eta(x) = 0$. So η is a biholomorphism between U and a neighborhood $\eta(U)$ of 0. Now, suppose we have local coordinates η_1, \dots, η_N at distinct points $x_1, \dots, x_N \in C$. The data

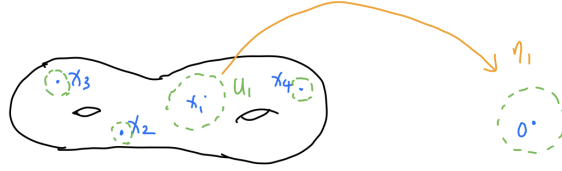
$$\mathfrak{X} := (C; x_\bullet; \eta_\bullet) = (C; x_1, \dots, x_N; \eta_1, \dots, \eta_N) \quad (1.2)$$

is called an **N -pointed compact Riemann surface with local coordinates**.

Let each η_i be defined on a neighborhood $U_i \ni x_i$. We assume moreover the following

Assumption 1.1. $U_i \cap U_j = \emptyset$ if $i \neq j$ (indeed, $\eta_i^{-1}(\mathbb{D}_1^{\text{cl}}) \cap \eta_j^{-1}(\mathbb{D}_1^{\text{cl}}) = \emptyset$ is sufficient), and $\eta_i(U_i) \supset \mathbb{D}_1^{\text{cl}}$ for each i . Here \mathbb{D}_1^{cl} is the closed unit disc.

By removing all $\eta_i^{-1}(\mathbb{D}_1)$, we get Σ with boundary strings $\eta_i^{-1}(\partial\mathbb{D}_1^{\text{cl}}) = \eta_i^{-1}(\mathbb{S}^1)$ whose parametrizations are η_i .



1.3

Any Σ as above determines uniquely an interaction of strings. Suppose it has N incoming strings and M outgoing ones. Then mathematically, such an interaction is described by a bounded linear map $T = T_\Sigma : \mathcal{H}^{\otimes N} \rightarrow \mathcal{H}^{\otimes M}$. (The boundedness is automatic thanks to the uniform boundedness principle. But this is not an important point in this course.) Given $\xi_\bullet = \xi_1 \otimes \dots \otimes \xi_N \in \mathcal{H}^{\otimes N}$ and $\eta_\bullet = \eta_1 \otimes \dots \otimes \eta_M \in \mathcal{H}^{\otimes M}$, the value

$$\langle \eta_\bullet | T \xi_\bullet \rangle \quad (1.3)$$

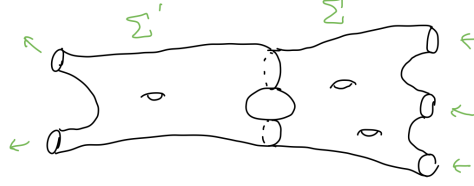
describes the probability amplitude that the N incoming closed strings with states ξ_1, \dots, ξ_N become η_1, \dots, η_M after interaction.

The word “conformal” in conformal field theory reflects the fact that T depends only on the complex structure of Σ and its parametrization, but not on the metric for instance. Thus, a CFT is more rigid than a topological quantum field theory (TQFT): in the latter case, T depends only on the topological structures of the manifolds.

1.4

Suppose we have another interaction $S : \mathcal{H}^{\otimes M} \rightarrow \mathcal{H}^{\otimes L}$ corresponding to the parametrized surface Σ' , then the composition of them $S \circ T : \mathcal{H}^{\otimes N} \rightarrow \mathcal{H}^{\otimes L}$ corresponds to the **sewing** $\Sigma \# \Sigma'$ of Σ and Σ' , where the j -th outgoing string $\partial_+ \Sigma_j$ of Σ is

sewn with the j -th incoming one $\partial_- \Sigma'_j$ of Σ' .



It is important to specify how $\partial_+ \Sigma_j$ (with parametrization η_j) is identified with $\partial_- \Sigma'_j$ (with parametrization η'_j). Pick $x \in \partial_+ \Sigma_j$ and $y \in \partial_- \Sigma'_j$. Then

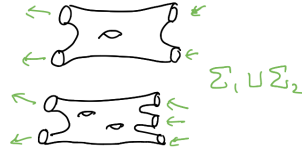
$$x = y \iff \eta_j(x) \eta'_j(y) = 1. \quad (1.4)$$

It is clear from the picture that the orientations of $\partial_+ \Sigma_j$ and $\partial_- \Sigma_j$ are opposite to each other. This is related to the fact that our rule for sewing is $\eta_j(x) = 1/\eta'_j(y)$ but not (say) $\eta_j(x) = \eta'_j(y)$.

Recall we assume that the parametrizations are analytic. We leave it to the readers to check that the sewing of Σ and Σ' , a priori only a topological surface, has a natural complex analytic structure.

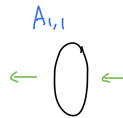
1.5

Suppose $T_1 : \mathcal{H}^{\otimes N_1} \rightarrow \mathcal{H}^{\otimes M_1}$ corresponds to Σ_1 and $T_2 : \mathcal{H}^{\otimes N_2} \rightarrow \mathcal{H}^{\otimes M_2}$ to Σ_2 , then $T_1 \otimes T_2 : \mathcal{H}^{\otimes (N_1+N_2)} \rightarrow \mathcal{H}^{\otimes (M_1+M_2)}$ corresponds to the disjoint union $\Sigma_1 \sqcup \Sigma_2$.



1.6

Consider an annulus $A_{r,R} = \{z \in \mathbb{C} : r < |z| < R\}$ obtained by removing two open discs from the compact Riemann sphere \mathbb{P}^1 via the local coordinate $\eta_1(z) = z/r$ at 0 and $\eta_2(z) = R/z$ at ∞ . We call such $A_{r,R}$ (with the given boundary parametrization) a **standard annulus**. Let $r \nearrow 1, R \searrow 1$. The limit of this annulus is a “degenerate” Riemann surface with 1 incoming boundary circle and 1 outgoing one. Both circles are \mathbb{S}^1 . The incoming one has parametrization $z \mapsto z$ and the outgoing one $z \mapsto z^{-1}$. We call this annulus the **standard thin annulus** and denote it by $A_{1,1}$. The map $T : \mathcal{H} \rightarrow \mathcal{H}$ associated to $A_{1,1}$ is the identity map. This reflects the fact that sewing any Σ with a disjoint union of $A_{1,1}$ gives Σ .



1.7

We give a fancy way to summarize what we have so far: Let \mathcal{C} be the monoidal category of compact 1-dimensional smooth manifolds such that a morphism from an object S_1 to another S_2 is a compact Riemann surface with incoming parametrized boundary $\simeq S_1$ and outgoing one $\simeq S_2$, that the identity morphism for a union of N circles is a disjoint union of N pieces of $A_{1,1}$, that the unit object is the empty set, and that the tensor product of objects and morphisms are respectively the disjoint unions of strings and Riemann surfaces. Then a CFT is a monoidal functor from \mathcal{C} to the monoidal category of Hilbert spaces. So, roughly speaking, a CFT is a representation of \mathcal{C} .

Since we choose Hilbert spaces as our underlying spaces, we should expect that the representation of \mathcal{C} is unitary. Technically, the functor mentioned above should be a $*$ -functor: this means that for each morphism Σ from N strings to M strings, we should define its adjoint morphism Σ^* from M strings to N ones whose corresponding map is the adjoint $T^* : \mathcal{H}^{\otimes M} \rightarrow \mathcal{H}^{\otimes N}$ of T . Σ^* is defined simply to be the **complex conjugate** $\bar{\Sigma}$ of Σ :

Definition 1.2. $\bar{\Sigma}$ consists of points \bar{x} where $x \in \Sigma$; the local holomorphic functions on $\bar{\Sigma}$ are η^* where η is a locally defined holomorphic function on Σ and

$$\eta^*(\bar{x}) = \overline{\eta(x)} \quad (1.5)$$

whenever η is defined on $x \in \Sigma$; similarly, boundary parametrizations are given by η_j^* . Note that if Σ is obtained by removing open discs from an N pointed $\mathfrak{X} = (C; x_\bullet; \eta_\bullet)$, then $\bar{\Sigma}$ is obtained by removing discs from

$$\bar{\mathfrak{X}} := (\bar{C}; \bar{x}_1, \dots, \bar{x}_N; \eta_1^*, \dots, \eta_N^*) \quad (1.6)$$

η^* should not be confused with $\bar{\eta}$ defined on Σ by

$$\bar{\eta}(x) = \overline{\eta(x)}.$$

In the present context, we should assume that an incoming (resp. outgoing) string of Σ becomes an outgoing (resp. incoming) one of $\bar{\Sigma}$ via the conjugate map $\mathbb{C} : x \in \Sigma \mapsto \bar{x} \in \bar{\Sigma}$. In the future, we will often consider all strings as incoming ones if necessary (cf. 1.9). In that case, we shall also assume all the boundary strings of $\bar{\Sigma}$ as incoming.

We should point out that although unitarity is a very important condition, there are important non-unitary CFTs, for instance, the logarithmic CFTs. (In such cases, \mathcal{H} is a vector space without inner products.) Also, many VOA results and techniques do not rely on the unitarity. Nevertheless, assuming unitarity will often reasonably simplify discussions or give motivations.

Example 1.3. Let $\mathfrak{X} = (\mathbb{P}^1; 0; \lambda\zeta)$ where ζ is the standard coordinate of \mathbb{C} and $\lambda \in \mathbb{C}^\times$. We can identify the conjugate of \mathbb{P}^1 with \mathbb{P}^1 by letting $x \in \mathbb{P}^1 \mapsto \bar{x}$ be the standard conjugate of \mathbb{C} : $z \mapsto \bar{z}$. Then $(\lambda\zeta)^*(\bar{z}) = \overline{\lambda\zeta(z)} = \bar{\lambda} \cdot \bar{z} = \bar{\lambda}\zeta(\bar{z})$. So the conjugate of \mathfrak{X} is isomorphic to $\bar{\mathfrak{X}} = (\mathbb{P}^1; 0; \bar{\lambda}\zeta)$.

1.8

An interaction process could have no incoming or outgoing strings. *The Hilbert space for the empty string \emptyset is \mathbb{C} .* The most elementary and important example with no incoming boundary is the closed unit disc \mathbb{D}_1^{cl} with 1 outgoing boundary parametrized by $z \mapsto z^{-1}$. The corresponding map $\mathbb{C} \rightarrow \mathcal{H}$ can be identified with its value at 1. This element in \mathcal{H} is denoted by **1** and called the **vacuum vector**.



$$(1.7)$$

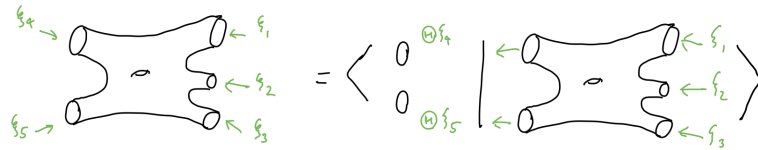
Assume as before that our theory is unitary. Then conjugate of the above disk is the same disk and boundary parametrization, but the original outgoing string is now the incoming one. The corresponding map $\mathcal{H} \rightarrow \mathbb{C}$ is, according to 1.7, the linear functional $\langle 1 | \cdot \rangle$.

1.9

In general, one may wonder what the interaction $T : \mathcal{H}^{\otimes N} \rightarrow \mathbb{C}$ means physically for a surface Σ with N incoming strings but no outgoing ones. Choose $0 < M < N$, and make M of the N strings of $\partial\Sigma$ be outgoing strings. Then the corresponding interaction is a map $\tilde{T} : \mathcal{H}^{\otimes(N-M)} \rightarrow \mathcal{H}^{\otimes M}$. In unitary CFT, T can be related to \tilde{T} by a anti-unitary (i.e. conjugate-unitary) map Θ on \mathcal{H} , called the **CPT operator**, such that for $\xi_1, \dots, \xi_N \in \mathcal{H}$ (where the last M vectors are associated to the outgoing strings), we have

$$T(\xi_1 \otimes \dots \otimes \xi_N) = \langle \Theta \xi_{N-M+1} \otimes \dots \otimes \Theta \xi_N | \tilde{T}(\xi_1 \otimes \dots \otimes \xi_{N-M}) \rangle, \quad (1.8)$$

interpreted pictorially as



The operator Θ is an involution, i.e., $\Theta^2 = 1_{\mathcal{H}}$.

Such a linear functional T corresponding to an interaction with no outgoing strings is called a **correlation function** (or an **N -point function**). These functions are the central objects in CFT (and indeed, in any quantum field theory). Relation (1.8) teaches us that: (1) correlation functions can be interpreted as probability amplitudes in string interactions with the help of Θ , and (2) to study arbitrary interactions, it suffices to study those with no outgoing strings.

Let me close this subsection by mentioning an important fact: suppose the complex structure of Σ and the (assumed analytic) boundary parametrizations are parametrized holomorphically by some complex variables $\tau_{\bullet} = (\tau_1, \dots, \tau_k)$, then the value of $T(\xi_{\bullet})$ is now a *real analytic function* of τ_{\bullet} , i.e., it is locally a power series of τ_1, \dots, τ_k and their conjugates. Actually, the word “function” in “correlation function” means a function of τ_{\bullet} , but not of ξ_{\bullet} .

1.10

You must be curious what CPT means. Indeed, Θ is responsible for the simultaneous symmetry of charge conjugation (C), parity transformation (P), and time reversal (T). P+T together means an *anti-biholomorphism* $\Sigma \rightarrow \Sigma'$. Now we have arrived at a point that we missed previously: since anti-holomorphic maps are also conformal maps, should we expect that the interaction maps (or the correlation functions) for anti-biholomorphic surfaces are equal? The answer is no. (Namely, P+T are not preserved.) Indeed, if we let Σ have N incomes and no outcomes, let $\bar{\Sigma}$ be its complex conjugate (cf. 1.7) but still with N incomes, and let $T_\Sigma, T_{\bar{\Sigma}}$ be the correlation functions associated to them. Then from 1.7 and relation (1.8), we have

$$T_\Sigma(\xi_1 \otimes \cdots \otimes \xi_N) = \overline{T_{\bar{\Sigma}}(\Theta\xi_1 \otimes \cdots \otimes \Theta\xi_N)}. \quad (1.9)$$

Proof. By the description in Subsec. 1.7, the interaction map $\tilde{T}_{\bar{\Sigma}}$ associated $\bar{\Sigma}$ with no input and N outputs is $T_\Sigma^* : \mathbb{C} \rightarrow \mathcal{H}^{\otimes N}$, the adjoint of T_Σ . By $\Theta^2 = 1$, we have

$$\begin{aligned} T_\Sigma(\xi_1 \otimes \cdots \otimes \xi_N) &= \langle 1 | T_\Sigma(\xi_1 \otimes \cdots \otimes \xi_N) \rangle = \langle T_\Sigma^* 1 | \xi_1 \otimes \cdots \otimes \xi_N \rangle \\ &= \overline{\langle \xi_1 \otimes \cdots \otimes \xi_N | \tilde{T}_{\bar{\Sigma}} 1 \rangle} \stackrel{(1.8)}{=} \overline{T_{\bar{\Sigma}}(\Theta\xi_1 \otimes \cdots \otimes \Theta\xi_N)}. \end{aligned}$$

Note that mathematically, the point of formula (1.9) is to translate (using (1.8)) the relation $\tilde{T}_{\bar{\Sigma}} = T_\Sigma^*$ (regarding all the strings of $\bar{\Sigma}$ as outgoing) to the case that all the strings of $\bar{\Sigma}$ are incoming. \square

Formula (1.9) explains CPT symmetry: the symmetries of charge (taking complex conjugate of the values of correlation functions) and parity+time (the conjugate biholomorphism $\mathbb{C} : \Sigma \rightarrow \bar{\Sigma}$) are preserved, and the operator realizing this simultaneous symmetry is Θ .

Note that mathematically, charge conjugation C is related to taking complex conjugate of numbers (but not of Σ). Physically, it means making a string into its “anti-string”, or (in general QFT) making a particle (e.g. an electron with negative charge) to its anti-particle (e.g. an antielectron with positive charge).

1.11

The CFT we have described so far is actually very special: it has no conformal anomaly. There are indeed no nontrivial CFTs which are both unitary and without anomaly. In this course, we will be mainly interested in CFTs with conformal anomaly. Technically, the conformal anomaly is determined by a complex number c (positive for unitary CFT), called **central charge**. To describe such CFT, we modify the previous descriptions as follows: The map (or the correlation function) T_Σ for Σ is only up to a positive scalar multiplication depending on Σ . $T_{\Sigma_1} \circ T_{\Sigma_2} = \lambda T_{\Sigma_1 \# \Sigma_2}$ where $\lambda > 0$. (The constants are not necessarily positive in non-unitary CFT.) If Σ is parametrized holomorphically by some complex variables τ_\bullet , then by shrinking the domain of τ_\bullet , we can choose T_Σ depending real analytically on τ_\bullet .

There are many important cases where a real analytic (or even a holomorphic) T_Σ can be chosen globally for τ_\bullet . This will be studied later in details.

Unless otherwise stated, a CFT always means one with (possible) conformal anomaly. Using the fancy language of 1.7, one can say that a unitary CFT is a *projective* monoidal $*$ -functor from the category \mathcal{C} in 1.7 to the category of Hilbert spaces. Namely, it is a projective unitary representation of \mathcal{C} .

1.12

To study the representations of a topological group G , one must first understand very well the topological and the algebraic structures of G . Similarly, the study of CFTs relies heavily on the geometric and analytic structures of compact Riemann surfaces. However, from what we have discussed, there is a huge obstacle for studying CFTs: the correlation functions are real analytic, but not complex analytic (i.e. holomorphic) functions of the parameters τ_\bullet . Thus, in order to study CFTs using the powerful tools of complex analysis (residue theorem, for instance), we make the following Ansatz: A correlation function T is a sum : $T_\Sigma = \sum_j \Phi_\Sigma^j \cdot \Psi_{\bar{\Sigma}}^j$, where each Φ^j and Ψ^j relies holomorphically on Σ and $\bar{\Sigma}$ respectively (so $\Psi_{\bar{\Sigma}}^j$ relies anti-holomorphically on Σ).

This Ansatz is very vague. Let me explain it in more details. Consider the annulus $A_{r,R}$ with boundary parametrization as in 1.6. We move the inside circle to another one centered at z (where $z \in A_{r,R}$ is reasonably small), still with radius r . The new eccentric annulus $A_{z,r,R}$ has larger outgoing string parametrized by R/ζ and the smaller incoming one parametrized by $(\zeta - z)/r$, where ζ is the standard coordinate of \mathbb{P}^1 . Namely, it is determined by the data

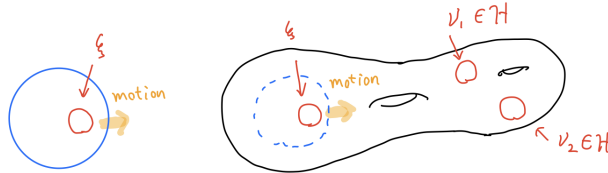
$$(\mathbb{P}^1; z, \infty; (\zeta - z)/r, R/\zeta). \quad (1.10)$$

Let $T_z : \mathcal{H} \rightarrow \mathcal{H}$ be the corresponding map. As we have said, for general vectors $\xi, \eta \in \mathcal{H}$, the expression $\langle \eta | T_z \xi \rangle = \langle \Theta \eta, T_z \xi \rangle$ can be chosen to be real analytic with respect to z . We now let

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbb{V} = \{ \xi \in \mathcal{H} : & \text{For all } r, R, \text{ the map } T \text{ can be chosen such that} \\ & z \mapsto \langle \nu | T_z \xi \rangle \text{ is holomorphic for all } \nu \in \mathcal{H}, \text{ and} \\ & \xi \text{ has "finite energy"} \} \end{aligned} \quad (1.11)$$

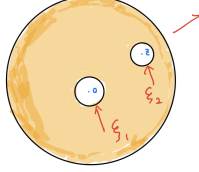
“Finite energy” is a minor condition to be explained later. (See 2.8.)

We can sew $A_{z,r,R}$ with any Σ , and the motion of the smaller string inside the annulus becomes, after sewing, the motion of a boundary string of Σ :



Therefore, if a vector $\xi \in \mathbb{V}$ is assigned to an incoming string of Σ with (analytic) boundary parametrization η_i , then, when translating this parametrized string with respect to η_i , the correlation function $T_\Sigma(\xi \otimes \dots)$ should be holomorphic with respect to the motion, whatever states we assign to the other strings. We can therefore study \mathbb{V} with the help of complex analysis. \mathbb{V} is called a **vertex operator algebra** (VOA).

We have only described \mathbb{V} as a vector space. But in which sense is \mathbb{V} an algebra? An obvious candidate is as follows: consider \mathbb{P}^1 with three marked points $0, z, \infty$ and usual coordinates, e.g. $\eta_0 = \zeta/r_1, \eta_z = (\zeta - z)/r_2, \eta_\infty = R/\zeta$ at $0, z, \infty$ where $r_1, r_2 > 0$ are small and $R > 0$ is large, and ζ is again the standard coordinate of \mathbb{C} . We assume the strings around 0 and z are ingoing and that around ∞ outgoing. If we assign $\xi_1, \xi_2 \in \mathbb{V}$ to the incoming strings, then the outcome can be viewed as a product of ξ_1 and ξ_2 .



Although this product does not have finite energy, it does satisfy the statement before the last line in (1.11). Thus, this product is almost a vector in \mathbb{V} . By modifying this product suitably, we can ensure that the products of vectors in \mathbb{V} are always in \mathbb{V} . Details will be given in later sections.

Similarly to (1.11), we define $\hat{\mathbb{V}} \subset \mathcal{H}$ to be the set of finite energy vectors ξ such that $\langle \nu | T_z \xi \rangle$ is anti-holomorphic over z . The vacuum vector 1 belongs to $\mathbb{V} \cap \hat{\mathbb{V}}$: The result of gluing the unit disc into the inside of $A_{z,r,R}$ is just the disc with radius R and parametrization R/ζ , which is independent of z . So $T_z 1$ and hence $\langle \nu | T_z 1 \rangle$ are constant over z , and hence both holomorphic and anti-holomorphic over z .

1.13

Now we can give a more detailed presentation of our Ansatz. We let \mathcal{H}^{fin} be the (indeed dense) subspace of vectors in \mathcal{H} with “finite energy”, which is acted on by $\mathbb{V} \otimes \hat{\mathbb{V}}$. Ansatz:

1. \mathcal{H}^{fin} as a $\mathbb{V} \otimes \hat{\mathbb{V}}$ -module has decomposition

$$\mathcal{H}^{\text{fin}} = \bigoplus_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \mathbb{W}_i \otimes \hat{\mathbb{W}}_i \quad \supset \mathbb{V} \otimes \hat{\mathbb{V}} \quad (1.12)$$

where each $\mathbb{W}_i, \hat{\mathbb{W}}_i$ are respectively irreducible \mathbb{V} -modules and $\hat{\mathbb{V}}$ -modules. \mathbb{V} and $\hat{\mathbb{V}}$ are (according to their definition cf. (1.11)) subspaces of \mathcal{H}^{fin} by identifying them with $\mathbb{V} \otimes 1$ and $1 \otimes \hat{\mathbb{V}}$ respectively. The vacuum vector 1 of \mathcal{H} is identified with $1 \otimes 1$ (which belongs to $\mathbb{V} \otimes \hat{\mathbb{V}}$).

2. For some Σ without outgoing boundaries, let $T_\Sigma : \mathcal{H}^{\otimes N} \rightarrow \mathbb{C}$ be the corresponding map. Then, corresponding to the above direct sum decomposition, we have

$$T_\Sigma \Big|_{(\mathcal{H}^{\text{fin}})^{\otimes N}} = \sum_{i_1, \dots, i_N \in \mathcal{I}} \Phi_{\Sigma, i_\bullet} \otimes \Psi_{\bar{\Sigma}, i_\bullet} \quad (1.13)$$

where

$$\Phi_{\Sigma, i_\bullet} : \mathbb{W}_{i_1} \otimes \dots \otimes \mathbb{W}_{i_N} \rightarrow \mathbb{C},$$

$$\Psi_{\bar{\Sigma}, i_{\bullet}} : \widehat{\mathbb{W}}_{i_1} \otimes \cdots \otimes \widehat{\mathbb{W}}_{i_N} \rightarrow \mathbb{C}$$

are linear. Moreover, when the complex structure and boundary parametrization are parametrized analytically by complex variables τ_{\bullet} , then locally (with respect to the domain of τ_{\bullet}), T_{Σ} , $\Psi_{\Sigma, i_{\bullet}}$, $\Psi_{\bar{\Sigma}, i_{\bullet}}$ can be chosen such that $\Psi_{\Sigma, i_{\bullet}}$ is holomorphic over τ_{\bullet} (for all input vectors), and $\Psi_{\bar{\Sigma}, i_{\bullet}}$ holomorphic over $\bar{\tau}_{\bullet}$. $\Phi_{\Sigma, i_{\bullet}}$ and $\Psi_{\bar{\Sigma}, i_{\bullet}}$ are called **conformal blocks** associated to Σ (resp. $\bar{\Sigma}$) and \mathbb{V} (resp. $\widehat{\mathbb{V}}$).

In part one, \oplus could be finite (our main focus in this course), infinite but discrete, or continuous.

The second part can be summarized by saying that the CFT is separated into the **chiral halves** (those Φ or \mathbb{W}_i) and the **anti-chiral halves** (those Ψ or $\widehat{\mathbb{W}}_i$). Here, “chiral”=“holomorphic”.

When physicists say a CFT is **rational**, they usually mean that the above direct sum is finite, and each \mathbb{W}_{i_k} , $\widehat{\mathbb{W}}_{i_k}$ are semi-simple (hence, by further decomposition, can be irreducible). So far, the mathematical theory of conformal blocks is complete almost only for rational CFTs. These will be the main examples of this course. For non-rational logarithmic CFTs, even the above Ansatz needs to be modified. (So far, it is not even clear how to do it.)

Physicists more or less consider the above description as the definition of conformal blocks. We mathematicians should do the opposite: define conformal blocks in a different way, and use them to *construct* CFTs following the above Ansatz.

1.14

You may notice that to make this Ansatz compatible with 1.4 and 1.5, it is necessarily to assume that

1. The tensor product of conformal blocks Φ_{Σ_1} , Φ_{Σ_2} associated to Σ_1 , Σ_2 respectively should be a conformal block associated to $\Sigma_1 \sqcup \Sigma_2$.
2. The composition of Φ_{Σ_1} , Φ_{Σ_2} (or more precisely, their contractions) should be conformal blocks associated to the sewings of Σ_1 and Σ_2 , where the pair of \mathbb{V} -modules to be contracted must be dual to each other.

$$\Phi_{\Sigma_1}(\xi_1 \otimes \xi_2 \otimes \xi_3) = \text{diagram of } \Sigma_1 \text{ with boundary components } \xi_1, \xi_2, \xi_3$$

$$\Phi_{\Sigma_2}(\nu_1 \otimes \nu_2 \otimes \nu_3) = \text{diagram of } \Sigma_2 \text{ with boundary components } \nu_1, \nu_2, \nu_3$$

$$\Phi_{\Sigma_1}(\xi_1 \otimes \cdot \otimes \cdot) \Phi_{\Sigma_2}(\cdot \otimes \cdot \otimes \nu_3) = \text{diagram of } \Sigma_1 \sqcup \Sigma_2 \text{ with boundary components } \xi_1, \xi_3, \nu_3, \nu_2$$

(A side note on linear algebra: If V^\vee is the dual space (or a suitable dense subspace of the dual space) of a vector space V , we choose a basis $\{v_\alpha\}_{\alpha \in \mathfrak{A}}$ labeled by elements of \mathfrak{A} , and choose a dual basis $\{v_\alpha^\vee\}_{\alpha \in \mathfrak{A}}$ of V^\vee (i.e. the one determined by $\langle v_\alpha, v_\beta^\vee \rangle = \delta_{\alpha, \beta}$), then taking contraction means substituting $\sum_{\alpha \in \mathfrak{A}} v_\alpha \otimes v_\alpha^\vee$ inside the linear functional on a tensor product of vector spaces such that V, V^\vee are tensor components.)

After we define conformal blocks rigorously, we will see that the first point is obvious, while the second one is a non-trivial theorem.

We briefly explain the meaning of “dual”, and why the dual modules appear in \mathcal{H} . For instance, in the above picture, the unitary \mathbb{V} -module containing ξ_2 is dual to the one containing η_1 . As vector spaces, they are “graded” dual spaces of each other. (It is a dense subspace of the full dual space, the subspace of “finite energy” linear functionals. We will talk about this in future sections.) In unitary CFTs, all \mathbb{V} and $\widehat{\mathbb{V}}$ modules are unitary, and $\Theta(\mathbb{W}_i \otimes \widehat{\mathbb{W}}_i)$ is equivalent to $\mathbb{W}'_i \otimes \widehat{\mathbb{W}}'_i$ where \mathbb{W}'_i is a \mathbb{V} -module dual to \mathbb{W}_i , and $\widehat{\mathbb{W}}'_i$ a $\widehat{\mathbb{V}}$ -module dual to $\widehat{\mathbb{W}}_i$. The formal name for dual module is **contragredient module**, to be defined rigorously in later sections.

1.15

Let us describe the equivalence $\Theta(\mathbb{W}_i \otimes \widehat{\mathbb{W}}_i) \simeq \mathbb{W}'_i \otimes \widehat{\mathbb{W}}'_i$ in more details.

For each $w_i \otimes \widehat{w}_i \in \mathbb{W}_i \otimes \widehat{\mathbb{W}}_i$, the vector $\Theta(w_i \otimes \widehat{w}_i)$ is regarded as a linear functional on $\mathbb{W}_i \otimes \widehat{\mathbb{W}}_i$ in the following way. Let the (clearly symmetric) bilinear form $\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle : \mathcal{H}^{\otimes 2} \rightarrow \mathbb{C}$ be the correlation function $T_{A_{1,1}}$ for the standard thin annulus $A_{1,1}$ (with two inputs and no outputs). Note that by (1.8), for each $\xi, \nu \in \mathcal{H}$, we have

$$\langle \Theta\xi, \nu \rangle = \langle \xi | \nu \rangle. \quad (1.14)$$

Then $\Theta(w_i \otimes \widehat{w}_i)$ is equivalent to the linear functional

$$\langle \Theta(w_i \otimes \widehat{w}_i), \cdot \rangle = \langle w_i \otimes \widehat{w}_i | \cdot \rangle \quad (1.15)$$

restricted onto $\mathbb{W}_i \otimes \widehat{\mathbb{W}}_i$.

A conformal block with $M+N$ inputs $\Phi_\Sigma : \mathbb{W}_{i_1} \otimes \cdots \otimes \mathbb{W}_{i_N} \otimes \mathbb{W}_{j_1} \otimes \cdots \otimes \mathbb{W}_{j_M} \rightarrow \mathbb{C}$ can be regarded as one with N inputs and M outputs $\Phi_\Sigma : \mathbb{W}_{j_1} \otimes \cdots \otimes \mathbb{W}_{j_M} \rightarrow \mathcal{H}'_{i_1} \otimes \cdots \otimes \mathcal{H}'_{i_M}$ where \mathcal{H}'_{i_k} is the Hilbert space completion of \mathbb{W}'_{i_k} and \mathbb{W}'_{i_k} is the contragredient \mathbb{V} -module of \mathbb{W}_{i_k} . Using (1.14), it is not hard to show that taking compositions of conformal blocks with outputs is equivalent to taking contractions for conformal blocks without outputs.

2 Virasoro relations; change of boundary parametrizations; strings vs. punctures

2.1

The goal of this section is to understand conformal blocks associated to 2-pointed Riemann spheres, equivalently, genus-0 surfaces with two boundary strings. We simply call them **annuli**, although their complex structures and boundary parametrizations are not necessarily the standard ones as in 1.6.

Let us first consider some degenerate examples whose boundary parametrizations are not necessarily analytic. Let $\text{Diff}^+(\mathbb{S}^1)$ be the topological group of orientation preserving diffeomorphisms of \mathbb{S}^1 . For each $g \in \text{Diff}^+(\mathbb{S}^1)$, we let $A_{1,1}^g$ be the thin annulus

whose incoming and outgoing strings are both \mathbb{S}^1 with parametrizations

$$\text{Incoming} : z \mapsto z, \quad \text{Outgoing} : z \mapsto 1/g(z).$$

Lemma 2.1. *If $h \in \text{Diff}^+(\mathbb{S}^1)$, then $A_{1,1}^{gh}$ is obtained by gluing the incoming circle of $A_{1,1}^g$ with the outgoing one of $A_{1,1}^h$.*

Proof. By (1.4), a point $z \in A_{1,1}^h$ is glued with $\zeta \in A_{1,1}^g$ iff $\zeta \cdot 1/h(z) = 1$, i.e., $\zeta = h(z)$. Now, a point z of $A_{1,1}^h$ becomes the point $h(z)$ of $A_{1,1}^g$ after gluing, which is sent by the outgoing parametrization of $A_{1,1}^g$ to $1/g(h(z))$. \square

This proof is not rigorous since we are considering degenerate annuli. A rigorous one would be approximating $A_{1,1}^g$ and $A_{1,1}^h$ by genuine annuli, identifying the sewn annuli, and then taking the limit. This proof is not easy, unless when g and h are real-analytic (e.g., rotations). Nevertheless, we only need this lemma to motivate our following discussions.

2.2

Thus, we may consider $\text{Diff}^+(\mathbb{S}^1)$ as the group of thin annuli whose product is the sewing. The merit of this viewpoint is that it convinces us to *consider the semi-group Ann of annuli as the complexification of $\text{Diff}^+(\mathbb{S}^1)$* . The multiplication $A_1 A_2$ of $A_1, A_2 \in \text{Ann}$ is the sewing of A_1, A_2 defined by gluing the inside of A_1 with the outside of A_2 using their parametrizations.

As an example, consider \mathbb{P}^1 with marked points $0, \infty$ and local coordinates $\eta_0(z) = z, \eta_\infty(z) = e^{-i\tau}/z$, which gives a thin annulus corresponding to the rotation $z \mapsto e^{i\tau}z$ when τ is real. Now consider τ as a complex variable $\tau = s + it$. Then the outgoing circle is the one with radius e^t . This gives a genuine annulus whenever $t > 0$.

The Ansatz in 1.13 should be expanded to include the following point: for each annulus $A \in \text{Ann}$, the comformal block decomposition of the interaction $T_A : \mathcal{H} \rightarrow \mathcal{H}$ (with one income and one outcome) with respect to $\mathcal{H}^{\text{fin}} = \bigoplus_i \mathbb{W}_i \otimes \widehat{\mathbb{W}}_i$ is of the form

$$T_A = \sum_i \pi_i(A) \otimes \widehat{\pi}_i(\overline{A}) \quad (2.1)$$

where $\pi_i(A)$ is a bounded linear operator on the Hilbert space completion \mathcal{H}_i of \mathbb{W}_i , and $\widehat{\pi}_i(\overline{A})$ is one on the completion $\widehat{\mathcal{H}}_i$ of $\widehat{\mathbb{W}}_i$. (\overline{A} is the complex conjugate of A ; see Def. 1.2. We assume the conjugate of the incoming string of \overline{A} is the incoming of A , and similarly for the outgoing strings.) The choice of $\pi_i(A)$ and $\widehat{\pi}_i(\overline{A})$ are unique up to scalar multiplications, and if A vary holomorphically over some complex variable τ_\bullet , then locally $\pi_i(A)$ and $\widehat{\pi}_i(\overline{A})$ can be chosen to vary holomorphically with respect to τ_\bullet and $\overline{\tau}_\bullet$ respectively. Finally, if $A_1, A_2 \in \text{Ann}$, then $\pi_i(A_1 A_2)$ equals $\pi_i(A_1) \pi_i(A_2)$ up to scalar multiplication, and a similar thing can be said about $\widehat{\pi}_i$.

Namely, each π_i is a projective representation of Ann on \mathcal{H}_i , and so is $\widehat{\pi}_i$ on $\widehat{\mathcal{H}}_i$. They should be the analytic extensions of projective unitary representations of $\text{Diff}^+(\mathbb{S}^1)$.

We emphasize that $\pi_i(A)$ and $\widehat{\pi}_i(\overline{A})$ are conformal blocks associated to A and \overline{A} respectively. Roughly speaking, π_i describes the conformal symmetries of chiral halves and $\widehat{\pi}_i$ the anti-chiral halves. A and \overline{A} have to act jointly on the full space \mathcal{H} .

2.3

Thus, the study of CFT interactions for annuli reduces to that of the projective representations of Ann . Our goal is to describe such representations in terms of Lie algebras.

Let $\text{Vec}(\mathbb{S}^1)$ be the Lie algebra of smooth real vector fields of \mathbb{S}^1 , whose elements are of the form $f\partial_\theta$ where ∂_θ is the pushforward of the standard unit vector of the real line under the map $\theta \mapsto e^{i\theta}$, and $f \in C^\infty(\mathbb{S}^1, \mathbb{R})$. The action of $f\partial_\theta$ on $h \in C^\infty(\mathbb{S}^1, \mathbb{R})$ is the negative of the usual one, $-f(e^{i\theta}) \cdot \frac{\partial}{\partial \theta} h(e^{i\theta})$. This is because the action of $g \in \text{Diff}^+(\mathbb{S}^1)$ on h should be $h \circ g^{-1}$ in order to respect the order of group multiplication. Therefore, the Lie bracket in $\text{Vec}(\mathbb{S}^1)$ is the negative of the usual one:

$$[f_1\partial_\theta, f_2\partial_\theta]_{\text{Vec}(\mathbb{S}^1)} = (-f_1\partial_\theta f_2 + f_2\partial_\theta f_1)\partial_\theta. \quad (2.2)$$

2.4

A projective unitary representation π of $\text{Vec}(\mathbb{S}^1)$ and the corresponding one π of $\text{Diff}^+(\mathbb{S}^1)$ (if exists) are related as follows. (Here unitary means that for each vector field $f\partial_\theta$, we have $\pi(f\partial_\theta)^\dagger = -\pi(f\partial_\theta)$, where \dagger is the adjoint, or “formal adjoint” when the underlying inner product space is not Cauchy-complete.)

Let $t \in (-\epsilon, \epsilon) \mapsto g_t \in \text{Diff}^+(\mathbb{S}^1)$ be a smooth family of diffeomorphisms satisfying $g_0 = 1$. Then up to addition by a number of $i\mathbb{R}$,

$$\left. \frac{d}{dt} \pi(g_t) \right|_{t=0} = \pi(\partial_t g_0) \quad (2.3)$$

where $\partial_t g_0 \in \text{Vec}(\mathbb{S}^1)$, the derivative of g at t_0 , is the vector field determined by

$$(\partial_t g_0)(h) = \left. \frac{d}{dt} (h \circ g_t) \right|_{t=0} \quad (2.4)$$

for all smooth function h on \mathbb{S}^1 .

Let now $t \in \mathbb{R} \mapsto \exp(tf\partial_\theta) \in \text{Diff}^+(\mathbb{S}^1)$ be the flow generated by $f\partial_\theta \in \text{Vec}(\mathbb{S}^1)$. So its derivative at $t = 0$ is $f\partial_\theta$, and $\exp((t_1 + t_2)f\partial_\theta) = \exp(t_1 f\partial_\theta) \circ \exp(t_2 f\partial_\theta)$. Then (2.4) implies that up to \mathbb{S}^1 -multiplication,

$$\pi(\exp(tf\partial_\theta)) = e^{t\pi(f\partial_\theta)}, \quad (2.5)$$

since the derivative of $\pi(\exp(tf\partial_\theta))e^{-t\pi(f\partial_\theta)}$ is $\pi(\exp(tf\partial_\theta))(\pi(f\partial_\theta) - \pi(f\partial_\theta))e^{-t\pi(f\partial_\theta)} = 0$.

2.5

The Witt algebra $\text{Span}_{\mathbb{C}} = \{l_n : n \in \mathbb{Z}\}$ is a complex dense Lie subalgebra of the complexification $\text{Vec}(\mathbb{S}^1) \otimes_{\mathbb{R}} \mathbb{C}$. Here,

$$l_n = z^{n+1}\partial_z = -ie^{in\theta}\partial_\theta \quad (2.6)$$

where $z = e^{i\theta}$ and $\partial_z = \frac{1}{ie^{i\theta}}\partial_\theta$. (We use the chain rule to “define” ∂_z .) One checks

$$[l_m, l_n] = (m - n)l_{m+n} \quad (2.7)$$

where the bracket is the negative of the usual one for vector fields.

Let us assume for simplicity that the CFT is unitary. In the decomposition $\mathcal{H}^{\text{fin}} = \bigoplus_i \mathbb{W}_i \otimes \widehat{\mathbb{W}}_i$, each \mathbb{W}_i is a projective unitary representation π_i of $\{l_n\}$, and similarly $\widehat{\mathbb{W}}_i$ is one $\widehat{\pi}_i$ of $\{l_n\}$. We know that the choice of $\pi_i(l_n)$ is unique up to $i\mathbb{R}$ -scalar addition. Here is a well-known fact about projective representations of Witt algebra (cf. for instance [Was10, Sec. IV.1]): one can make a particular choice of $\pi_i(l_n)$ (for each n), denoted by L_n , such that the **Virasoro relation**

$$[L_m, L_n] = (m - n)L_{m+n} + \frac{c}{12}(m + 1)m(m - 1)\delta_{m,-n} \quad (2.8)$$

holds and $c \in \mathbb{C}$ is called the **central charge**. In the case that π_i is projectively unitary, L_n can be chosen such that $L_n^\dagger = L_{-n}$ also holds.

We have abused the notation by writing the actions of l_n on all \mathbb{V} -modules \mathbb{W}_i (as chiral halves of the CFT) as L_n . We are justified to do so because, as we will see later, the actions of l_n come from those of \mathbb{V} . Technically: Virasoro algebra is inside the VOA. So the action of $\{l_n\}$ on \mathbb{W}_i is the restriction of that of \mathbb{V} . In particular, all chiral halves \mathbb{W}_i share the same central charge c .

Similarly, we write the actions of l_n on all $\widehat{\mathbb{W}}_i$ as \overline{L}_n . (The bar over L_n reflects the fact that \overline{L}_n describes the conformal symmetries of the anti-chiral halves of the CFT. \overline{L}_n is not related with L_n by the CPT operator Θ .) The central charge \hat{c} for $\{\overline{L}_n\}$ is independent of $\widehat{\mathbb{W}}_i$ and in general could be different from the one c of $\{L_n\}$, although in most important cases they are equal. (E.g., when the CFT contains both closed and open strings.)

2.6

We shall generalize (2.5) to complex vector fields. First of all, we consider an element

$$f(z)\partial_z = \sum_{n \in \mathbb{Z}} a_n z^{n+1} \partial_z$$

where the sum could be infinite. We treat $f(z) = \sum_n a_n z^{n+1}$ as a Laurent series. Let us now assume that $f(z)$ is a holomorphic function on a neighborhood $U \subset \mathbb{C}$ of \mathbb{S}^1 .

$f\partial_z$ is a complex holomorphic vector field of U , which (after shrinking U) gives a **holomorphic flow** $\tau \in \Delta \mapsto \exp(\tau f\partial_z) \in \mathcal{O}(U)$ where $\Delta \subset \mathbb{C}$ is a neighborhood of 0. (Recall from the notation section that $\mathcal{O}(U)$ is the space of holomorphic functions on U .) This means:

- (1) $(\tau, z) \in \Delta \times U \mapsto \exp(\tau f\partial_z)(z)$ is holomorphic whose restriction to each slice $\tau \times U$ is injective (and hence, a biholomorphism onto its image).
- (2) $\exp(0 f\partial_z)(z) = z$.
- (3) $\exp((\tau_1 + \tau_2)f\partial_z) = \exp(\tau_1 f\partial_z) \circ \exp(\tau_2 f\partial_z)$ on an open subset of U containing \mathbb{S}^1 .

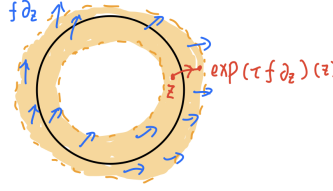
(4) For any holomorphic function h defined on an open set inside U ,

$$f\partial_z h = \frac{\partial}{\partial \tau} h \circ \exp(\tau f\partial_z) \Big|_{\tau=0}. \quad (2.9)$$

(Compare (2.4).) This condition is equivalent to

$$\frac{\partial}{\partial \tau} \exp(\tau f\partial_z) \Big|_{\tau=0} = f. \quad (2.10)$$

(To see the equivalence, set $h(z) = z$ for one direction, and use chain rule for the other one.)



Remark 2.2. A caveat: The notations $f\partial_z$ and $\exp(\tau f\partial_z)$ are not compatible with those in the real case. Indeed, if we assume that τ only takes real values $\tau = t$, then by taking the real and the imaginary parts of (2.10), we see that σ_t is a real flow on the real surfaces U generated by the real vector field $\operatorname{Re} f \cdot \partial_x + \operatorname{Im} f \cdot \partial_y$. Writing $\partial_x = \partial_z + \partial_{\bar{z}}$, $\partial_y = i(\partial_z - \partial_{\bar{z}})$, we see that this vector field $f\partial_z$ should more precisely be written as $f\partial_z + \bar{f}\partial_{\bar{z}}$ where $\bar{f}(x) = \overline{f(x)}$.

This point is also justified by the fact that if k is antiholomorphic, then

$$\bar{f}\partial_{\bar{z}}k = \frac{\partial}{\partial \bar{\tau}} k \circ \exp(\tau f\partial_z) \Big|_{\tau=0}. \quad (2.11)$$

(Proof: take $k = \bar{h}$ in (2.10).) Thus, a more precise notation for $\exp(\tau f\partial_z)$ should be $\exp(\tau f\partial_z + \bar{\tau}\bar{f}\partial_{\bar{z}})$. But we prefer to suppress the term $\bar{\tau}\bar{f}\partial_{\bar{z}}$ to keep the notations shorter.

2.7

One way to find the expression of $\sigma_\tau = \exp(\tau f\partial_z)$ is to solve the holomorphic nonlinear differential equation with initial condition:

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{\partial}{\partial \tau} \sigma_\tau(z) &= f(\sigma_\tau(z)), \\ \sigma_0(z) &= z. \end{aligned} \quad (2.12)$$

This is due to (2.10) and $\sigma_{\tau_1+\tau_2} = \sigma_{\tau_1} \circ \sigma_{\tau_2}$. (Indeed, the existence of holomorphic flows is due to that of the solutions of such equations.)

Alternatively, one may calculate the flow by brutal force using the formula

$$\begin{aligned} \exp(f\partial_z)(z) &= \sum_{k \in \mathbb{N}} \frac{1}{k!} (f(z)\partial_z)^k z \\ &= \sum_{k \in \mathbb{N}} \frac{1}{k!} \underbrace{f(z)\partial_z \left(f(z)\partial_z \left(\cdots f(z)\partial_z z \cdots \right) \right)}_{k \text{ times}}. \end{aligned} \quad (2.13)$$

(One may treat this formula as a formal sum if one worries about the convergence issue.) To see why this formula is valid, check that such defined $\exp(\tau f \partial_z)(z) =: \sigma_\tau(z)$ satisfies that $\sigma_{\tau_1 + \tau_2} = \sigma_{\tau_1} \circ \sigma_{\tau_2}$, that $\partial_\tau \sigma_\tau|_{\tau=0} = f$, and that $\sigma_0(z) = z$. This is easy.

2.8

Example 2.3. $\sigma_\tau(z) = e^\tau z$ is the holomorphic flow generated by the vector field $l_0 = z \partial_z$ since $\frac{\partial}{\partial \tau} e^\tau z|_{\tau=0} = z$. Namely,

$$\exp(\tau z \partial_z)(z) = e^\tau z.$$

Set $\lambda = e^\tau$. In view of the $A_{1,1}^g$ in 2.1, we consider the 2-pointed sphere $\mathfrak{X} = (\mathbb{P}^1; 0, \infty; \zeta, \lambda^{-1} \zeta^{-1})$ where $\zeta : z \mapsto z$ is the standard coordinate of \mathbb{C} . Then, when $|\lambda| \leq 1$, \mathfrak{X} defines an annulus A , either genuine or thin, whose incoming circle has radius 1 and outgoing $1/|\lambda|$. Thus, the conformal block $\pi_i(A)$ associated to this annulus, which is a linear operator on the Hilbert space completion \mathcal{H}_i , should be $e^{\tau L_0} = \lambda^{L_0}$ (by replacing $z \partial_z$ with L_0).

It is easy to check that \bar{A} is isomorphic to the annulus defined by $(\mathbb{P}^1; 0, \infty; \zeta, \bar{\lambda}^{-1} \zeta^{-1})$. So the corresponding conformal block should be $\hat{\pi}_i(\bar{A}) = \bar{\lambda}^{\bar{L}_0}$. Therefore, the interaction map $T_A : \mathcal{H} \rightarrow \mathcal{H}$ is determined by

$$T_A|_{\mathcal{H}_i \otimes \hat{\mathcal{H}}_i} = \lambda^{L_0} \otimes \bar{\lambda}^{\bar{L}_0}. \quad (2.14)$$

In a unitary CFT, L_0 and \bar{L}_0 (or more precisely, their closures) are self-adjoint operators so that λ^{L_0} and $\bar{\lambda}^{\bar{L}_0}$ can be defined and are unitary when $|\lambda| = 1$. Moreover, in a unitary CFT:

Assumption 2.4 (Positive energy). The spectra of L_0 and \bar{L}_0 are both positive (i.e. ≥ 0). In these notes, we are mainly interested in the case that the spectra are discrete. We identify L_0 with $L_0 \otimes 1$ and \bar{L}_0 with $1 \otimes \bar{L}_0$ so that L_0, \bar{L}_0 are commuting diagonalizable operators on \mathcal{H}^{fin} with ≥ 0 eigenvalues.

Now we can explain what we meant by finite energy: A vector ξ of \mathcal{H} has **finite energy** if ξ is a finite sum of eigenvectors of both L_0 and \bar{L}_0 . (In general, a vector of \mathcal{H} is an l^2 -convergent sum, either finite or infinite, of eigenvectors.)

2.9

Example 2.5. Let $n \neq 0$. To understand the geometric meanings of $e^{\tau L_{-n}}$ and $e^{\bar{\tau} \bar{L}_{-n}}$, we find the expression of $\sigma_\tau = \exp(\tau z^{-n+1} \partial_z)$ by solving the differential equation $\partial_\tau \sigma_\tau = (\sigma_\tau)^{-n+1}$ with initial condition $\sigma_0(z) = z$ (cf. (2.12)). The solution is

$$\exp(\tau z^{-n+1} \partial_z)(z) = (z^n + n\tau)^{\frac{1}{n}}. \quad (2.15)$$

□

Unfortunately, this flow does not give us any annulus in the usual sense. Take $n = 1$ for instance. Then the flow is just the translation by τ . However, the circle after a small translation will intersect the original one. So there is no annulus whose outgoing circle is the translation of the incoming one. In fact, in most cases, $\exp(f\partial_z)$ is not the action of an annulus. We have to pursue another way of understanding this operator.

2.10

There are two ways to look at a group action $G \curvearrowright X$: (1) The action of $g \in G$ on X is a transformation. So $gx \neq x$ in general. (2) gx and x are different expressions (under different coordinates) of the same element. The rule for change of coordinate is given by the action of G . We shall take the second viewpoint.

Let $\mathfrak{X} = (C; x_1, \dots, x_N; \eta_1, \dots, \eta_N)$ be an N -pointed compact Riemann surface with local coordinates satisfying Assumption 1.1. Assume the setting of 2.6. Write $\sigma_\tau = \exp(\tau f\partial_z)$ and $f(z) = \sum_{n \in \mathbb{Z}} a_n z^{n+1}$ be defined on $U \supset \mathbb{S}^1$. Let $\tau \in \Delta$ be close to 0.

Remark 2.6. In case you want to know the precise meaning of “close”: for the local coordinate η_i we are to discuss in the following, we choose $\epsilon > 0$ such that $\sigma_\tau(U \cap \text{Rng}(\eta_i))$ contains \mathbb{S}^1 for all $\tau \in \mathbb{D}_\epsilon$, where the open set $\text{Rng}(\eta_i)$ is the range of η_i .

Principle 2.7 (Change of boundary parametrizations). Suppose that the local coordinate η_i at x_i is changed to the boundary parametrization $\sigma_\tau \circ \eta_i$ and the boundary string $\eta_i^{-1} \circ (\mathbb{S}^1)$ is gradually changed (with respect to the change of τ) to $\eta_i^{-1}(\sigma_\tau^{-1}(\mathbb{S}^1))$. Then, in the expressions of conformal blocks and correlation functions (without outputs), each $w_i \in \mathbb{W}_i$ is replaced by $e^{\tau \sum_n a_n L_n} w_i$, and each $\hat{w}_i \in \widehat{\mathbb{W}}_i$ by $e^{\bar{\tau} \sum_n \bar{a}_n \bar{L}_n} \hat{w}_i$.

To be more precise, let $T_\Sigma : \mathcal{H}^{\otimes N} \rightarrow \mathbb{C}$ be the correlation function where Σ is obtained from \mathfrak{X} . Assume $i = 1$ for simplicity. Changing the local coordinate η_1 to $\sigma_\tau \circ \eta_1$ gives a new surface with parametrized boundary Σ' . Then up to scalar multiplication, $T_{\Sigma'}$ and T_Σ are related by

$$T_\Sigma(\xi_1 \otimes \xi_2 \otimes \dots \otimes \xi_N) = T_{\Sigma'}\left((e^{\tau \sum_n a_n L_n} \otimes e^{\bar{\tau} \sum_n \bar{a}_n \bar{L}_n}) \xi_1 \otimes \xi_2 \otimes \dots \otimes \xi_N\right) \quad (2.16)$$

for all ξ_1, \dots, ξ_N . Similarly, if $\Phi_\Sigma : \mathbb{W}_{i_1} \otimes \dots \otimes \mathbb{W}_{i_N} \rightarrow \mathbb{C}$ is a conformal block for Σ , then $\Phi_{\Sigma'}$ defined by

$$\Phi_\Sigma(w_1 \otimes w_2 \otimes \dots \otimes w_N) = \Phi_{\Sigma'}(e^{\tau \sum_n a_n L_n} w_1 \otimes w_2 \otimes \dots \otimes w_N) \quad (2.17)$$

is one for Σ' .

2.11

The geometric intuition in the above subsection is the following: ξ_1 in the η_1 -parametrization is the same (up to scalar multiplication) vector as $(e^{\tau \sum_n a_n L_n} \otimes e^{\bar{\tau} \sum_n \bar{a}_n \bar{L}_n}) \xi_1$ in the $\sigma_\tau \circ \eta_1$ -parametrization. We call this same “abstract” vector $\tilde{\xi}_1$, which is unique up to scalar multiplication. We write $\xi_1 = (\mathcal{U}(\eta_1) \otimes \mathcal{U}(\eta_1^*)) \tilde{\xi}_1$, understanding

$\mathcal{U}(\eta_1) \otimes \mathcal{U}(\eta_1^*)$ as the map sending an abstract vector to its concrete expression under the boundary parametrization η_1 . Namely, $\mathcal{U}(\eta_1) \otimes \mathcal{U}(\eta_1^*)$ is a vector bundle trivialization. The transition function from the η_1 -parametrization to the $\sigma_\tau \circ \eta_1$ -parametrization is

$$(\mathcal{U}(\sigma_\tau \circ \eta_1) \otimes \mathcal{U}((\sigma_\tau \circ \eta_1)^*)) (\mathcal{U}(\eta_1) \otimes \mathcal{U}(\eta_1^*))^{-1} = e^{\tau \sum_n a_n L_n} \otimes e^{\bar{\tau} \sum_n \bar{a}_n \bar{L}_n}. \quad (2.18)$$

We have a parametrization independent T (more precisely, independent of a small change of parametrizations) whose expressions under the concrete boundary parametrizations are (up to scalar multiplications)

$$\begin{aligned} T(\tilde{\xi}_1 \otimes \cdots) &= T_\Sigma \left((\mathcal{U}(\eta_1) \otimes \mathcal{U}(\eta_1^*))^{-1} \tilde{\xi}_1 \otimes \cdots \right) \\ &= T_{\Sigma'} \left((\mathcal{U}(\sigma_\tau \circ \eta_1) \otimes \mathcal{U}((\sigma_\tau \circ \eta_1)^*))^{-1} \tilde{\xi}_1 \otimes \cdots \right). \end{aligned}$$

2.12

Let us do an example to see how the change of parametrization formula works.

Example 2.8. Let $\mathfrak{X} = (\mathbb{P}^1; 1/3, \infty; 2(\zeta - 1/3), \zeta^{-1})$ where $\zeta : z \mapsto z$ is the standard coordinate of \mathbb{C} . We choose $1/3$ to be the input point, and ∞ the outgoing one. The associated boundary parametrized surface Σ is an annulus whose incoming circle $\{z : |2(z - 1/3)| = 1\}$ has center $1/3$ and radius $1/2$, and whose outgoing circle is \mathbb{S}^1 . Let us find an expression for $T_\Sigma : \mathcal{H} \rightarrow \mathcal{H}$.

We know that the map for the standard thin annulus $A_{1,1}$ is $T_{A_{1,1}} = 1_{\mathcal{H}}$. Let $\mathfrak{X}_1 = (\mathbb{P}^1; 0, \infty; 2\zeta, \zeta^{-1})$, which gives an annulus Σ_1 with incoming string $\frac{1}{2}\mathbb{S}^1$ and outgoing one \mathbb{S}^1 . $A_{1,1}$ is changed to Σ_1 by changing the incoming boundary parametrization ζ to 2ζ . By Ex. 2.3, $2\zeta = \exp(\log 2 \cdot z \partial_z)$. So, as $e^{\log 2 L_0} = 2^{L_0}$ and similarly $e^{\log 2 \bar{L}_0} = 2^{\bar{L}_0}$, by (2.16), T_{Σ_1} could be $(1/2)^{L_0} \otimes (1/2)^{\bar{L}_0}$.

Σ_1 is changed to Σ by adding 2ζ by $-2/3$. According to Ex. 2.5, $\exp(-2/3 \partial_z)(z) = z - 2/3$. Therefore, up to a scalar multiplication, $T_{\Sigma_1}(\xi) = T_\Sigma((e^{-\frac{2}{3}L_{-1}} \otimes e^{-\frac{2}{3}\bar{L}_{-1}})\xi)$. Thus, the answer is

$$T_\Sigma = ((1/2)^{L_0} \otimes (1/2)^{\bar{L}_0}) \cdot ((e^{\frac{2}{3}L_{-1}} \otimes e^{\frac{2}{3}\bar{L}_{-1}})) = ((1/2)^{L_0} e^{\frac{2}{3}L_{-1}}) \otimes ((1/2)^{\bar{L}_0} e^{\frac{2}{3}\bar{L}_{-1}}).$$

$(1/2)^{L_0} e^{\frac{2}{3}L_{-1}}$ is a conformal block for Σ . □

2.13

What is the change of parametrization formula for T_Σ (and hence Φ_Σ) when some output strings are involved? Recall from Subsec. 1.15 that the correlation function $T_{A_{1,1}} : \mathcal{H}^{\otimes 2} \rightarrow \mathbb{C}$ is a symmetric bilinear form $\langle \xi, \nu \rangle = \langle \nu, \xi \rangle = \langle \Theta \nu | \xi \rangle$. With respect to this form, we actually have

$$(L_n \otimes \mathbf{1})^t = L_{-n} \otimes \mathbf{1}, \quad (\mathbf{1} \otimes \bar{L}_n)^t = \mathbf{1} \otimes \bar{L}_{-n}. \quad (2.19)$$

More precisely, for each $\xi, \nu \in \mathcal{H}^{\text{fin}}$, we have

$$\langle (L_n \otimes \mathbf{1})\xi, \nu \rangle = \langle \xi, (L_{-n} \otimes \mathbf{1})\nu \rangle$$

and a similar relation for \bar{L}_n . Rewrite the above relation in terms of $\langle \cdot | \cdot \rangle$, we have $\langle \Theta(L_n \otimes \mathbf{1}) \xi | \nu \rangle = \langle \Theta \xi | (L_{-n} \otimes \mathbf{1}) \nu \rangle$, and noticing the unitarity property $L_n^\dagger = L_{-n}$, we get

$$\Theta(L_n \otimes \mathbf{1}) = (L_n \otimes \mathbf{1})\Theta, \quad \Theta(\mathbf{1} \otimes \bar{L}_n) = (\mathbf{1} \otimes \bar{L}_n)\Theta. \quad (2.20)$$

These relations truly hold, not just up to scalar addition or multiply.

From this, we see that for the maps $T_\Sigma, T_{\Sigma'} : \mathcal{H}^{\otimes(N-1)} \rightarrow \mathcal{H}$ with $N-1$ inputs and 1 output,

$$T_\Sigma = \left(e^{\tau \sum_n a_n L_{-n}} \otimes e^{\bar{\tau} \sum_n \bar{a}_n \bar{L}_{-n}} \right) \circ T_{\Sigma'}. \quad (2.21)$$

You can easily generalize this formula to the case of more than one outputs.

Proof. Let $\xi_\bullet \in \mathcal{H}^{\otimes(N-1)}$ and $\nu \in \mathcal{H}$. By (1.8), the correlation function (with N -inputs and no outputs) for Σ and Σ' are $\langle \Theta \cdot | T_\Sigma \cdot \rangle$ and $\langle \Theta \cdot | T_{\Sigma'} \cdot \rangle$ respectively. So by (2.16),

$$\begin{aligned} \langle \Theta \nu | T_\Sigma(\xi_\bullet) \rangle &= \langle \Theta(e^{\tau \sum_n a_n L_n} \otimes e^{\bar{\tau} \sum_n \bar{a}_n \bar{L}_n}) \nu | T_{\Sigma'}(\xi_\bullet) \rangle \\ &\stackrel{(2.20)}{=} \langle (e^{\bar{\tau} \sum_n \bar{a}_n L_n} \otimes e^{\tau \sum_n a_n \bar{L}_n}) \Theta \nu | T_{\Sigma'}(\xi_\bullet) \rangle \\ &\stackrel{\text{unitarity}}{=} \langle \Theta \nu | (e^{\tau \sum_n a_n L_{-n}} \otimes e^{\bar{\tau} \sum_n \bar{a}_n \bar{L}_{-n}}) T_{\Sigma'}(\xi_\bullet) \rangle. \end{aligned}$$

□

Exercise 2.9. Show that the formula (2.14) in Example 2.3 follows from (2.21).

2.14

In case you want to know why $(L_{-n} \otimes \mathbf{1}) = (L_n \otimes \mathbf{1})^\dagger$, we give a geometric explanation below, in which we pretend to ignore the issue of the uniqueness up to scalar additions/multiplications.

Proof. Let $\mathfrak{X} = (\mathbb{P}^1; 0, \infty; z, z^{-1})$ where z is the standard coordinate of \mathbb{C} , which gives the standard thin annulus $A_{1,1}$. Assume the two strings are incoming. We know the correlation function is $\langle \xi, \nu \rangle$, where we assume ξ is associated to the string around 0 and ν the one around ∞ .

Change the local coordinate z at 0 to σ_τ , and keep the other data of \mathfrak{X} . This changes $A_{1,1}$ to a new weird annulus A . By (2.16), the correlation function for A is

$$T_A(\xi \otimes \nu) = \langle (e^{-\tau \sum_n a_n L_n} \otimes e^{-\bar{\tau} \sum_n \bar{a}_n \bar{L}_n}) \xi, \nu \rangle.$$

Note that if we set $\zeta = \sigma_\tau(z)$, then $z^{-1} = 1/\sigma_\tau^{-1}(\zeta)$, which equals $1/\sigma_{-\tau}(\zeta)$ by the definition of flows. Namely, A is equivalent to the weird annulus whose incoming boundary parametrization is z and outgoing $1/\sigma_{-\tau}(z)$. To compute the correlation function for this choice of boundary parametrization, we note that the original $1/z$ at ∞ is changed to $1/\sigma_{-\tau}(z)$. Therefore, if we let $\gamma_\tau(z) = 1/\sigma_{-\tau}(1/z)$ which is a holomorphic flow generated by some $\sum_n b_n z^{n+1}$, then the expression for T_A is

$$T_A(\xi \otimes \nu) = \langle \xi, (e^{-\tau \sum_n b_n L_n} \otimes e^{-\bar{\tau} \sum_n \bar{b}_n \bar{L}_n}) \nu \rangle.$$

For the two expressions of T_A , we take the holomorphic derivative $-\partial_\tau$ at $\tau = 0$ to get

$$\sum a_n \langle (L_n \otimes \mathbf{1}) \xi, \nu \rangle = \sum b_n \langle \xi, (L_n \otimes \mathbf{1}) \nu \rangle.$$

To finish the proof, it suffices to prove $b_n = a_{-n}$.

Recall $\sum a_n z^{n+1} = \partial_\tau \sigma_\tau|_{\tau=0}$. Similarly, $\sum b_n z^{n+1} = \partial_\tau \gamma_\tau|_{\tau=0}$, which is

$$\begin{aligned} \partial_\tau (1/\sigma_{-\tau}(1/z))|_{\tau=0} &= -\frac{1}{\sigma_0(1/z)^2} \cdot \partial_\tau (\sigma_{-\tau}(1/z))|_{\tau=0} \\ &= z^2 \cdot \sum a_n (1/z)^{n+1} = \sum a_n z^{-n+1} = \sum a_{-n} z^{n+1}. \end{aligned}$$

□

2.15

As an easy application of our change of parametrization formula, we are able to describe the map $T_A : \mathcal{H} \rightarrow \mathcal{H}$ for an analytic annulus $A \in \mathbf{Ann}$ obtained from $(\mathbb{P}^1; 0, \infty; \eta_0, \eta_\infty)$ where η_0 and η_∞ are local coordinates at $0, \infty$ respectively. Set $\varpi = 1/z$. One can write

$$\eta_0(z) = \exp\left(\sum_{n \in \mathbb{N}} a_n z^{n+1} \partial_z\right)(z), \quad \eta_\infty(\varpi) = \exp\left(\sum_{n \in \mathbb{N}} b_n \varpi^{n+1} \partial_\varpi\right)(\varpi),$$

where the coefficients a_n, b_n can be determined using (2.13). (We will say more about determining the coefficients in the future.) When A is the standard thin annulus (i.e., when $\eta_0 : z \mapsto z, \eta_\infty : z \mapsto z^{-1}$), we know $T_A = \mathbf{1}$. Thus, in general, by (2.16) and (2.19), the map T_A is (up to scalar multiplications)

$$T_A = \left(e^{\sum_{n \in \mathbb{N}} -b_n L_{-n}} \otimes e^{\sum_{n \in \mathbb{N}} -\overline{b_n} \cdot \overline{L}_{-n}}\right) \cdot \left(e^{\sum_{n \in \mathbb{N}} -a_n L_n} \otimes e^{\sum_{n \in \mathbb{N}} -\overline{a_n} \cdot \overline{L}_n}\right).$$

The reason that only $n \in \mathbb{N}$ are involved is because η_0 and η_∞ can be defined near 0 and send 0 to 0. Indeed, for $f(z) = \sum_{n \in \mathbb{Z}} a_n z^{n+1}$, assume that $\exp(\tau f \partial_z)(z)$ is defined near 0 and sends 0 to 0 for all small τ . Then its derivative over τ at $z = 0$, which is $f(\exp(\tau f \partial_z)(0)) = f(0)$ by (2.14), should also be 0. So f must be of the form $\sum_{n \geq 0} a_n z^{n+1}$.

2.16

We call those in 2.10 and 2.11 **change of (boundary) parametrizations** in general, and those in 2.15 **change of (local) coordinates**. The former contains the latter.

When changing the boundary parametrizations, the standard coordinate z could be changed to σ_τ not necessarily defined at 0, or more generally, a local coordinate (say) η_1 of an N -pointed $\mathfrak{X} = (C; x_\bullet; \eta_\bullet)$ is changed to $\sigma_\tau \circ \eta_1$. This changes the boundary-parametrized Riemann surface Σ to Σ' . Note that this process does not violate our definition of *analytic* boundary parametrizations in 1.2: The new surface Σ' is obtained from a new N -pointed one $\mathfrak{X}' = (C'; x_\bullet; \sigma_\tau \circ \eta_1, \eta_1, \dots, \eta_N)$ where C' is a new compact Riemann surface, which is defined by gluing Σ with N pieces of unit discs \mathbb{D}_1 using

the maps $\sigma_\tau \circ \eta_1, \eta_2, \dots, \eta_N$. (If you use the maps η_1, \dots, η_N instead, you simply get C .) Thus, *for the change of boundary parametrizations in general, the underlying compact Riemann surfaces C could be changed.*

By change of coordinates, we mean \mathfrak{X} is changed to $\mathfrak{X}' = (C; x_\bullet; \eta'_\bullet)$ with the same underlying compact Riemann surface C and the same marked points x_\bullet as the original ones but different local coordinates at these marked points. As mentioned in 2.15, in this process, only L_0, L_1, L_2, \dots (and also $\bar{L}_0, \bar{L}_1, \bar{L}_2, \dots$) are involved, while in the change of boundary parametrizations, all L_n are involved.

In the previous discussions, almost all formulas hold only up to scalar multiplications or additions. However, when only $L_{-1}, L_0, L_1, L_2, \dots$ are involved, the interaction maps T_Σ can indeed be chosen such that all the formulas truly hold, not just up to scalar multiplications or additions. This is because the conformal anomaly is due to the central term $c \cdot (m^3 - m)\delta_{m,-n}/12$ in the Virasoro relation (2.8), which vanishes when $m, n \geq -1$. Note that L_{-1} is responsible for translation. Thus:

Principle 2.10. T_Σ can be chosen to have no ambiguity when changing the local coordinates, or when translating a marked point x_i with respect to its local coordinate η_i .

To be more precise: We fix a compact Riemann surface C . Then for each choice of N marked points x_\bullet and local coordinates η_\bullet , we can choose the correlation function $T_{\mathfrak{X}} : \mathcal{H}^{\otimes N} \rightarrow \mathbb{C}$ associated to the boundary parametrized surface associated to $\mathfrak{X} = (C; x_\bullet; \eta_\bullet)$ such that

- For another choice of N -pointed $\mathfrak{X}' = (C; x_\bullet; \eta'_\bullet)$ with the same marked points and different local coordinates η'_\bullet , $T_{\mathfrak{X}}$ and $T_{\mathfrak{X}'}$ are related by (2.16).
- If $\mathfrak{X}' = (C; x'_1, x_2, \dots, x_N; \eta'_1, \eta_2, \dots, \eta_N)$ where $\eta'_1 = \eta_1 - \eta_1(x'_1)$, and if x'_1 is inside an open disc U_1 centered at x_1 on which η_1 is holomorphically defined (more precisely, this means $\eta_1(U_1)$ is an open disc centered at $\eta_1(x_1) = 0$), then $T_{\mathfrak{X}}$ and $T_{\mathfrak{X}'}$ are related by (2.16), namely, (noticing (2.15) for $n = 1$)

$$T_{\mathfrak{X}}(\xi_1 \otimes \dots \otimes \xi_N) = T_{\mathfrak{X}'}\left((e^{-\eta_1(x'_1)L_{-1}} \otimes e^{-\overline{\eta_1(x'_1)}\bar{L}_{-1}})\xi_1 \otimes \xi_2 \otimes \dots \otimes \xi_N\right). \quad (2.22)$$

A similar principle holds when $T_{\mathfrak{X}}$ has output strings. □

Recall the geometric picture described in 2.11. We see that when changing local coordinates, everything in 2.11 truly holds, not just up to scalar multiplications. In particular, the abstract vector $\tilde{\xi}_1$ is uniquely determined when only the change of local coordinates are allowed.

2.17

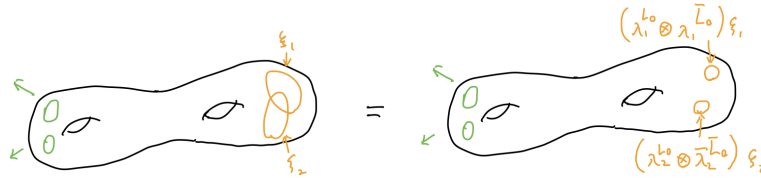
Assumption 2.11. We drop Assumption 1.1 for the incoming strings when we associate only finite energy vectors (i.e., vectors of $\mathbb{W}_i \otimes \widehat{\mathbb{W}}_i, \mathbb{V} \otimes \widehat{\mathbb{V}}$, etc.) to the incoming strings. Instead, we only assume that the (distinct) incoming points are outside the outgoing strings.

In this course, we will be mainly interested in finite energy vectors. Therefore, we do not assume that each $\eta_i(U_i)$ contains \mathbb{D}_1^1 , or that U_i and U_j are disjoint for different i and j . In the latter case, the two boundary strings $\eta_i^{-1}(\mathbb{S}^1)$ and $\eta_j^{-1}(\mathbb{S}^1)$ possibly overlap. What does this picture actually mean?

Note that multiplying η_i by $\lambda\eta_i$ amounts to shrinking the size of the string $\eta_i^{-1}(\mathbb{S}^1)$ by $|\lambda|$ and then rotating the string. If $\lambda > 0$ then there is only shrinking but not rotating. Thus, for an local coordinated N -pointed $\mathfrak{X} = (C; x_\bullet; \eta_\bullet)$, we can find $\lambda_1, \dots, \lambda_N \in \mathbb{C}^\times$ with large enough absolute values such that the new data $\mathfrak{X}' = (C; x_\bullet; \lambda_1\eta_1, \dots, \lambda_N\eta_N)$ satisfies Assumption 1.1. Then for finite energy vectors $\xi_1, \dots, \xi_N \in \mathcal{H}^{\text{fin}} = \bigoplus_i \mathbb{W}_i \otimes \widehat{\mathbb{W}}_i$, $T_{\mathfrak{X}}(\xi_1 \otimes \dots \otimes \xi_N)$ is understood as

$$T_{\mathfrak{X}}(\xi_1 \otimes \dots \otimes \xi_N) := T_{\mathfrak{X}'}\left((\lambda_1^{L_0} \otimes \overline{\lambda_1}^{\overline{L}_0})\xi_1 \otimes \dots \otimes (\lambda_N^{L_0} \otimes \overline{\lambda_N}^{\overline{L}_0})\xi_N\right). \quad (2.23)$$

This definition is independent of the choice of sufficiently large $\lambda_1, \dots, \lambda_N$. And each $\lambda_j^{L_0} \otimes \overline{\lambda_j}^{\overline{L}_0}$ acts diagonally on \mathcal{H}^{fin} since $L_0 \otimes \overline{L}_0$ does. (Recall Assumption 2.4.)



In the spirit of the previous subsection, you should view the finite energy vectors ξ_j and $(\lambda_j^{L_0} \otimes \overline{\lambda_j}^{\overline{L}_0})\xi_j$ not as different vectors, but as two coordinate representations of the same vector $\tilde{\xi}_j$. When $|\lambda_j|$ becomes infinitely large, the string for ξ_j shrinks to an infinitesimal one around x_j , i.e., it shrinks to x_j as a **puncture**. It is very useful to view the abstract finite energy vector $\tilde{\xi}_j$ not associated to any particular string, but associated to that puncture x_j . Thus, the marked points x_\bullet of \mathfrak{X} are also called punctures.

Remark 2.12. A side note: When we do local coordinate changes, finite energy vectors are changed to finite energy ones.

Therefore, in the above discussion, we don't have to stick to change of coordinates of the form $\eta_j \mapsto \lambda_j\eta_j$: any local coordinate change is valid. We will prove the above claim in later sections.

2.18

Let us choose $\mathbb{W}_i \otimes \widehat{\mathbb{W}}_i$ inside \mathcal{H}^{fin} . According to Assumption 2.4, the eigenvalues of the diagonalizable operators L_0 (on \mathbb{W}_i) and \overline{L}_0 (on $\widehat{\mathbb{W}}_i$) are ≥ 0 . Now choose eigenvectors $w \in \mathbb{W}_i$ and $\hat{w} \in \widehat{\mathbb{W}}_i$ with $L_0 w = \Delta w$, $\overline{L}_0 \hat{w} = \hat{\Delta} \hat{w}$ where $\Delta, \hat{\Delta} \geq 0$.

Here is an important point about the two eigenvalues. They are not necessarily integers, which means that $\lambda^{L_0} w$ and $\overline{\lambda}^{\overline{L}_0} \hat{w}$ might be *multivalued with respect to λ* , i.e., they may also depend on the choice of argument $\arg \lambda$. However, according to the No-Ambiguity Principle 2.10, the expression

$$(\lambda^{L_0} \otimes \overline{\lambda}^{\overline{L}_0})(w \otimes \hat{w}) = \lambda^{\Delta} \overline{\lambda}^{\hat{\Delta}} \cdot w \otimes \hat{w}$$

must be single-valued with respect to λ , namely, it does not rely on the choice of $\arg \lambda$. As $\lambda = |\lambda|e^{i\arg \lambda}$ and hence $\lambda^\Delta \bar{\lambda}^{\hat{\Delta}} = |\lambda|^{\Delta+\hat{\Delta}} e^{i(\Delta-\hat{\Delta})\arg \lambda}$, we conclude that

$$\Delta - \hat{\Delta} \in \mathbb{Z}. \quad (2.24)$$

This gives a constraint on the possible $\mathbb{V} \otimes \hat{\mathbb{V}}$ -submodules of \mathcal{H}^{fin} .

That $\lambda^{L_0} w$ could be multivalued is a crucial property in CFT, and it is not related to conformal anomaly. Indeed, it is related to the non-uniqueness of decomposing T_Σ into conformal blocks. Thus, *the No-Ambiguity Principle 2.10 does not hold for conformal blocks.*

3 Definition of VOAs, I

3.1

We first give the rigorous definition of vertex operators algebras and a slightly weaker version, graded vertex algebras. Then we explain the meanings of the axioms.

Definition 3.1. A **graded vertex algebra** is a (complex) vector space \mathbb{V} together with a diagonalizable operator L_0 acting on \mathbb{V} whose eigenvalues are inside \mathbb{N} . We write the L_0 -grading of \mathbb{V} as $\mathbb{V} = \bigoplus_{n \in \mathbb{N}} \mathbb{V}(n)$. Any eigenvector v of L_0 (including 0) is called (L_0) -**homogeneous**, and if $v \in \mathbb{V}(n)$ (i.e. $L_0 v = nv$), we write $\text{wt} v = n$ and call $\text{wt} v$ the **weight** of v . Moreover, we have a linear map

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbb{V} &\rightarrow (\text{End}(\mathbb{V}))[[z^{\pm 1}]] \\ u &\mapsto Y(u, z) \equiv \sum_{n \in \mathbb{Z}} Y(u)_n z^{-n-1} \end{aligned} \quad (3.1)$$

where each $Y(u)_n \in \text{End}(\mathbb{V})$ is called a **(Fourier) mode**. Here, z is treated as a formal variable. Thus $Y(u, z)v \in \mathbb{V}[[z^{\pm 1}]]$ for each $v \in \mathbb{V}$. The reason for associating z^{-n-1} to $Y(u)_n$ is because we could have (recalling (0.2))

$$\text{Res}_{z=0} Y(u, z) z^n dz = Y(u)_n. \quad (3.2)$$

$Y(u, z)$ is called a **vertex operator**.

Moreover, the following axioms are satisfied:

- There is a distinguished vector $\mathbf{1} \in \mathbb{V}(0)$ called **vacuum vector** such that

$$Y(\mathbf{1}, z) = \mathbf{1}_{\mathbb{V}}.$$

Namely $Y(\mathbf{1})_{-1} = \mathbf{1}_{\mathbb{V}}$ and $Y(\mathbf{1})_n = 0$ if $n \neq -1$.

- **Creation property:** For each $v \in \mathbb{V}$, $Y(v, z)\mathbf{1} = v + \bullet z + \bullet z^2 + \cdots$ where each \bullet is in \mathbb{V} . Namely,

$$Y(v)_{-1}\mathbf{1} = v, \quad (3.3)$$

and $Y(v)_n \mathbf{1} = 0$ for all $n > -1$. This property is abbreviated to

$$\lim_{z \rightarrow 0} Y(v, z)\mathbf{1} = v.$$

- **Grading property:** For each $v \in \mathbb{V}$,

$$[L_0, Y(v, z)] = Y(L_0 v, z) + z \frac{d}{dz} Y(v, z). \quad (3.4)$$

- **Translation property:** There is a distinguished linear operator L_{-1} on \mathbb{V} such that

$$L_{-1} \mathbf{1} = 0, \quad (3.5)$$

and that for each $v \in \mathbb{V}$,

$$[L_{-1}, Y(v, z)] = \frac{d}{dz} Y(v, z). \quad (3.6)$$

- **Jacobi identity:** This is the most crucial yet complicated axiom. We postpone its definition to the next section. (See Def. 4.5.)

We say that \mathbb{V} is a **vertex operator algebra** (VOA) if L_0, L_{-1} can be extended to a sequence of linear operators $(L_n)_{n \in \mathbb{Z}}$ on \mathbb{V} satisfying the Virasoro relation (2.8) for some central charge $c \in \mathbb{C}$, and if there is a distinguished vector $\mathbf{c} \in \mathbb{V}$, called the **conformal vector**, such that

$$Y(\mathbf{c})_n = L_{n-1}, \quad (3.7)$$

or equivalently,

$$Y(\mathbf{c}, z) = \sum_{n \in \mathbb{Z}} L_n z^{-n-2}. \quad (3.8)$$

□

You may wonder why the right hand side of (3.7) is not L_n or L_{n-a} for some constant $a \neq 1$. Indeed, if it were not L_{n-1} , then the Virasoro relation would be not compatible with the Jacobi identity. We will explain this in more details after defining the Jacobi identity. (See Exercise 5.4.)

We warn the readers that our definitions of graded vertex algebras and VOAs are slightly stronger than the usual ones in the VOA literature, which do not require L_0 to have non-negative eigenvalues. This positivity condition $L_0 \geq 0$ is very mild and satisfied by most interesting examples including all unitary ones. Since assuming this condition will simplify proofs, we keep it in our definition.

Also, in most interesting cases, each $\mathbb{V}(n)$ is finite-dimensional. We do not include this in our definition of VOA here, but we will assume this fact in later sections.

Most VOA textbooks and articles use either ω or ν to denote the conformal vector \mathbf{c} . In our notes, ω and ν are reserved for other meanings and hence do not denote conformal vectors in order to avoid conflicts of notations.

The reason why we should assume that $\sum L_n z^{-n-2}$ can be written as $Y(\mathbf{c}, z)$ for some $\mathbf{c} \in \mathbb{V}$ will not be explained in this section. We will explain it in Subsec. 5.4.

There is a notion of **unitary VOA** which we do not define in this course (although our motivations are mainly from unitary CFTs). We refer the readers to [CKLW18, DL14] for details.

3.2

Before we give the motivations for these axioms, let us first derive some useful facts.

Expand the series (3.4) and take the coefficients before each z^{-n-1} . This gives us the following equivalent form of grading property:

$$[L_0, Y(v)_n] = Y(L_0 v)_n - (n+1)Y(v)_n. \quad (3.9)$$

To be more concrete, assuming that v is homogeneous, then

$$[L_0, Y(v)_n] = (\text{wt} v - n - 1)Y(v)_n. \quad (3.10)$$

Namely: $Y(v)_n$ raises the weights by $\text{wt} v - n - 1$. It is useful to keep in mind that in the VOA theory, $Y(v)_n$ raises weights when n is sufficiently negative, and lowers weights when n is sufficiently positive. As a related fact, as

$$[L_0, L_n] = -nL_n \quad (3.11)$$

by the Virasoro relation (2.8), L_{-n} raises (resp. L_n lowers) the weights by n .

Remark 3.2. As an application of (3.11), we compute $L_n \mathbf{c}$ when $n \geq 0$. Since

$$\mathbf{c} = Y(\mathbf{c})_{-1} \mathbf{1} = L_{-2} \mathbf{1}, \quad (3.12)$$

and since L_{-2} raises the weights by 2, we see that

$$L_0 \mathbf{c} = 2\mathbf{c}. \quad (3.13)$$

By $[L_1, L_{-2}] = 3L_{-1}$, $[L_2, L_{-2}] = 4L_0 + \frac{1}{2}c$, and that $L_n \mathbf{1} = 0$ whenever $n > 0$ (since its weight is < 0), we have

$$L_1 \mathbf{c} = 0, \quad L_2 \mathbf{c} = \frac{c}{2} \mathbf{1}. \quad (3.14)$$

3.3

By (3.10), for each $u, v \in \mathbb{V}$, we know that $Y(u)_n v$ vanishes when n is sufficiently large. Equivalently, we have

$$Y(u, z)v \in \mathbb{C}((z)). \quad (3.15)$$

This important fact is called the **lower truncation property**. It allows us to use meromorphic functions to study VOAs.

In the definition of graded vertex algebras, if the grading property is replaced by the lower truncation property, and if in particular the diagonalizable L_0 is not introduced, then \mathbb{V} is called a **vertex algebra**. We will not address this most general notion in our notes.

3.4

We let

$$\mathbb{V}' = \bigoplus_{n \in \mathbb{N}} \mathbb{V}(n)^*$$

where $\mathbb{V}(n)^*$ is the dual space of \mathbb{V} . \mathbb{V}' is called the **graded dual space** of \mathbb{V} . We let L_0 act on \mathbb{V}' such that $L_0 v' = n v'$ whenever $v' \in \mathbb{V}(n)^*$. Then $L_0^t = L_0$. As before, a **homogeneous** vector of \mathbb{V}' is either 0 or an eigenvector of L_0 . From our definition, it is clear that the evaluation between $\mathbb{V}'(m) = \mathbb{V}(m)^*$ and $\mathbb{V}(n)$ vanishes if $m \neq n$.

Proposition 3.3. *For each $u, v \in \mathbb{V}, v' \in \mathbb{V}', \langle v', Y(u, z)v \rangle := \sum_{n \in \mathbb{Z}} \langle v', Y(u)_n v \rangle z^{-n-1}$ is a Laurent polynomial of z , i.e.,*

$$\langle v', Y(u, z)v \rangle \in \mathbb{C}[z^{\pm 1}].$$

Thus, when evaluating between **finite energy vectors** (i.e., vectors of \mathbb{V} and \mathbb{V}'), $Y(u, z)$ is not only a formal series, but a meromorphic function of \mathbb{P}^1 with poles at $0, \infty$.

Proof. We must show that $\sum_{n \in \mathbb{Z}} \langle v', Y(u)_n v \rangle z^{-n-1}$ is a finite sum. By linearity, it suffices to assume that u, v, v' are homogeneous. Then $Y(u)_n v$ is homogeneous with weight $\text{wt}u + \text{wt}v - n - 1$. So $\langle v', Y(u)_n v \rangle$ is non-zero only if $\text{wt}v' = \text{wt}u + \text{wt}v - n - 1$. Thus

$$\langle v', Y(u, z)v \rangle = \langle v', Y(u)_{\text{wt}u + \text{wt}v - \text{wt}v' - 1} v \rangle \cdot z^{\text{wt}v' - \text{wt}u - \text{wt}v}.$$

□

Remark 3.4. The formula $\lim_{z \rightarrow 0} Y(u, z)\mathbf{1}$ can now be understood in an analytic sense: By the creation property, for each $v' \in \mathbb{V}, \langle v', Y(u, z)\mathbf{1} \rangle$ is a polynomial of z since it has no negative powers of z . So

$$\lim_{z \rightarrow 0} \langle v', Y(u, z)\mathbf{1} \rangle = \langle v', u \rangle \quad (3.16)$$

where the left hand side is the limit of a polynomial function.

3.5

The grading and the translation properties were presented in the “derivative form”. We shall present them in the integral form. To prepare for this task, we introduce

$$\mathbb{V}^{\text{cl}} := \prod_{n \in \mathbb{N}} \mathbb{V}(n) = \{(v_0, v_1, v_2, \dots) : v_n \in \mathbb{V}(n)\}, \quad (3.17)$$

called the **algebraic completion** of \mathbb{V} . \mathbb{V}^{cl} is naturally a subspace of the dual space $(\mathbb{V}')^*$ of \mathbb{V}' . (Indeed, we are mostly interested in the case that each $\mathbb{V}(n)$ is finite dimensional. In such case, one checks easily that $\mathbb{V}^{\text{cl}} = (\mathbb{V}')^*$.) We let

$$P_n : \mathbb{V}^{\text{cl}} \rightarrow \mathbb{V}(n), \quad (v_0, v_1, v_2, \dots) \mapsto v_n \quad (3.18)$$

be the canonical projection onto the n -th component. Then for each $z \in \mathbb{C}^\times = \mathbb{C} \setminus \{0\}$, we have

$$Y(u, z)v \in \mathbb{V}^{\text{cl}}$$

whose projection onto $\mathbb{V}(\text{wt}u + \text{wt}v - n - 1)$ is $Y(u)_n v \cdot z^{-n-1}$.

Note that L_0 and λ^{L_0} act on \mathbb{V}^{cl} in an obvious way:

$$L_0(v_n)_{n \in \mathbb{N}} = (nv_n)_{n \in \mathbb{N}}, \quad \lambda^{L_0}(v_n)_{n \in \mathbb{N}} = (\lambda^n v_n)_{n \in \mathbb{N}}.$$

3.6

Proposition 3.5 (Scale covariance). *For each $\lambda \in \mathbb{C}^\times$, we have*

$$\lambda^{L_0} Y(u, z) \lambda^{-L_0} v = Y(\lambda^{L_0} u, \lambda z) v \quad (3.19)$$

on the level of \mathbb{V}^{cl} . We drop the symbol v and simply write the above relation as

$$\lambda^{L_0} Y(u, z) \lambda^{-L_0} = Y(\lambda^{L_0} u, \lambda z).$$

The method in the following proof will appear repeatedly in our notes.

Proof. Recall $L_0^t = L_0$. Fix $z \in \mathbb{C}^\times$. We prove that for each homogeneous u, v, v' ,

$$\langle \lambda^{L_0} v', Y(u, z) \lambda^{-L_0} v \rangle = \langle v', Y(\lambda^{L_0} u, \lambda z) v \rangle. \quad (3.20)$$

The left hand side f is a scalar times $\lambda^{\text{wt}v' - \text{wt}v}$, and the right hand side g is a Laurent polynomial of λ . So both are holomorphic functions on \mathbb{C}^\times . Clearly these two expressions are equal when $\lambda = 1$. Let us prove that they are equal for all $\lambda \neq 0$ by showing that they satisfy the same differential equation.

From the form of f , it is clear that $\partial_\lambda f(\lambda) = (\text{wt}v' - \text{wt}v) \lambda^{-1} f(\lambda)$. To compute $\partial_\lambda g$, we first compute an easier derivative $\partial_\lambda \langle v', Y(u, \lambda z) v \rangle$. By the chain rule, we have

$$\frac{\partial}{\partial \lambda} \langle v', Y(u, \lambda z) v \rangle = z \frac{d}{d\zeta} \langle v', Y(u, \zeta) v \rangle \Big|_{\zeta = \lambda z},$$

which, due to the grading property, equals

$$\begin{aligned} & \lambda^{-1} \langle v', ([L_0, Y(u, \lambda z)] - Y(L_0 u, \lambda z)) v \rangle \\ &= (\text{wt}v' - \text{wt}v - \text{wt}u) \lambda^{-1} \langle v', Y(u, \lambda z) v \rangle. \end{aligned}$$

So

$$\partial_\lambda g(\lambda) = \partial_\lambda \langle v', Y(\lambda^{L_0} u, \lambda z) v \rangle = \partial_\lambda (\lambda^{\text{wt}u} \langle v', Y(u, \lambda z) v \rangle) = (\text{wt}v' - \text{wt}v) \lambda^{-1} g(\lambda).$$

□

Informally, the integral form (3.19) (i.e., the scale covariance) also implies the derivative form (3.9) by taking partial derivative over λ . Thus, on a non-rigorous level, these two forms are equivalent. But the integral form has a clearer geometric meaning, which we shall give later.

In the above proof, we have done our first serious VOA calculation. You should be so familiar with these computations that you can “immediately see” the equivalence of the two forms.

The integral form of $[L_{-1}, Y(u, z)] = \partial_z Y(u, z)$ is

$$e^{\tau L_{-1}} Y(u, z) e^{-\tau L_{-1}} = Y(u, z + \tau),$$

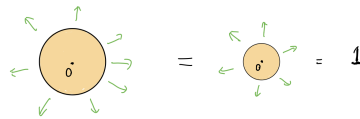
called the **translation covariance**. You may give an informal proof yourself by checking that both sides satisfy the same “linear differential equation”. A rigorous treatment is more difficult than the scale covariance. So we leave it to the end of this section.

3.7

We now explain the motivations behind the definition of VOAs. Namely, we shall explain how the axioms are natural assumptions from the point of view of the previous two sections. The following explanations are heuristic and non-rigorous.

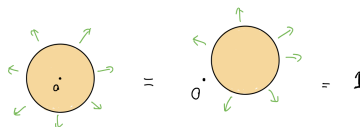
Recall the non-rigorous “definition” of \mathbb{V} in (1.11). We know that \mathbb{V} and $\widehat{\mathbb{V}}$ are subspaces of \mathcal{H}^{fin} , and the decomposition of \mathcal{H}^{fin} into $\mathbb{V} \otimes \widehat{\mathbb{V}}$ -submodules contains a piece $\mathbb{V} \otimes \widehat{\mathbb{V}}$, which furthermore contains $\mathbb{V} \simeq \mathbb{V} \otimes \mathbf{1}$ and $\widehat{\mathbb{V}} \simeq \mathbf{1} \otimes \widehat{\mathbb{V}}$. The vacuum vector is $\mathbf{1} \simeq \mathbf{1} \otimes \mathbf{1}$.

We have said in Subsection 1.8 that the standard unit closed disc \mathbb{D}_1^{cl} with no input and whose boundary \mathbb{S}^1 is parametrized by $z \mapsto z^{-1}$ produces from nothing the vacuum vector $\mathbf{1} \otimes \mathbf{1}$. Namely, the vacuum vector comes from the data $(\mathbb{P}^1; \infty; \zeta^{-1})$ where ζ is the standard coordinate. This data is equivalent to $(\mathbb{P}^1; \infty; \lambda^{-1} \zeta^{-1})$ (where $\lambda \in \mathbb{C}^\times$) via the biholomorphism $z \in \mathbb{P}^1 \mapsto \lambda z \in \mathbb{P}^1$. By the change of local coordinate formula (Principle 2.10), the later geometric data produces uniquely the vector $(\lambda^{L_0} \otimes \bar{\lambda}^{\bar{L}_0}) \mathbf{1}$, which is equal to $\mathbf{1}$ by the equivalence of the two geometric data. Apply ∂_λ and $\partial_{\bar{\lambda}}$ to $(\lambda^{L_0} \otimes \bar{\lambda}^{\bar{L}_0}) \mathbf{1} = \mathbf{1}$, we see that $L_0 \mathbf{1} = \bar{L}_0 \mathbf{1} = 0$. This explain $\mathbf{1} \in \mathbb{V}(0)$ in Def. 3.1.



Consequently, by (2.24), the eigenvalues of L_0 are integers, and hence ≥ 0 integers by the positive energy Assumption 2.4. This explains $\text{Spec}(L_0) \subset \mathbb{N}$.

Similarly, the standard disc \mathbb{D}_1^{cl} is equivalent to its translation by some $\tau \in \mathbb{C}$. So we must have $(e^{\tau L_{-1}} \otimes e^{\bar{\tau} \bar{L}_{-1}}) \mathbf{1} = \mathbf{1}$ and hence, similarly, $L_{-1} \mathbf{1} = \bar{L}_{-1} \mathbf{1} = 0$. This explains part of the translation property.



3.8

Recall

$$[L_0, L_n] = -nL_n, \quad [\bar{L}_0, \bar{L}_n] = -n\bar{L}_n. \quad (3.21)$$

As the L_0 and \bar{L}_0 spectral are ≥ 0 , and since $\mathbf{1}$ is a zero eigenvectors of them, we must have

$$L_n \mathbf{1} = \bar{L}_n \mathbf{1} = 0 \quad (n \geq -1). \quad (3.22)$$

From (3.22), we see that for each $v \in \mathbb{V}$, if the change of boundary parametrization does not involve L_{-2}, L_{-3}, \dots and $\bar{L}_{-2}, \bar{L}_{-3}, \dots$, then all \bar{L}_n can be ignored:

$$(e^{\sum_{n \geq -1} a_n L_n} \otimes e^{\sum_{n \geq -1} \bar{a}_n \bar{L}_n})v = e^{\sum_{n \geq -1} a_n L_n} v. \quad (3.23)$$

To see this, identify v with $v \otimes \mathbf{1} \in \mathbb{V} \otimes \hat{\mathbb{V}} \subset \mathcal{H}$ and note that $\mathbf{1}$ is fixed by $e^{\sum_{n \geq -1} \bar{a}_n \bar{L}_n}$.

Thus, we conclude: *The translation of the change of local coordinates formula for vectors of \mathbb{V} does not involve \bar{L}_n .* In particular, note that the right hand side of (3.23) is almost a vector of \mathbb{V} . It is a genuine vector of \mathbb{V} when it has finite energy. Thus, *the change of local coordinates and the translation almost preserve \mathbb{V} .* Indeed, the change of local coordinates truly preserve \mathbb{V} , as we will see in later sections.

A general change of *boundary parametrization* does not necessarily preserve \mathbb{V} in any weak sense.

3.9

Let us describe the meaning of $Y(u, z)v$. For each $z \in \mathbb{C}^\times$, we define a local-coordinated 3-pointed sphere

$$\mathfrak{P}_z = \{\mathbb{P}^1; 0, z, \infty; \zeta, \zeta - z, \zeta^{-1}\} \quad (3.24)$$

where ζ is the standard coordinate of \mathbb{C} .

Let us regard $0, z$ as incoming punctures and ∞ outgoing. Roughly speaking, $Y(u, z)v$ is just $T_{\mathfrak{P}_z}(v \otimes u)$ where v is associate to 0 and u to z , understood in a suitable way by change of coordinates. Assume first of all that $0 < |z| < 1$. After scaling ζ and $\zeta - z$ to $\lambda_1 \zeta, \lambda_2(\zeta - z)$ and hence shrinking the two incoming strings, Assumption 1.1 is satisfied. Let the new N -pointed sphere by denoted by $\mathfrak{P}_z^{\lambda_1, \lambda_2}$. Note that v in the ζ coordinate becomes $(\lambda_1^{L_0} \otimes \bar{\lambda}_1^{\bar{L}_0})v = \lambda_1^{L_0} v$ in the $\lambda_1 \zeta$ coordinate. Similarly, u becomes $\lambda_2^{L_0} u$ in the new coordinate. Then $Y(u, z)v$ is (physically) defined as $T_{\mathfrak{P}_z^{\lambda_1, \lambda_2}}(\lambda_1^{L_0} v \otimes \lambda_2^{L_0} u)$.

As in Subsec. 2.17, we can use the *puncture picture* to view u and v as the states associated to the punctures $0, z$ with respect to the local coordinates $\zeta, \zeta - z$. Or moreover, formulated in a coordinate independent way as in Subsec. 2.11, we associate the abstract vector $\mathcal{U}(\zeta)^{-1}v$ (the one whose explicit expression under the coordinate ζ is v)

to the puncture 0 and $\mathcal{U}(\zeta - z)^{-1}v$ to z . Then:

$$Y(u, z)v = \begin{array}{c} \text{Puncture Picture} \end{array} = \begin{array}{c} \text{String Picture} \end{array} \quad (3.25)$$

According to the notation in Subsec. 2.11, the abstract vectors should be written as $(\mathcal{U}(\zeta) \otimes \mathcal{U}(\zeta^*))^{-1}v$ and $(\mathcal{U}(\zeta - z) \otimes \mathcal{U}((\zeta - z)^*))^{-1}u$. Here we suppress the second tensor component because, by (3.23), the change of local coordinates for vectors of \mathbb{V} does not involve \bar{L}_n .

3.10

In the string picture of (3.25), setting u to be $\mathbf{1}$ means filling the hole around z using the solid disc. The result we get is an annulus $\mathcal{A}_{\lambda_1,1}$ with inside parametrization $\lambda_1\zeta$ and outside one ζ^{-1} .¹ According to the change of coordinate formula, the interaction map $\mathcal{H} \rightarrow \mathcal{H}$ for this annulus satisfies $T_{\mathcal{A}_{\lambda_1,1}}(\lambda_1^{L_0}v) = T_{\mathcal{A}_{1,1}}v = v$. This explains $Y(\mathbf{1}, z)v = v$.

If we set $v = \mathbf{1}$ instead, then we fill the hold around 0 with the solid disc. The result we get is an eccentric annulus $\mathcal{A}_{z,\lambda_2,1}$ with inside boundary parametrization $\lambda_2(\zeta - z)$ and outside one ζ^{-1} . Let $T_{\mathcal{A}_{z,\lambda_2,1}} : \mathcal{H} \rightarrow \mathcal{H}$ be the interaction map. Then, by (3.25), $Y(u, z)\mathbf{1} = T_{\mathcal{A}_{z,\lambda_2,1}}(\lambda_2^{L_0}u)$. Let $z \rightarrow 0$. Then $\mathcal{A}_{z,\lambda_2,1}$ converges to $\mathcal{A}_{0,\lambda_2,1}$, which is just the concentric annulus $\mathcal{A}_{\lambda_2,1}$. We have $T_{\mathcal{A}_{\lambda_2,1}}(\lambda_2^{L_0}u) = u$. This explains $\lim_{z \rightarrow 0} Y(u, z)\mathbf{1} = u$.

3.11

For a general $z \in \mathbb{C}^\times$, in the string picture, we must also shrink the outgoing string in order to get a true surface Σ . We thus choose $\lambda \in \mathbb{C}^\times$ with $|\lambda| > 1$. Let

$$\mathfrak{P}_z^{\lambda_1, \lambda_2, \lambda} = \{\mathbb{P}^1; 0, z, \infty; \lambda_1\zeta, \lambda_2(\zeta - z); \lambda\zeta^{-1}\}.$$

Then $Y(u, z)v$ is physically “defined” to be

$$Y(u, z)v = \lambda^{L_0} T_{\mathfrak{P}_z^{\lambda_1, \lambda_2, \lambda}}(\lambda_1^{L_0}v \otimes \lambda_2^{L_0}u). \quad (3.26)$$

In the puncture picture, it is

$$Y(u, z)v = \lambda^{L_0} \cdot$$

¹We have previously defined an annulus $\mathcal{A}_{r,R}$ with incoming string $|z| = r$ and outgoing $|z| = R$. According to that definition, $\mathcal{A}_{r^{-1},1} = \mathcal{A}_{r,1}$.

The meaning of $Y(u)_n$ is clear:

$$\langle v', Y(u)_n v \rangle = \oint_0 \langle v', Y(u, z) v \rangle z^n \cdot \frac{dz}{2i\pi} = \text{Res}_{z=0} \langle v', Y(u, z) v \rangle z^n dz.$$

where the subscript under \oint means that the integral is over any loop around 0.

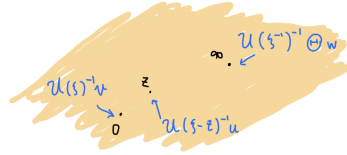
3.12

If we prefer not to scale ζ^{-1} , we can make the output point ∞ input. To do this, note that from Subsec. 1.14 and 1.15, we know that each $\Theta(\mathbb{W}_i \otimes \widehat{\mathbb{W}}_i)$ is equivalent to $\mathbb{W}'_i \otimes \widehat{\mathbb{W}}'_i$, the space of finite energy dual vectors on $\mathbb{W}_i \otimes \widehat{\mathbb{W}}_i$. In the case of \mathbb{V} , we get an equivalence

$$\Theta\mathbb{V} \xrightarrow{\simeq} \mathbb{V}', \quad \Theta w \mapsto \langle \Theta w, \cdot \rangle|_{\mathbb{V}} = \langle w | \cdot \rangle|_{\mathbb{V}}$$

where $\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle$ is the correlation function associated to $A_{1,1}$. (From $\langle w | \cdot \rangle|_{\mathbb{V}}$ you can see why this linear map is an isomorphism. Here, you may assume each $\mathbb{V}(n)$ is finite-dimensional, or even pretend that \mathbb{V} is finite dimensional.) Then in the puncture picture, the vertex operator and the correlation function of \mathfrak{P}_z (restricted to a linear functional on $\mathbb{V} \otimes \mathbb{V} \otimes \Theta\mathbb{V} \simeq \mathbb{V} \otimes \mathbb{V} \otimes \mathbb{V}'$) are related by

$$\langle \Theta w, Y(u, z) v \rangle = \langle w | Y(u, z) v \rangle \stackrel{(1.8)}{=}$$



for all $u, v, w \in \mathbb{V}$ and hence $\Theta w \in \Theta\mathbb{V} \simeq \mathbb{V}'$.

3.13

We actually have

$$\Theta\mathbb{V} = \mathbb{V} \tag{3.27}$$

and similarly $\Theta\widehat{\mathbb{V}} = \widehat{\mathbb{V}}$. An explanation is as follows:

Proof. First of all, Θ maps finite energy vectors to finite energy ones since Θ commutes with the energy operators $L_0 \otimes \mathbf{1}, \mathbf{1} \otimes \bar{L}_0$. (See Subsec. 2.13.) By the physical definition of \mathbb{V} in (1.11), for each $u \in \mathbb{V}$, the correlation function T_z associated to $\mathfrak{P}_{z,r,R} = (\mathbb{P}^1; z, \infty; (\zeta - z)/r, R/\zeta)$ varies holomorphically if u is associated to the puncture z . Namely, $T_z(u \otimes \nu)$ is holomorphic for all $\nu \in \mathcal{H}$. It is easy to see that the conjugate of $\mathfrak{P}_{z,r,R}$ is equivalent (via the standard conjugation of the complex plane) to $\mathfrak{P}_{\bar{z},r,R} = (\mathbb{P}^1; \bar{z}, \infty; (\zeta - \bar{z})/r, R/\zeta)$, whose correlation function is $T_{\bar{z}}$. Thus, by (1.9)

$$T_z(\Theta u \otimes \nu) = \overline{T_{\bar{z}}(u \otimes \Theta \nu)},$$

which is also holomorphic over z . This proves $\Theta u \in \mathbb{V}$ if $u \in \mathbb{V}$. □

Consequently, $\mathbb{V} = \Theta\mathbb{V} \simeq \mathbb{V}'$. The equivalence is given by

$$\mathbb{V} \xrightarrow{\simeq} \mathbb{V}', \quad u \mapsto \langle u, \cdot \rangle \quad (3.28)$$

Due to this equivalence, we call the VOA \mathbb{V} to be **self-dual**.

So, in all unitary CFTs (and indeed, also in many non-unitary CFTs), the VOAs are self-dual. We remark that there is a mathematically rigorous definition of self-dualness, which plays an important role in the tensor categories of \mathbb{V} -modules. However, the definition of a general VOA does not require self-dualness, because many properties can be derived without assuming self-dualness.

3.14

Let ζ be the standard coordinate of \mathbb{C} as usual. For each $\lambda \neq 0$, we have an equivalence

$$(\mathbb{P}^1; 0, z, \infty; \zeta, \zeta - z, \zeta^{-1}) \simeq (\mathbb{P}^1; 0, \lambda z, \infty; \lambda^{-1}\zeta, \lambda^{-1}\zeta - z, \lambda\zeta^{-1}) \quad (3.29)$$

realized by the biholomorphism $\gamma \mapsto \lambda\gamma$ of \mathbb{P}^1 . (You should check that the pull-back of the local coordinates on the right hand side equal those on the left.) The correlation function for the left hand side, evaluating on $v \otimes u \otimes w \in \mathbb{V}^{\otimes 3}$, is $\langle w, Y(u, z)v \rangle$. The right hand side of (3.29) is obtained by scaling the local coordinates of $(\mathbb{P}^1; 0, \lambda z, \infty; \zeta, \zeta - \lambda z, \zeta^{-1})$ (whose correlation function on $\mathbb{V}^{\otimes 3}$ takes the form $\langle w, Y(u, \lambda z)v \rangle$) by $\lambda^{-1}, \lambda^{-1}, \lambda$ respectively. By the change of coordinate formula, the correlation function for the right hand side of (3.29), denoted temporarily by ω , must satisfy

$$\langle w, Y(u, \lambda z)v \rangle = \omega(\lambda^{-L_0}v \otimes \lambda^{-L_0}u \otimes \lambda^{L_0}w),$$

namely, ω should be $\langle \lambda^{-L_0}w, Y(\lambda^{L_0}u, \lambda z)\lambda^{L_0}v \rangle$. This last equation must equal $\langle w, Y(u, z)v \rangle$ due to the equivalence (3.29). This explains the scale covariance.

3.15

Similarly, for each $\tau \in \mathbb{C}$, consider the equivalence

$$(\mathbb{P}^1; 0, z, \infty; \zeta, \zeta - z, \zeta^{-1}) \simeq (\mathbb{P}^1; \tau, z + \tau, \infty; \zeta - \tau, \zeta - z - \tau, \frac{1}{\zeta - \tau}) \quad (3.30)$$

induced by the biholomorphism $\gamma \mapsto \gamma + \tau$ of \mathbb{P}^1 . The right hand side is a change of parametrization from $(\mathbb{P}^1; 0, z + \tau, \infty; \zeta, \zeta - z - \tau, \zeta^{-1})$ (whose correlation function is $\langle w, Y(u, z + \tau)v \rangle$), where ζ is changed to $\zeta - \tau$ (which is a translation), and $\eta := \zeta^{-1}$ is changed to $1/(\eta^{-1} - \tau)$. The translation corresponds to $e^{-\tau L_{-1}}$. The second change of coordinate is $\exp(\tau z^2 \partial_z)$ due to Ex. 2.5, which gives $e^{\tau L_1}$.

Let ω now be the correlation function (restricted to $\mathbb{V}^{\otimes 3}$) of the right hand side. Then we have

$$\langle w, Y(u, z + \tau)v \rangle = \omega(e^{-\tau L_{-1}}v \otimes u \otimes e^{\tau L_1}w).$$

So ω is $\langle e^{-\tau L_1}w, Y(u, z + \tau)e^{\tau L_1}v \rangle = \langle w, e^{-\tau L_{-1}}Y(u, z + \tau)e^{\tau L_1}v \rangle$, which must equal $\langle w, Y(u, z)v \rangle$ due to the equivalence (3.30). This explains the translation covariance.

Exercise 3.6. Find a geometric explanation of $Y(u, z + \tau) = Y(e^{\tau L_{-1}}u, z)$.

There is another shorter geometric explanation of translation covariance: $e^{\tau L_{-1}}Y(u, z)v$ amounts to moving the outgoing large string in the string picture in (3.25) by $-\tau$. This is the same as fixing the outgoing string and translating the two incoming strings by τ . Translating the one around 0 changes v to $e^{\tau L_{-1}}v$, and translating the one around z just changes z to $z + \tau$.

This second explanation is however less rigorous than the first one. But the first one is not rigorous anyway. So why should we care about the issue of rigor here? Well, our first geometric explanation for translation covariance, as well as the one in Subsec. 3.14 for rotation covariance, is much more rigorous in the sense that you can easily get the correct formulas using this method. You may try and give a short explanation for rotation covariance using our second method. Then you will realize that it is not easy to get the correct formula since the change of local coordinates is not so easy to visualize.

3.16

Now we return to rigorous mathematics. We are going to prove translation covariance rigorously. For that purpose, we need to generalize the differential equation method in the proof of scale covariance to the following vector-valued form:

Lemma 3.7. *Let W be a (non-necessarily finite dimensional) vector space, and $f \in W[[z]]$. Suppose that $\frac{d}{dz}f(z) = Af(z)$ for some $A \in \text{End}(W)$. Suppose also that $f(0) = 0$, namely, the constant term in the power series $f(z)$ is 0. Then $f = 0$.*

Proof. Write $f(z) = \sum_{n \in \mathbb{N}} f_n z^n$ where each $f_n \in W$. The assumptions say that $f_0 = 0$ and

$$\sum_{n \in \mathbb{N}} n f_n z^{n-1} = \sum_{n \in \mathbb{N}} A f_n z^n.$$

So $n f_n = A f_{n-1}$ where $n > 0$. This proves that all f_n are 0. □

3.17

We have said that the integral form of $[L_{-1}, Y(u, z)] = \partial_z Y(u, z)$ is

$$\langle v', e^{\tau L_{-1}}Y(u, z)e^{-\tau L_{-1}}v \rangle = \langle v', Y(u, z + \tau)v \rangle. \quad (3.31)$$

This relation is more difficult to address than the scale covariance since both sides actually involve infinite sums of powers of τ . Our goal is to understand: on which domain does this relation hold? Certainly we need $\tau \neq -z$. But this condition is far from enough.

Let us first understand the two sides as infinite series of τ and z . Assume without loss of generality that u, v, v' are homogeneous. The right hand side is of the form $a(z + \tau)^m$ for some $a \in \mathbb{C}, m \in \mathbb{Z}$. Certainly this expression makes sense as a rational function, but we shall first regard it as a formal series of τ, z by expanding $(z + \tau)^m$ on

the domain $|\tau| < |z|$, namely $(z + \tau)^m = \sum_{k \in \mathbb{N}} \binom{m}{k} z^{m-k} \tau^k$. Thus, the right hand side of (3.31), as an element of $\mathbb{C}[z^{\pm 1}][[\tau]]$, is understood as

$$\langle v', Y(u, z + \tau)v \rangle = \sum_{n \in \mathbb{Z}} \sum_{k \in \mathbb{N}} \binom{-n-1}{k} \langle v', Y(u)_n v \rangle \cdot z^{-n-1-k} \tau^k.$$

Here, the sum over $n \in \mathbb{Z}$ is finite, and when the vectors are homogeneous, there is only one possibly non-zero summand.

But why do we expand $(z + \tau)^m$ on $|\tau| < |z|$? Why not $|z| < |\tau|$? Well, this will give us $\sum_{k \in \mathbb{N}} \binom{m}{k} z^k \tau^{m-k}$ which contains negative powers of τ . But the left hand side of (3.31) actually has only non-negative powers of τ .

So let us turn to the left hand side of (3.31). It would be easier to first understand why

$$\langle v', e^{\lambda L_{-1}} Y(u, z) e^{-\mu L_{-1}} v \rangle \quad (3.32)$$

is an element of $\mathbb{C}[z^{\pm 1}][[\lambda, \mu]]$. We first want to move $e^{\lambda L_{-1}}$ to the left hand side of the bracket. In general, if L_n is defined on \mathbb{V} , we define L_{-n} on \mathbb{V}' to be the transpose of L_n : $L_{-n} = L_n^t$, or more precisely,

$$\langle L_{-n} v', v \rangle := \langle v', L_n v \rangle. \quad (3.33)$$

In case you doubt why this transpose exists, we can write the definition even more precisely: Assume $v' \in \mathbb{V}'(m)$. Then $L_{-n} v'$ is a linear functional on $\mathbb{V}(m+n)$ (so L_{-n} raises the weights by n) whose value at any $v \in \mathbb{V}(m+n)$ is $\langle v', L_n v \rangle$. (Recall that L_n lowers the weights by n so $L_n v \in \mathbb{V}(m)$.) And $L_{-n} v'$ vanishes on $\mathbb{V}(a)$ if $a \neq m+n$.

Now, (3.32) equals

$$f(z, \lambda, \mu) := \langle e^{\lambda L_1} v', Y(u, z) e^{-\mu L_{-1}} v \rangle = \sum_{n, l \in \mathbb{N}} \frac{\lambda^n (-\mu)^l}{n! l!} \langle L_1^n v', Y(u, z) L_{-1}^l v \rangle. \quad (3.34)$$

This is in $\mathbb{C}[z^{\pm 1}][[\lambda, \mu]]$. Indeed, it is in $\mathbb{C}[z^{\pm 1}][[\mu]][\lambda]$ since $L_1^n v'$ lowers the weight by n , and hence vanishes when $n > \text{wt } v'$. But we will not need this fact here.

Now, the left hand side of (3.31) can be understood as $f(z, \tau, \tau)$, noting the following fact:

Lemma 3.8. *Let W be a vector space. If $\varphi(z_1, \dots, z_N) \in W[[z_1, \dots, z_N]]$, then $\varphi(z, \dots, z)$ naturally makes sense as an element of $W[[z]]$.*

Proof. Write $\varphi(z_\bullet) = \sum a_{n_1, \dots, n_N} z_1^{n_1} \cdots z_N^{n_N}$. Then

$$\varphi(z, \dots, z) = \sum_{n \in \mathbb{N}} \sum_{n_1 + \dots + n_N = n} a_{n_1, \dots, n_N} z^n$$

where the inside sum is clearly finite. □

3.18

Proposition 3.9 (Translation covariance). *For each $u, v \in \mathbb{V}, v' \in \mathbb{V}'$, the following equation holds on the level of $\mathbb{C}[z^{\pm 1}][[\tau]]$:*

$$\langle v', e^{\tau L_{-1}} Y(u, z) e^{-\tau L_{-1}} v \rangle = \langle v', Y(u, z + \tau) v \rangle. \quad (3.35)$$

Here, the right hand side, which is a priori a Laurent polynomial of $z + \tau$, is expanded as if $|\tau| < |z|$.

Proof. Let $f_z(\tau)$ and $g_z(\tau)$ be the left and the right hand sides of (3.35), considered as formal power series of τ whose coefficients are elements of $\mathbb{C}[z^{\pm 1}]$. Then clearly $f_z(0) = g_z(0)$ as polynomials of $z^{\pm 1}$. So, it suffices to prove that f_z and g_z satisfy the same linear differential equation. The left hand side is $f_z(\tau, \tau)$ where

$$f_z(\lambda, \mu) = \langle e^{\lambda L_1} v', Y(u, z) e^{-\mu L_{-1}} v \rangle \in \mathbb{C}[z^{\pm 1}][[\lambda, \mu]].$$

As a general result about multivariable formal power series, we have chain rule

$$\partial_\tau f_z(\tau, \tau) = (\partial_\lambda + \partial_\mu) f_z(\lambda, \mu) \Big|_{\lambda=\mu=\tau}.$$

(It is reasonable to believe that this is true. But you can also give a rigorous proof by expanding the two series and check that their coefficients agree!) So, as

$$\begin{aligned} \partial_\lambda f_z(\lambda, \mu) &= \langle e^{\lambda L_1} L_1 v', Y(u, z) e^{-\mu L_{-1}} v \rangle, \\ \partial_\mu f_z(\lambda, \mu) &= -\langle e^{\lambda L_1} v', Y(u, z) e^{-\mu L_{-1}} L_{-1} v \rangle, \end{aligned}$$

we have

$$\partial_\tau f_z(\tau) = \langle e^{\tau L_1} L_1 v', Y(u, z) e^{-\tau L_{-1}} v \rangle - \langle e^{\tau L_1} v', Y(u, z) e^{-\tau L_{-1}} L_{-1} v \rangle.$$

This expression is not a differential equation of the $\mathbb{C}[z^{\pm 1}]$ -coefficients power series f_z . But we can make it an ODE by fixing u , varying v, v' , and view f_z as a $\mathcal{V} := \text{Hom}(\mathbb{V} \otimes \mathbb{V}', \mathbb{C}[z^{\pm 1}])$ -valued power series of τ . Then $\partial_\tau f_z = A f_z$ where $A \in \text{End } \mathcal{V}$ is defined by sending each $\Phi : \mathbb{V} \otimes \mathbb{V}' \rightarrow \mathbb{C}[z^{\pm 1}]$ to

$$A\Phi = \Phi \circ (\mathbf{1} \otimes L_1 - L_{-1} \otimes \mathbf{1}).$$

Now, we compute (noting that the following sum is finite for each fixed u, v)

$$\begin{aligned} \partial_\tau g_z(\tau) &= \partial_\tau \langle v', Y(u, z + \tau) v \rangle = \partial_\tau \left(\sum_n a_n (z + \tau)^n \right) \\ &= \sum_n n a_n (z + \tau)^{n-1} = \partial_\zeta \left(\sum_n a_n \zeta^n \right) \Big|_{\zeta=z+\tau} = \partial_\zeta \langle v', Y(u, \zeta) v \rangle \Big|_{\zeta=z+\tau}. \end{aligned}$$

By the translation property, the above equals

$$\partial_\tau g_z(\tau) = \langle v', [L_{-1}, Y(u, \zeta)] v \rangle \Big|_{\zeta=z+\tau},$$

which also equals $A g_z(\tau)$ if we now vary v, v' and regard g as \mathcal{V} -valued. Therefore, $f_z(\tau) = g_z(\tau)$ due to Lemma 3.7. \square

3.19

Let us consider a useful variant of Prop. 3.9. Notice that (3.35) holds if v' is replaced by L_1^n and also both sides are multiplied by τ^n . Thus, (3.35) holds on the level of $\mathbb{C}[z^{\pm 1}][[\tau]]$ if v' is replaced by $e^{-\tau L_1} v'$. Namely:

$$\langle v', Y(u, z) e^{-\tau L_{-1}} v \rangle = \langle e^{-\tau L_1} v', Y(u, z + \tau) v \rangle. \quad (3.36)$$

Remark 3.10. The left hand sides of (3.35) and (3.36) converges absolutely when $|\tau| < |z|$ and $z \neq 0$ since the right hand side does. These right hand sides are linear combinations of $(z + \tau)^m$ for some $m \in \mathbb{Z}$, whose expansion $\sum_{j,k \in \mathbb{Z}} a_{j,k} z^j \tau^k := \sum_{n \in \mathbb{N}} \binom{m}{n} z^{m-n} \tau^n$ clearly satisfies

$$\sup_{(z,\tau) \in K} \sum_{j,k \in \mathbb{Z}} |a_{j,k} z^j \tau^k| < +\infty \quad (3.37)$$

on every compact subset K of $\{(z, \tau) : |\tau| < |z|, z \neq 0\}$. Thus, the same convergence property holds for the left hand sides of (3.35) and (3.36). We call this property the **absolute and locally uniform converge**, which will be the focus of our study in this course.

Thus, we have actually proved our first convergence result in this course. The method used here is standard in the VOA theory: we show that a formal power series converges by identifying it with the power series expansion of a holomorphic function, which can be achieved with the help of linear differential equations.

3.20

Let us choose $v = 1$ in the formula (3.35). Then, as $L_{-1} 1 = 0$, we obtain

$$\langle v', e^{\tau L_{-1}} Y(u, z) 1 \rangle = \langle v', Y(u, z + \tau) 1 \rangle \quad (3.38)$$

on the level of $\mathbb{C}[z, \tau]$, since, by Rem. 3.4, the right hand side is a polynomial of $z + \tau$. As $z \rightarrow 0$, the left hand side converges to $\langle e^{\tau L_1} v', u \rangle = \langle v', e^{\tau L_{-1}} u \rangle$ by (3.16). So we conclude:

Corollary 3.11. *For each $u \in \mathbb{V}, v \in \mathbb{V}'$, the equation*

$$\langle v', e^{\tau L_{-1}} u \rangle = \langle v', Y(u, \tau) 1 \rangle$$

holds as polynomials of τ . Equivalently, the equation

$$e^{\tau L_{-1}} u = Y(u, \tau) 1$$

holds on the level of $\mathbb{V}[[\tau]]$, which is equivalent to that for each $n \in \mathbb{N}$,

$$Y(u)_{-n-1} 1 = \frac{1}{n!} L_{-1}^n u. \quad (3.39)$$

We leave it to the reader to find a geometric explanation of $e^{\tau L_{-1}} u = Y(u, \tau) 1$.

4 Definition of VOAs, II: Jacobi Identity.

4.1

Principle 4.1. When gluing Riemann spheres to get new spheres, the formula $T_{\Sigma_1} \circ T_{\Sigma_2} = T_{\Sigma_1 \# \Sigma_2}$ truly holds if the local coordinates at the points for sewing are Möbius transformations, i.e. of the form $z \mapsto \frac{az+b}{cz+d}$ where $ad - bc \neq 0$.

A rough reason for this No-Ambiguity Principle is that only $L_0, L_{\pm 1}$ are involved in the change of coordinate formulas between Möbius transformations, and the Lie bracket relations between them do not involve the central charge.

4.2

We shall give motivations for the Jacobi identity.

We first remark on the sewing of compact Riemann surfaces in Subsec. 1.4. Suppose we have data $\mathfrak{X} = (C; x_\bullet; \eta_\bullet)$ and $\mathfrak{X}' = (C'; y_\bullet; \eta'_\bullet)$ and we sew them along x_1 and x'_1 . For simplicity, we set $\xi = \eta_1, \varpi = \eta'_1$. From (1.4), we know that the gluing law is that any $x \in \xi^{-1}(\mathbb{S}^1)$ (recall that $\xi^{-1}(\mathbb{S}^1)$ is a boundary string of the corresponding surface Σ for \mathfrak{X}) and any $y \in \varpi^{-1}(\mathbb{S}^1)$ are identified following the rule

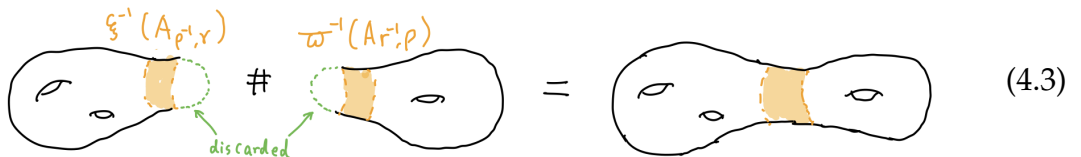
$$x = y \quad \Longleftrightarrow \quad \xi(x)\varpi(y) = 1. \quad (4.1)$$

This definition of gluing is topological, but not complex analytic. Analytically, we are actually gluing a neighborhood of $\xi^{-1}(\mathbb{S}^1)$ and one of $\varpi^{-1}(\mathbb{S}^1)$ using the rule (4.1) for all x in the first neighborhood and y in the second one. It is clear that a (locally defined) function on the first neighborhood is holomorphic if and only if it is so on the second one. This defines the complex analytic structure on $C \# C'$.

Remark 4.2. Let us be more precise on the shape of the neighborhoods. Let ξ and ϖ be defined (and injective) on U, U' respectively. Choose $r > 1, \rho > 1$ such that $\xi(U) \supset \mathbb{D}_r, \varpi(U') \supset \mathbb{D}_\rho$. Then the following neighborhoods of $\xi^{-1}(\mathbb{S}^1)$ and $\varpi^{-1}(\mathbb{S}^1)$ are glued via the relation (4.1):

$$\begin{aligned} \xi^{-1}(A_{\rho^{-1}, r}) &= \{x \in U : \rho^{-1} < |\xi(x)| < r\} \\ &\quad \updownarrow \text{identified via (4.1)} \\ \varpi^{-1}(A_{r^{-1}, \rho}) &= \{y \in U' : r^{-1} < |\varpi(y)| < \rho\} \end{aligned} \quad (4.2)$$

The parts $\{x \in U : |\xi(x)| \leq \rho^{-1}\}$ and $\{y \in U' : |\varpi(y)| \leq r^{-1}\}$ are discarded when gluing.



$$\xi^{-1}(A_{\rho^{-1}, r}) \# \varpi^{-1}(A_{r^{-1}, \rho}) = \text{glued surface} \quad (4.3)$$

4.3

As pointed out before, when we associate finite energy vectors to the incoming strings/points, we may scale their local coordinates. However, for the local coordinates at the output points and the points to be sewn, an arbitrary scaling is not allowed. We thus assume that Assumption 1.1 holds after scaling (by some λ with arbitrarily large $|\lambda|$) the local coordinates at the incoming points. This amounts to the following

Assumption 4.3. If x_i is either an outgoing point or a point to be sewn with another point, then the local coordinate η_i at x_i defined on a neighborhood $U_i \ni x_i$ satisfies that $\eta_i(U_i) \supset \mathbb{D}_1^{\text{cl}}$, that $\eta_i^{-1}(\mathbb{D}_1^{\text{cl}}) \cap \eta_j^{-1}(\mathbb{D}_1^{\text{cl}}) = \emptyset$ if x_j is either outgoing or a point to be sewn, and that $x_j \in \eta_i^{-1}(\mathbb{D}_1^{\text{cl}})$ if x_j is incoming and not to be sewn.

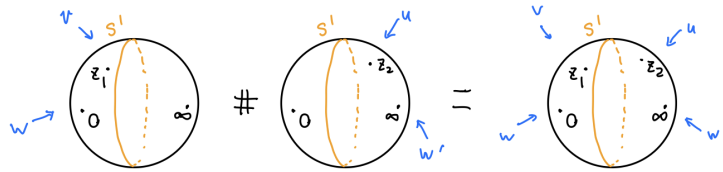
Remark 4.4. There is indeed one way we can slightly loosen the above assumption. Using the notation of (4.1). Then we may assume that Assumption 4.3 after scaling ξ by some $\lambda \in \mathbb{C}^\times$ and ϖ by λ^{-1} . Then the rule for gluing (4.1) is not changed. On the side of interaction maps T_Σ , the change $\xi \rightsquigarrow \lambda\xi$ adds a factor $\lambda^{-L_0} \otimes (\bar{\lambda})^{-\bar{L}_0}$ to one tensor component in T_Σ , and $\xi \rightsquigarrow \lambda^{-1}\xi$ adds a factor $\lambda^{L_0} \otimes \bar{\lambda}^{\bar{L}_0}$. These two are canceled after taking contraction or composition.

4.4

We want to understand the product $\langle w', Y(u, z_2)Y(v, z_1)w \rangle$. Let ζ be the standard coordinate of \mathbb{C} . By the sewing property in Segal's picture, this expression should correspond to the sewing of

$$\mathfrak{P}_{z_1} = (\mathbb{P}_1^1; 0, z_1, \infty; \zeta, \zeta - z_1, \zeta^{-1}), \quad \mathfrak{P}_{z_2} = (\mathbb{P}_2^1; 0, z_2, \infty; \zeta, \zeta - z_2, \zeta^{-1})$$

along the points ∞ of \mathfrak{P}_{z_1} and 0 of \mathfrak{P}_{z_2} . (Here, both \mathbb{P}_1^1 and \mathbb{P}_2^1 are \mathbb{P}^1 . We assume the two ∞ are outgoing before sewing.) Assumption 4.3 is satisfied when $0 < |z_1| < 1 < |z_2| < +\infty$ if we consider all the points not for sewing as incoming. The sewing rule is that $\gamma_1 \in \mathbb{P}_1^1, 0 < |\gamma_1^{-1}| < +\infty$ is identified with $\gamma_2 \in \mathbb{P}_2^1, 0 < |\gamma_2| < +\infty$ if and only if $\gamma_1^{-1} \cdot \gamma_2 = 1$, namely $\gamma_1 = \gamma_2$. (Here, we set $r = \rho = \infty$ in order to apply Rem. 4.2. The discarded points are the ∞ of \mathbb{P}_1^1 and the 0 of \mathbb{P}_2^1 .) Thus, the sewing is just placing the first sphere onto the second one.



The result of sewing is

$$\mathfrak{P}_{z_1, z_2} = (\mathbb{P}^1; 0, z_1, z_2, \infty, \zeta - z_1, \zeta - z_2, \zeta^{-1}) \quad (4.4)$$

Assuming all the points of \mathfrak{P}_{z_1, z_2} as incoming, for each $u, v, w, w' \in \mathbb{V}$,

$$T_{\mathfrak{P}_{z_1, z_2}}(w, v, u, w') = \langle w', Y(u, z_2)Y(v, z_1)w \rangle \quad (\text{if } 0 < |z_1| < |z_2| < +\infty). \quad (4.5)$$

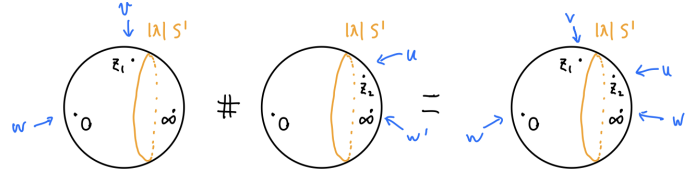
The reason why the conditions $|z_1| < 1$ and $1 < |z_2|$ can be dropped is explained below.

4.5

We explain why (4.5) holds provided $0 < |z_1| < |z_2| < +\infty$.

Pick $\lambda \in \mathbb{C}$ such that $|z_1| < |\lambda| < |z_2|$. Following the guide of Rem. 4.4, we replace the local coordinate ζ^{-1} of \mathfrak{P}_{z_1} by $\lambda\zeta^{-1}$ and the one ζ of \mathfrak{P}_{z_2} by ζ/λ . Then Assumption 4.3 is again satisfied. In particular, the outgoing string of \mathbb{P}_1^1 around ∞ and the incoming one of \mathbb{P}_2^1 around 0 are both $|\lambda|\mathbb{S}^1$.

The interaction map $T_{\mathfrak{P}_{z_1}} : \mathcal{H}^{\otimes 2} \rightarrow \mathcal{H}$ acting on $w \otimes v$ is $\lambda^{-L_0} Y(v, z_1)w$. $T_{\mathfrak{P}_{z_2}}$ sends $u \otimes _ \in \mathbb{V} \otimes \mathbb{V}$ to $Y(u, z_2)\lambda^{L_0}_$. The composition of these two expressions, evaluated with $w' \in \mathbb{V}$, is again the right hand side of (4.5). And the result of sewing is again \mathfrak{P}_{z_1, z_2} . So (4.5) holds in general.



4.6

According to the physical definition of \mathbb{V} in Subsec. 1.12 as well as the No-Ambiguity Principle 2.10, we know that when the vectors of \mathbb{V} are inserted, the correlation functions change holomorphically with respect to the translation of the marked points and their local coordinates. Thus $T_{\mathfrak{P}_{z_1, z_2}}(w, v, u, v')$ is a holomorphic function on $\text{Conf}^2(\mathbb{C}^\times) = \{(z_1, z_2) \in \mathbb{C}^\times : z_1 \neq z_2\}$. Since, similar to (4.5), we also have

$$T_{\mathfrak{P}_{z_1, z_2}}(w, v, u, w') = \langle w', Y(v, z_1)Y(u, z_2)w \rangle \quad (\text{if } 0 < |z_2| < |z_1| < +\infty), \quad (4.6)$$

we conclude that $\langle w', Y(u, z_2)Y(v, z_1)w \rangle$ defined on $0 < |z_1| < |z_2|$ and $\langle w', Y(v, z_1)Y(u, z_2)w \rangle$ defined on $0 < |z_2| < |z_1|$ can be continued to the same holomorphic function on $\text{Conf}^2(\mathbb{C}^\times)$. That this fact is true for all $w, w' \in \mathbb{V}$ (or more generally, all $w \in \mathbb{V}, w' \in \mathbb{V}'$ if $\mathbb{V} \simeq \mathbb{V}'$ is not assumed) is simply written as

$$Y(u, z_2)Y(v, z_1) \sim Y(v, z_1)Y(u, z_2). \quad (4.7)$$

This property is called **commutativity**.

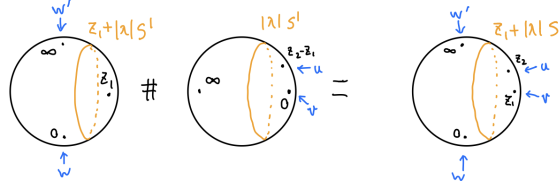
4.7

We now consider the sewing of

$$\mathfrak{P}_{z_1} = (\mathbb{P}_1^1; 0, z_1, \infty; \zeta, \zeta - z_1, \zeta^{-1}), \quad \mathfrak{P}_{z_2 - z_1} = (\mathbb{P}_{21}^1; 0, z_2 - z_1, \infty; \zeta, \zeta - z_2 + z_1, \zeta^{-1})$$

(where $\mathbb{P}_{21}^1 = \mathbb{P}^1$) along the points $z_1 \in \mathbb{P}_1^1$ and $\infty \in \mathbb{P}_{21}^1$. We assume $0 < |z_2 - z_1| < |z_1| < +\infty$. Choose $\lambda \in \mathbb{C}$ satisfying $|z_2 - z_1| < |\lambda| < |z_1|$. Replace the local coordinate $\zeta - z_1$ of \mathfrak{P}_{z_1} by $\lambda^{-1}(\zeta - z_1)$ and the one ζ^{-1} of $\mathfrak{P}_{z_2 - z_1}$ by $\lambda\zeta^{-1}$. Then Assumption 4.3 is satisfied. The rule for sewing is identifying $\gamma_1 \in \mathbb{P}_1^1, 0 < |\lambda^{-1}(\gamma_1 - z_1)| < +\infty$ with $\gamma_{21} \in \mathbb{P}_{21}^1, 0 < |\lambda\gamma_{21}^{-1}| < +\infty$ if and only if $(\gamma_1 - z_1) = \gamma_{21}$. Thus, gluing $\mathfrak{P}_{z_1 - z_1}$ to \mathfrak{P}_{z_1}

amounts to translating $\mathfrak{P}_{z_2-z_1}$ to \mathfrak{P}_{z_2} . After sewing, the points 0 and $z_2 - z_1$ of $\mathfrak{P}_{z_2-z_1}$ become z_1 and z_2 . (The points z_1 of \mathfrak{P}_{z_1} and ∞ of $\mathfrak{P}_{z_2-z_1}$ are discarded.)



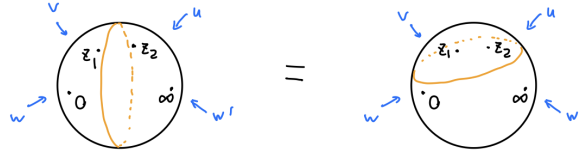
This sewing picture gives

$$T_{\mathfrak{P}_{z_1, z_2}}(w, v, u, w') = \langle w', Y(Y(u, z_2 - z_1)v, z_1)w \rangle \quad (\text{if } 0 < |z_2 - z_1| < |z_1| < +\infty). \quad (4.8)$$

We therefore have the **associativity** property

$$\begin{aligned} \langle w', Y(u, z_2)Y(v, z_1)w \rangle &= \langle w', Y(Y(u, z_2 - z_1)v, z_1)w \rangle \\ &\quad \text{if } 0 < |z_2 - z_1| < |z_1| < |z_2|. \end{aligned} \quad (4.9)$$

Geometrically, it means the equivalence of sewing spheres in the following way:



4.8

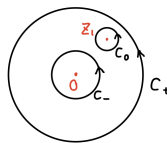
The fact that for all $u, v, w \in \mathbb{V}, w' \in \mathbb{V}'$, (4.5), (4.6), and (4.8) can be defined as holomorphic functions of z_1, z_2 on the given domain (the precise meaning will be given later), and that these three expressions can be extended to the same holomorphic function (namely $T_{\mathfrak{P}_{z_1, z_2}}(w \otimes v \otimes u \otimes w')$) on $\text{Conf}^2(\mathbb{C}^\times)$ is called the **Jacobi identity** in the complex analytic form. Roughly speaking,

$$\text{Jacobi identity} = \text{Commutativity} + \text{Associativity}. \quad (4.10)$$

For the moment, we will derive an algebraic version, and use it as the formal definition of Jacobi identity in Def. 3.1.

Write $f(z_1, z_2) = T_{\mathfrak{P}_{z_1, z_2}}(w \otimes v \otimes u \otimes w')$. Fix $z_1 \in \mathbb{C}^\times$, and consider f as a holomorphic function of z_2 on $\mathbb{C}^\times \setminus \{z_1\}$. (Moreover, from (4.5), (4.6), (4.8), and by the lower truncation property (3.15), it is easy to see that f has finite poles at $z_1 = 0, z_2, \infty$. So f is a meromorphic function.) By the residue theorem, for each meromorphic 1-form μ on \mathbb{P}^1 with possible poles only at 0, z_1 , ∞ , we must have $(\text{Res}_{z_2=0} + \text{Res}_{z_2=z_1} + \text{Res}_{z_2=\infty})f\mu = 0$. It is easy to see that such μ are linear combinations of those of the form $z_2^m(z_2 - z_1)^n dz_2$.

Equivalently, choose C_+ to be a circle around 0 whose radius is $> |z_1|$, C_- is one around 0 whose radius is $< |z_1|$, and C_0 a small circle around z_1 between C_+ and C_- .



Let f_+, f_-, f_0 be respectively the right hand sides of (4.5), (4.6), (4.8). Then, when z_2 is on C_+, C_-, C_0 respectively, f equals f_+, f_-, f_0 . Then the fact that f_+, f_-, f_0 defined on their domains extend to the same meromorphic function on \mathbb{P}^1 with poles $0, z_1, \infty$ implies for any $m, n \in \mathbb{Z}$ and $\mu = z_2^m(z_2 - z_1)^n dz_2$ that

$$\oint_{C_+} \frac{f_+ \mu}{2i\pi} - \oint_{C_-} \frac{f_- \mu}{2i\pi} = \oint_{C_0} \frac{f_0 \mu}{2i\pi}. \quad (4.11)$$

Indeed, the latter one also implies the previous one. This is guaranteed by the so called *strong residue theorem*, which will be discussed in later sections. The strong residue theorem will imply that the analytic form and the algebraic form of Jacobi identity are equivalent.

Recall the general formula $\oint_C Y(u, z) z^k \frac{dz}{2i\pi} = Y(u)_k$ if C is a circle around the origin. When $z_2 \in C_+$, μ has absolutely convergent expansion $\mu = \sum_{l \in \mathbb{N}} \binom{n}{l} (-z_1)^l z_2^{m+n-l} dz_2$. So

$$\begin{aligned} \oint_{C_+} \frac{f_+ \mu}{2i\pi} &= \sum_{l \in \mathbb{N}} \oint_{C_+} \binom{n}{l} (-z_1)^l z_2^{m+n-l} \langle w', Y(u, z_2) Y(v, z_1) w \rangle \frac{dz_2}{2i\pi} \\ &= \sum_{l \in \mathbb{N}} \binom{n}{l} (-z_1)^l \langle w', Y(u)_{m+n-l} Y(v, z_1) w \rangle =: a(z_1) \end{aligned}$$

When $z_2 \in C_-$,

$$\begin{aligned} \oint_{C_-} \frac{f_- \mu}{2i\pi} &= \sum_{l \in \mathbb{N}} \oint_{C_-} \binom{n}{l} (-z_1)^{n-l} z_2^{m+l} \langle w', Y(v, z_1) Y(u, z_2) w \rangle \frac{dz_2}{2i\pi} \\ &= \sum_{l \in \mathbb{N}} \binom{n}{l} (-z_1)^{n-l} \langle w', Y(v, z_1) Y(u)_{m+l} w \rangle =: b(z_1) \end{aligned}$$

When $z_2 \in C_0$, since $0 < |z_2 - z_1| < |z_1|$, we have the absolutely convergent expansion $\mu = (z_1 + (z_2 - z_1))^m (z_2 - z_1)^n dz_2 = \sum_{l \in \mathbb{N}} \binom{m}{l} z_1^{m-l} (z_2 - z_1)^{n+l} dz_2$. So

$$\begin{aligned} \oint_{C_0} \frac{f_0 \mu}{2i\pi} &= \sum_{l \in \mathbb{N}} \oint_{C_0} \binom{m}{l} z_1^{m-l} (z_2 - z_1)^{n+l} \langle w', Y(Y(u, z_2 - z_1)v, z_1) w \rangle \frac{dz_2}{2i\pi} \\ &= \sum_{l \in \mathbb{N}} \binom{m}{l} z_1^{m-l} \langle w', Y(Y(u)_{n+l}v, z_1) w \rangle := c(z_1) \end{aligned}$$

Now we have $c(z_1) = a(z_1) - b(z_1)$. We vary z_1 . For each $k \in \mathbb{Z}$, multiply both sides by $z_1^k \frac{dz_1}{2i\pi}$ and apply the residue at $z_1 = 0$. We then get (by suppressing w' and w)

Definition 4.5 (Jacobi identity (algebraic version)). For each $u, v, w \in \mathbb{V}$, and each $m, n, k \in \mathbb{Z}$, we have

$$\begin{aligned} &\sum_{l \in \mathbb{N}} \binom{m}{l} Y(Y(u)_{n+l}v)_{m+k-l} \\ &= \sum_{l \in \mathbb{N}} (-1)^l \binom{n}{l} Y(u)_{m+n-l} Y(v)_{k+l} - \sum_{l \in \mathbb{N}} (-1)^{n+l} \binom{n}{l} Y(v)_{n+k-l} Y(u)_{m+l}. \end{aligned} \quad (4.12)$$

This completes Definition 3.1.

In the above three terms, when acting on every $w \in \mathbb{V}$, each sum over $l \in \mathbb{N}$ is finite thanks to the lower truncation property.

5 Consequences of Jacobi identity; reconstruction theorem

5.1

The algebraic form of Jacobi identity is very complicated. Very few people can write down exactly the right formula without checking the references or reproving this formula using the long argument in Subsec. 4.8. But we shall try our best to explain how to use this formula and what this formula implies.

First of all, if (4.12) holds whenever $m = 0$ or $n = 0$, then it holds in general. We will not give a rigorous proof for this statement. But, since (4.12) is derived from (4.11) for all $\mu = z_2^m(z_2 - z_1)^n dz_2$, the readers can be convinced of this statement by the following elementary fact:

Exercise 5.1. Show that $z_2^m(z_2 - z_1)^n$ is a $\mathbb{C}[z_1^{\pm 1}]$ -linear combination of z_2^k and $(z_2 - z_1)^l$ where $k, l \in \mathbb{Z}$ and $l < 0$. (Hint: Assume without loss of generality that $m, n < 0$. Prove the statement by induction on $|m|$ and $|n|$.)

Thus, we may understand (4.12) by restricting to the special cases $m = 0, n < 0$ or $n = 0$.

5.2

We now return to rigorous mathematics. Consider the case that $n = 0$, i.e., $\mu = z_2^m dz_2$. Then (4.12) reads

$$[Y(u)_m, Y(v)_k] = \sum_{l \in \mathbb{N}} \binom{m}{l} Y(Y(u)_l v)_{m+k-l}. \quad (5.1)$$

This is a Lie bracket relation. Interestingly, this general formula does not come from Lie groups, but from the residue theorem. However, in many concrete examples, such Lie bracket relations do have Lie-theoretic origins.

Let me take this chance to say a few words about the similarity and the difference between the VOA theory and the Lie theory. In the VOA theory, the residue theorem is the standard way of passing from the complex analytic world to the algebraic world. The opposite direction is through the strong residue theorem. This is strikingly different from the Lie theory, in which one passes from the differential geometric formulation (i.e. Lie groups) to the algebraic one (i.e. Lie algebras) by taking derivatives, and vice versa by taking exponentiation/integral. Thus, although Lie brackets do appear in VOAs, it is not always fruitful to think of VOAs as generalizations of Lie algebras. These two mathematical objects have very different geometric intuitions. Also, if we view VOAs in the complex analytic way, then by (4.10), VOAs are more like commutative algebras. Thus, VOAs can be viewed as a quantum version of both the Lie algebras and the commutative algebras.

5.3

Take u to be the conformal vector \mathbf{c} in (5.1) and recall that $Y(\mathbf{c})_{m+1} = L_m$. We obtain

$$\begin{aligned} [L_m, Y(v)_k] &= \sum_{l \in \mathbb{N}} \binom{m+1}{l} Y(L_{l-1}v)_{m+k+1-l} \\ &= Y(L_{-1}v)_{m+k+1} + \sum_{l \in \mathbb{N}} \binom{m+1}{l+1} Y(L_lv)_{m+k-l}. \end{aligned} \quad (5.2)$$

Multiply z^{-k-1} to both sides and take the sum over all $k \in \mathbb{Z}$, we obtain

$$[L_m, Y(v, z)] = z^{m+1} Y(L_{-1}v, z) + \sum_{l \in \mathbb{N}} \binom{m+1}{l+1} z^{m-l} Y(L_lv, z) \quad (5.3)$$

either on the level of $\text{End}(\mathbb{V})[[z^{\pm 1}]]$, or as Laurent polynomials of z when evaluating between any $w \in \mathbb{V}$ and $w' \in \mathbb{V}'$. Then the cases $m = -1$ and $m = 0$ imply

$$[L_{-1}, Y(v, z)] = Y(L_{-1}v, z) \quad (5.4a)$$

$$[L_0, Y(v, z)] = zY(L_{-1}v, z) + Y(L_0v, z). \quad (5.4b)$$

Note that these two equations follow solely from the Jacobi identity. By the translation property, we have

$$Y(L_{-1}v, z) = \frac{d}{dz} Y(v, z). \quad (5.5)$$

Equivalently, by applying $\text{Res}_{z=0}(\cdot)z^n dz$, we get a crucial relation

$$Y(L_{-1}v)_n = -nY(v)_{n-1}. \quad (5.6)$$

(The quickest way to get the formula on the right hand side is integration by parts.)

Exercise 5.2. Show that (3.39) follows from (5.6) and the creation property.

Exercise 5.3. Assume that \mathbb{V} satisfies the lower truncation property (3.15) and all the axioms of VOAs in Def. 3.1 except the grading and the translation property. Use (5.4) to prove that the following conditions are equivalent.

1. The grading property.
2. $Y(L_{-1}v, z) = \partial_z Y(v, z)$ for all $v \in \mathbb{V}$.
3. The translation property.
4. The translation property without assuming $L_{-1}\mathbf{1} = 0$.

Thus, we may use the lower truncation property and any of these four conditions to replace the grading and the translation properties in the definition of VOAs.

Exercise 5.4. In (5.2), set $v = \mathbf{c}$, and show that this formula is compatible with the Virasoro relation.

5.4

We see that (5.3) for $m = 0, -1$ (together with (5.5)) means the grading and the translation properties, which integrate to the rotation and the translation covariance. For general m , (5.3) also has a geometric explanation. To simplify discussions, we give such an explanation by assuming that v is primary.

Definition 5.5. A vector $v \in \mathbb{V}$ is called a **primary vector** if it is homogeneous and $L_n v = 0$ for all $n > 0$.

Some important VOAs (affine VOAs for instance) are generated by primary vectors. And many important formulas in CFT were first proved by physics who assumed that their theories are generated by primary vectors in the following sense:

Definition 5.6. We say that a VOA \mathbb{V} is **generated** by a subset $E \subset \mathbb{V}$ if \mathbb{V} is spanned by vectors of the form $Y(v_1)_{n_1} \cdots Y(v_k)_{n_k} \mathbf{1}$ where $k \in \mathbb{N}$, $n_1, \dots, n_k \in \mathbb{Z}$, and $v_1, \dots, v_k \in E$.

Indeed, formula (5.3) for any primary vector v is one such example, which (combined with (5.5)) reads

$$[L_m, Y(v, z)] = z^{m+1} \partial_z Y(v, z) + (m+1) \text{wt} v \cdot z^m Y(v, z). \quad (5.7)$$

This is called by physicists (or more precisely, is equivalent to what physicists call) the **conformal Ward identity**.

Choose a holomorphic vector field $f(z) \partial_z = \sum_{n \in \mathbb{Z}} a_n z^{n+1} \partial_z$ on a neighborhood of \mathbb{S}^1 . Let $\sigma_\tau = \exp(\tau f \partial_z)$ be the holomorphic flow. Then (5.7) (with L_m, z^m replaced by $\sum_m a_m L_m, \sum_m a_m z_m$) integrates to

$$e^{\tau \sum_{n \in \mathbb{Z}} a_n L_n} Y(v, z) e^{-\tau \sum_{n \in \mathbb{Z}} a_n L_n} = (\partial_z \sigma_\tau(z))^{\text{wt} v} Y(v, \sigma_\tau(z)), \quad (5.8)$$

called **conformal covariance**. For now, we do not treat this formula in a rigorous way. But the readers can convince themselves by checking that both sides satisfy the same linear differential equation over τ .

The right hand side of (5.8) looks familiar to us. Set $\tau = 1$, $\sigma = \sigma_1$, and $\Delta = \text{wt} v$. Then formula (5.8) resembles the change of variable formula $(\partial(\varphi \circ \sigma))^\Delta = (\partial \varphi \circ \sigma)^\Delta \cdot (\partial_z \sigma)^\Delta$ for a function $\varphi = \varphi(z)$ and ∂ is the standard holomorphic derivative. Indeed, the primary field $Y(v, z)$ can be viewed as the quantization of $(\partial \varphi)^\Delta$, or more generally, of $\partial \varphi_1 \cdots \partial \varphi_\Delta$. It is also interesting to write (5.8) in the form

$$e^{\sum a_n L_n} (Y(v, z) dz^\Delta) e^{-\sum a_n L_n} = Y(v, \sigma) d\sigma^\Delta. \quad (5.9)$$

Conformal covariance (5.8) can be interpreted in a similar geometric way as we did for rotation and translation covariance in Subsec. 3.14 and 3.15. (We will give this explanation in the future assuming $f = \sum_{n \geq 0} a_n z^{n+1} \partial_z$.) So, from the CFT point of view, this formula follows naturally from our change of parametrization formula in Sec. 2 and the physical definition of the vertex operator $Y(v, z)$ in Sec. 3 (if we ignore the issue of uniqueness up to scalar multiplications). In particular, the geometric intuition we are using for formula (5.7) is Lie theoretic, because the relationship between Virasoro algebras and change of parametrization formula is the one between the representations of Lie algebras and Lie groups. But we have also derived (5.7) from the

Jacobi identity, whose geometric intuition relies on the residue theorem. How should we view this coincidence of the two geometric pictures?

My answer is that we should regard the Lie theoretic explanation as the fundamental one for conformal covariance/Ward identity. In fact, to use the Jacobi identity to obtain (5.7), we have assumed that $\sum L_n z^{-n-2}$ is the vertex operator of a vector of \mathbb{V} , namely the conformal vector c . But the reason that this assumption should be included in the definition of VOA was not explained in Sec. 3. Here we give a short explanation: we will see later (cf. the reconstruction Thm. 5.12 and Rem. 5.13) that if the Fourier modes $A_m \in \text{End}(\mathbb{V})$ of a field $A(z)$ satisfy the correct Jacobi identity (such as (5.1) or (5.7)) with the modes $Y(v)_k$ for v inside a generating subset $E \subset \mathbb{V}$, then $A(z)$ must be $Y(u, z)$ for some $u \in \mathbb{V}$. Thus, (in my opinion) the better point of view is that we use the conformal Ward identity (whose geometric intuition relies on the change of parametrization formula and the physical meaning of $Y(u, z)$) and the Jacobi identity to explain the fact that $\sum L_n z^{-n-2}$ is represented by a vector c in \mathbb{V} , but not that we explain the Ward identity using the VOA Jacobi identity.

5.5

We say that \mathbb{V} is of **CFT-type** if $\dim \mathbb{V}(n) < +\infty$ for each n , and $\mathbb{V}(0) = \mathbb{C}\mathbf{1}$. The CFT-type condition is a very natural and mild one satisfied by all the examples in our notes. It says that the only quantum states with zero energy are the vacuum.

In this subsection, we assume \mathbb{V} is CFT-type, and study (5.1) for vectors in $\mathbb{V}(1)$. For each $u \in \mathbb{V}(1)$, we write $Y(u)_m$ as u_m for short. By (3.10), u_l lowers the weights by l . Then (5.1) says $[u_m, v_n] = (u_0 v)_{m+n} + m(u_1 v)_{m+n-1}$, where $u_l v$ vanishes when $l > 1$ since its weight is $1 - l$. Since $u_1 v \in \mathbb{V}(0) \in \mathbb{C}$, we may write

$$u_1 v = (u, v)\mathbf{1} \quad (5.10)$$

where (\cdot, \cdot) is a bilinear form on $\mathbb{V}(1)$. Thus $(u_1 v)_{m+n-1} = (u, v)\delta_{m, -n}$ since $Y(\mathbf{1}, z) = \mathbf{1}$. Set

$$[u, v] := u_0 v. \quad (5.11)$$

Then

$$[u_m, v_n] = [u, v]_{m+n} + m(u, v)\delta_{m, -n}. \quad (5.12)$$

Proposition 5.7. $[\cdot, \cdot]$ defines a Lie algebra structure on $\mathbb{V}(1)$, and (\cdot, \cdot) is an invariant symmetric bilinear form, namely, $(u, v) = (v, u)$ and $([w, u], v) = -(u, [w, v])$.

Proof. $w \in \mathbb{V}(1) \mapsto w_{-1}$ is injective since $w_{-1}\mathbf{1} = w$ by the creation property. By (5.12), $[u, v]_{-1} = [u_0, v_{-1}] = -[v_{-1}, u_0] = -[v, u]_{-1}$. This proves $[u, v] = -[v, u]$. By calculating $[u_1, v_{-1}]$ and $[v_{-1}, u_1]$ using (5.12), we obtain $(u, v) = (v, u)$. (5.12) implies

$$[w_k, [u_m, v_n]] = [w, [u, v]]_{k+m+n} + k(w, [u, v])\delta_{k+m+n, 0}.$$

Apply the Jacobi identity for the Lie bracket of linear operators, we obtain the Jacobi identity for $[\cdot, \cdot]$ on $\mathbb{V}(1)$ if we set $k = -1, m = n = 0$, and we obtain the invariance of (\cdot, \cdot) if we set $k = 0, m = 1, n = -1$. \square

The vector space $\text{Span}_{\mathbb{C}}\{v_n, \mathbf{1}_{\mathbb{V}} : n \in \mathbb{Z}\}$ is a Lie algebra whose bracket is the standard one for linear operators. Since it satisfies (5.12), we call it an **affine Lie algebra** associated to the finite-dimensional complex Lie algebra $\mathbb{V}(1)$. When \mathbb{V} is generated by $\mathbb{V}(1)$, we say \mathbb{V} is an **affine VOA**.

We are mostly interested in the case that (\cdot, \cdot) is non-degenerate. This is always true when the CFT (or the VOA) is unitary, since (\cdot, \cdot) is indeed the negative of the correlation function $\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle = \langle \Theta \cdot | \cdot \rangle$ of $A_{1,1}$ restricted to $\mathbb{V}^{\otimes 2}$. Moreover, a unitary affine VOA \mathbb{V} is indeed uniquely determined by its Lie subalgebra $\mathbb{V}(1)$, where $\mathbb{V}(1)$ is a direct sum of an abelian Lie algebra and a semisimple one. (We refer the readers to [Gui19, Sec. 1 and 2] for a detailed account of the relationship between unitary VOAs and their “unitary” Lie subalgebras $\mathbb{V}(1)$.) Affine Lie algebras and affine VOAs in the strict sense are those such that $\mathbb{V}(1)$ are simple Lie algebras. If on the other hand $\mathbb{V}(1)$ is abelian, then \mathbb{V} is called a **free boson VOA** or a **Heisenberg VOA**.

If \mathbb{V} is generated by \mathbf{c} , we call \mathbb{V} a **Virasoro VOA**.

5.6

We now turn to the case $m = 0, n < 0$ in the VOA Jacobi identity (4.12). First consider $n = -1$. Then (4.12) reads

$$Y(Y(u)_{-1}v)_k = \sum_{l \in \mathbb{N}} Y(u)_{-1-l}Y(v)_{k+l} + \sum_{l \in \mathbb{N}} Y(v)_{k-1-l}Y(u)_l. \quad (5.13)$$

This formula can be written in a compact way. For a general series $f(z) = \sum_{l \in \mathbb{Z}} a_l z^{-l-1} \in W[[z^{\pm 1}]]$ where W is a vector space, we let

$$f(z)_+ = \sum_{l \in \mathbb{N}} a_l z^{-1-l}, \quad f(z)_- = \sum_{l \in \mathbb{N}} a_{-l-1} z^l \quad (5.14)$$

(so we have $f(z) = f(z)_+ + f(z)_-$). Define the **normal-ordered product**

$$:Y(u, z)Y(v, z): = Y(u, z)_-Y(v, z) + Y(v, z)Y(u, z)_+ \quad (5.15)$$

which is non-commutative in general. Then (5.13) can be abbreviated to

$$Y(Y(u)_{-1}v, z) = :Y(u, z)Y(v, z): \quad (5.16)$$

By (5.6) we have

$$Y(u)_{-j-1} = \frac{1}{j!} Y(L_{-1}^j u)_{-1} \quad (5.17)$$

when $j \geq 0$. Combine this with $Y(L_{-1}^j u, z) = \partial_z^j Y(u, z)$, we obtain

$$Y(Y(u)_{-j-1}v, z) = \frac{1}{j!} :(\partial_z^j Y(u, z))Y(v, z): \quad (5.18)$$

where the normal-ordered product is defined in a similar way using the positive and the negative parts of $\partial_z^j Y(u, z)$. We leave it to the readers to check that this formula agrees with the Jacobi identity (4.12) when $m = 0, n < 0$.

Thus, once we know how $Y(u, z)$ looks like for all u in a small generating subset E of \mathbb{V} , we can write down the formula of $Y(w, z)$ for any $w \in \mathbb{V}$ using the formula

$$Y(Y(u_1)_{-j_1-1} \cdots Y(u_k)_{-j_k-1} v, z) = \frac{1}{j_1! \cdots j_k!} : \partial_z^{j_1} Y(u_1, z) \cdots \partial_z^{j_k} Y(u_k, z) \cdot Y(v, z) : \quad (5.19)$$

where the normal-ordered product for several operators is defined inductively by

$$:A_1 A_2 \cdots A_n: = :A_1 (:A_2 \cdots A_n): \quad (5.20)$$

5.7

One can also write down the explicit formula of $Y(Y(u)_n v, z)$ for $n \geq 0$ using (4.12) where $m = 0, n \geq 0$. But as I said, (4.12) is determined by the special cases $m = 0, n < 0$ and $n = 0$. So we hope that $Y(Y(u)_n v, z), n \geq 0$ can be calculated using (5.1). This is true.

Write (5.1) in the equivalent form

$$[Y(u)_m, Y(v, z)] = \sum_{l \in \mathbb{N}} \binom{m}{l} z^{m-l} Y(Y(u)_l v, z). \quad (5.21)$$

Thus, for $m \geq 0$, $Y(Y(u)_m v, z)$ can be computed inductively by

$$\begin{aligned} Y(Y(u)_0 v, z) &= [Y(u)_0, Y(v, z)] \\ Y(Y(u)_m v, z) &= [Y(u)_m, Y(v, z)] - \sum_{l=0}^{m-1} \binom{m}{l} z^{m-l} Y(Y(u)_l v, z). \end{aligned} \quad (5.22)$$

We now see the close relation between the Lie brackets of vertex operators and the data $Y(Y(u)_m v, z), m \geq 0$. The latter plays a very different role from $Y(Y(u)_m v, z), m < 0$. To understand this relation better, we write the associativity relation (4.9) as

$$Y(u, z_2) Y(v, z_1) = \sum_{m \in \mathbb{Z}} (z_2 - z_1)^{-m-1} Y(Y(u)_m v, z_1) \quad (5.23)$$

when $0 < |z_2 - z_1| < |z_1|$. Here, we understand $Y(u, z_2) Y(v, z_1)$ as $Y(v, z_1) Y(u, z_2)$ when $0 < |z_1| < |z_2|$ or more generally, as a linear functional on $\mathbb{V}^{\otimes 2}$ sending $w \otimes w'$ to $T_{\mathfrak{P}_{z_1, z_2}}(w \otimes v \otimes u \otimes w')$ (the correlation function associated to (4.4)) for all $(z_1, z_2) \in \text{Conf}^2(\mathbb{C}^\times)$. Then the part $m \geq 0$ in (5.23) accounts for the poles of $T_{\mathfrak{P}_{z_1, z_2}}(w \otimes v \otimes u \otimes w')$ at $z_2 = z_1$.

The summand in (5.23) vanishes for sufficiently positive m . In physics, a series expansion of the form

$$A(z_2) B(z_1) = \sum_{m \geq -N} (z_2 - z_1)^m C^m(z_1)$$

is called the **operator product expansion (OPE)** of the fields $A(z_2), B(z_1)$. Thus, in the VOA context, *OPEs are just the associativity property* (4.9). OPE is useful to physicists

because it allows them to reduce the calculation of 4-point correlations functions to that of 3-point ones, or in general, N -point to $(N - 1)$ -point.

We split the right hand side of (5.23) into two parts: $m \geq 0$, which is called the **regular terms** since it has no poles at $z_2 = z_1$, and $m < 0$ called the **singular terms**. Thus

$$Y(u, z_2)Y(v, z_1) = \frac{Y(Y(u)_{N-1}v, z_1)}{(z_2 - z_1)^N} + \cdots + \frac{Y(Y(u)_0v, z_1)}{(z_2 - z_1)} + \text{regular terms},$$

or, written in physics language,

$$Y(u, z_2)Y(v, z_1) \sim \frac{Y(Y(u)_{N-1}v, z_1)}{(z_2 - z_1)^N} + \cdots + \frac{Y(Y(u)_0v, z_1)}{(z_2 - z_1)}. \quad (5.24)$$

Thus, to summarize, (5.1) establishes a close relationship between the Lie brackets of vertex operators, the finite poles of the correlation function $T_{\mathfrak{P}_{z_1, z_2}}$ at $z_1 = z_2$, and the finitely many singular terms in the OPE of vertex operators. As a special case, from (5.21) and (5.22) one sees that two vertex operators $Y(u, z_2), Y(v, z_1)$ commute (namely, their Fourier modes $Y(u)_m, Y(v)_k$ commute) iff there are no singular terms in the OPE of $Y(u, z_2)Y(v, z_1)$, iff $T_{\mathfrak{P}_{z_1, z_2}}(\cdot \otimes v \otimes u \otimes \cdot)$ is holomorphic on a neighborhood of $z_2 = z_1$.

5.8

In the previous subsection, we derive the relationship from the definition of VOAs (in particular, from the VOA Jacobi identity). So one may ask this natural question: does this relationship rely on the full Jacobi identity? For instance, does it rely on (5.18)?

The answer is no. In a very vague sense, any of the following three implies the others without assuming the full Jacobi identity.

1. Suitable Lie bracket relations hold for a pair of field operators $A(z_2), B(z_1)$.
2. The finite poles of (the analytic continuation of) $\langle w', A(z_2)B(z_1)w \rangle$ at $z_2 = z_1$.
3. The finitely many singular terms in the OPE of $A(z_2)B(z_1)$ and, in particular, the existence of such OPE.

Clearly, the third one a priori implies the second one, since the second does not assume the existence of OPE. Thus, as we have said that OPEs are roughly the same as associativity, we see that the associativity (and indeed, the full Jacobi identity) can be derived from the first or the second statement above. This is called the **reconstruction theorem** because it allows us to build examples of VOAs by checking only a small part of the Jacobi identity, namely the Lie bracket relations. This theorem is the most important one for constructing examples of VOAs.

A rigorous and detailed discussion of the equivalence of the above three statements will be given in the later section on local fields. The first and the second statements correspond to three seeming different but indeed equivalent definitions of the **locality** of $A(z_2), B(z_1)$. (There are two ways to describe the second one, a formal variable way and a complex analytic way.) Here, we first state the rigorous definition of the first one.

5.9

We let $\mathbb{V} = \bigoplus_{n \in \mathbb{N}} \mathbb{V}(n)$ be an \mathbb{N} -graded vector space, graded by a diagonalizable operator L_0 . We do not assume that \mathbb{V} and L_0 are from any graded vertex algebra.

Definition 5.8. An (L_0) -homogeneous field (operator) on \mathbb{V} is an element

$$A(z) = \sum_{n \in \mathbb{Z}} A_n z^{-n-1} \in \text{End}(\mathbb{V})[[z^{\pm 1}]]$$

(where each A_n is in $\text{End}(\mathbb{V})$) satisfying

$$[L_0, A(z)] = \Delta_A \cdot A(z) + z \partial_z A(z) \quad (5.25)$$

or equivalently,

$$[L_0, A_n] = (\Delta_A - n - 1)A_n \quad (\forall n \in \mathbb{Z}). \quad (5.26)$$

Δ_A is called the **weight** of $A(z)$.

Clearly, a homogeneous field $A(z)$ satisfies the **lower truncation property** $A(z)w \in \mathbb{C}((z))$ (for all $w \in \mathbb{V}$).

Definition 5.9 (Local fields (Lie algebraic version)). Given homogeneous fields $A(z)$ and $B(z)$, we say $A(z)$ is **local** to $B(z)$ if there exist $C^j(z) = \sum_{n \in \mathbb{Z}} C_n^j z^{-n-1} \in \text{End}(\mathbb{V})[[z^{\pm 1}]]$ (where $j = 0, 1, \dots, N-1$ for some $N \in \mathbb{N}$) satisfying

$$[A_m, B_k] = \sum_{l=0}^{N-1} \binom{m}{l} C_{m+k-l}^l \quad (5.27)$$

for all $m, k \in \mathbb{Z}$. We consider the right hand side of (5.27) as 0 if $N = 0$.

Remark 5.10. $A(z)$ is local to $B(z)$ if and only if there exist $D^0(z), \dots, D^{N-1}(z) \in \text{End}(\mathbb{V})[[z^{\pm 1}]]$ satisfying for all $m, k \in \mathbb{Z}$ that

$$[A_m, B_k] = \sum_{l=0}^{N-1} m^l D_{m+k}^l. \quad (5.28)$$

This is because $\tilde{C}_j^l := C_{j-l}^l$ and D_j^l are related by $\tilde{C}_j^l + \sum_{p=l+1}^{N-1} a_{p,l} \cdot \tilde{C}_j^p = D_j^l$ where each $a_{p,l} \in \mathbb{R}$ is determined by $\binom{m}{p} = m^p + \sum_{l=1}^{p-1} a_{p,l} \cdot m^l$.

Exercise 5.11. Use (5.28) to show that if $A(z)$ is local to $B(z)$ then $B(z)$ is local to $A(z)$.

5.10

Roughly speaking, reconstruction theorem says that if we have a small set \mathcal{E} of operators $A(z) \in \text{End}(\mathbb{V})$ that generates \mathbb{V} and satisfies all the axioms in the definition of graded vertex algebras/VOAs, except that the Jacobi identity is replaced by the weaker condition that the operators in \mathcal{E} are mutually local, then the Jacobi identity is automatically satisfied, and hence \mathbb{V} is a graded vertex algebra/VOA. This theorem will be proved in a later section.

Theorem 5.12 (Reconstruction theorem). *Let \mathcal{E} be a set of L_0 -homogeneous fields on \mathbb{V} . Assume that the following conditions are satisfied. Then \mathbb{V} has a unique graded vertex algebra structure such that each $A(z) \in \mathcal{E}$ is a vertex operator (namely, is of the form $Y(u, z)$ for some $u \in \mathbb{V}$), and that the vacuum vector $\mathbf{1}$ and the operator L_{-1} are those described in the following.*

- *Creation property:* There is a distinguished vector $\mathbf{1} \in \mathbb{V}(0)$ such that $A(z)\mathbf{1}$ has no negative powers of z for all $A(z) \in \mathcal{E}$.
- *Translation property:* There is a distinguished $L_{-1} \in \text{End}(\mathbb{V})$ such that $L_{-1}\mathbf{1} = 0$, and that for each $A(z) \in \mathcal{E}$ we have $[L_{-1}, A(z)] = \partial_z A(z)$.
- *Generating property:* Vectors of the form $A_{n_1}^1 \cdots A_{n_k}^k \mathbf{1}$ (where $k \in \mathbb{N}$, $A^1(z), \dots, A^k(z) \in \mathcal{E}$, and $n_1, \dots, n_k \in \mathbb{Z}$) span \mathbb{V} .
- *Locality:* Any two fields of \mathcal{E} are local.

Moreover, if L_0, L_{-1} can be extended to a sequence of operators $(L_n)_{n \in \mathbb{Z}}$ on \mathbb{V} such that $\sum_{n \in \mathbb{Z}} L_n z^{-n-2}$ belongs to \mathcal{E} , and that the Virasoro relation (2.8) is satisfied for some $c \in \mathbb{C}$, then \mathbb{V} is a VOA whose conformal vector \mathbf{c} satisfies $Y(\mathbf{c}, z) = \sum_{n \in \mathbb{Z}} L_n z^{-n-2}$.

Note that the uniqueness of the graded vertex algebra/VOA structure follows directly from (5.19). The non-trivial part of this theorem is of course the existence of such structure.

Remark 5.13. The end of the reconstruction Thm. 5.12 means that in order to show that a graded vertex algebra \mathbb{V} is a VOA, it suffices to show that L_0, L_{-1} can be extended to $(L_n)_{n \in \mathbb{Z}}$ satisfying the Virasoro relation, that $T(z) = \sum L_n z^{-n-2}$ satisfies the creation property (namely, $L_n \mathbf{1} = 0$ for all $n \geq -1$), and that $T(z)$ is local with any field in \mathcal{E} (by showing for instance the conformal Ward identity $[L_m, A(z)] = z^{m+1} \partial_z A(z) + \Delta_A \cdot z^m A(z)$ for all $A(z) \in \mathcal{E}$ if one expects that all $A(z)$ are “primary”). The translation property is automatically satisfied due to the Virasoro relation $[L_{-1}, L_n] = -(n+1)L_{n-1}$.

6 Constructing examples of VOAs

6.1

In the previous section, we have mentioned some important examples of VOAs: affine VOAs and Virasoro VOAs. But we didn’t explain why they exist. This is the task of this section. The standard references for this section are [LL, Chapter 6] and [Was10] (with emphasis on the unitarity aspect).

The style of this section is different from the previous ones: it has a strong flavor of Lie theory. The methods in this section will not be used in the future (except when we discuss examples of VOA modules). So the readers can safely skip this section if they do not want to bother with the existence issue. (But they should at least read Subsec. ?? on tensor product VOAs.)

Our first class of examples are Virasoro VOAs, namely, those generated by the conformal vector \mathbf{c} . To begin with, the **Virasoro algebra** is a Lie algebra $\text{Vir} = \text{Span}_{\mathbb{C}}\{L_n, K : n \in \mathbb{Z}\}$ satisfying the bracket relation

$$\begin{aligned}[L_m, L_n] &= (m - n)L_{m+n} + \frac{K}{12}(m+1)m(m-1)\delta_{m,-n}, \\ [K, L_n] &= 0.\end{aligned}$$

We know that any VOA must satisfy $L_n \mathbf{1} = 0$ for all $n \geq -1$. Motivated by this fact, we have:

Proposition 6.1. *Let \mathbb{V} be a representation of Vir such that L_0 is diagonalizable and has \mathbb{N} -spectrum. Assume that \mathbb{V} has a distinguished vector $\mathbf{1}$ killed by L_n for all $n \geq -1$, that vectors of the form $L_{n_1} \cdots L_{n_k} \mathbf{1}$ (where $k \in \mathbb{N}, n_1, \dots, n_k \in \mathbb{Z}$) span \mathbb{V} , and that K acts as a constant $c \in \mathbb{C}$. Then \mathbb{V} has a unique natural structure of a Virasoro VOA. Its central charge is c .*

Proof. This follows immediately from the reconstruction Thm. 5.12. Note that by (5.28), $\sum_{n \in \mathbb{Z}} L_n z^{-n-2}$ is local to itself due to the Virasoro relation. \square

6.2

Thus, it remains to construct Vir -modules satisfying the conditions in Prop. 6.1. Let us first find a “largest” such module. We expect that this module should have basis $L_{-n_1} \cdots L_{-n_k} \mathbf{1}$ where $n_1 \geq \cdots \geq n_k \geq 2$, because:

Exercise 6.2. Let \mathbb{V} be as in Prop. 6.1. Prove by induction on k that $L_{n_1} \cdots L_{n_k} \mathbf{1}$ (for any n_1, \dots, n_k) can be written as a linear combination of $L_{-m_1} \cdots L_{-m_l} \mathbf{1}$ where $l \in \mathbb{N}, m_1, \dots, m_l \geq 2$. (Hint: if $n_j \leq -2$, move L_{n_j} to the rightmost by using the Virasoro relation.)

Now let us construct this largest module $V_{\text{Vir}}(c, 0)$ for each $c \in \mathbb{C}$. Its basis consists of $(-n_1, \dots, -n_k)$ where $k \in \mathbb{N}$ and $-n_1 \geq \cdots \geq -n_k$. The one with $k = 0$ is denoted by $\mathbf{1}$. If $n \geq n_1$, we simply define the action of L_{-n} on each $(-n_1, \dots, -n_k)$ to be $(-n, -n_1, \dots, -n_k)$. But we also want to define the action of L_n on $(-n_1, \dots, -n_k) = L_{-n_1} \cdots L_{-n_k} \mathbf{1}$ for all $n \in \mathbb{Z}$. In practice, we can write down the formula explicitly using the Virasoro relation. For instance: $L_0 L_{-n_1} \cdots L_{-n_k} \mathbf{1} = -(n_1 + \cdots + n_k) L_{-n_1} \cdots L_{-n_k} \mathbf{1}$, and

$$\begin{aligned}L_3 L_{-4} L_{-3} \mathbf{1} &= [L_3, L_{-4}] L_{-3} \mathbf{1} + L_{-4} [L_3, L_{-3}] \mathbf{1} \\ &= 7 L_{-1} L_{-3} \mathbf{1} + 6 L_{-4} L_0 \mathbf{1} + 2c L_{-4} \mathbf{1} = (14 + 2c) L_{-4} \mathbf{1}.\end{aligned}\tag{6.2}$$

There is a natural question about this approach: how do we verify that such defined action of Vir on $V_{\text{Vir}}(c, 0)$ preserves the Lie bracket relations of Vir ?

Index

1 , the vacuum vector, [7](#)

$A_{r,R}$ and the standard thin annulus $A_{1,1}$, [5](#)

$\overline{C}, \overline{\Sigma}$, the complex conjugate of C and Σ , [6](#)

$\text{Diff}^+(\mathbb{S}^1)$, [12](#)

f^*, η^*, \dots and $\overline{f}, \overline{\eta}, \dots$, where $f^*(\overline{x}) = \overline{f(x)}$ and $\overline{f(x)} = f(\overline{x})$, [6](#)

P_n , [27](#)

$T_\Sigma, T_{\mathfrak{X}}$: The interaction map/correlation function, [4](#), [22](#)

\mathbb{V}', \mathbb{W}' , the graded dual spaces, [27](#)

$\mathbb{V}^{\text{cl}}, \mathbb{W}^{\text{cl}}$, the algebraic completions, [27](#)

$\text{wt}v, \widetilde{\text{wt}}w$, [24](#)

$Y(u)_n$, [24](#)

Θ , the CPT operator, [7](#)

$\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle : \mathcal{H}^{\otimes 2} \rightarrow \mathbb{C}$, the correlation function $T_{A_{1,1}}$ for $A_{1,1}$, [12](#)

References

- [CKLW18] Carpi, S., Kawahigashi, Y., Longo, R. and Weiner, M., 2018. From vertex operator algebras to conformal nets and back (Vol. 254, No. 1213). *Memoirs of the American Mathematical Society*
- [DL14] Dong, C. and Lin, X., 2014. Unitary vertex operator algebras. *Journal of algebra*, 397, pp.252-277.
- [FMS] Francesco, P., Mathieu, P. and S  n  chal, D., 2012. *Conformal field theory*. Springer Science & Business Media.
- [Gui] Gui, B., *Conformal Blocks: Vector Bundle Structures, Sewing, and Factorization*.
- [Gui19] Gui, B., 2019. Energy bounds condition for intertwining operators of types B , C , and G_2 unitary affine vertex operator algebras. *Transactions of the American Mathematical Society*, 372(10), pp.7371-7424.
- [Gui20] Gui, B., *Convergence of Sewing Conformal Blocks*, arXiv:2011.07450
- [LL] Lepowsky, J. and Li, H., 2004. *Introduction to vertex operator algebras and their representations* (Vol. 227). Springer Science & Business Media.
- [Seg88] Segal, G.B., 1988. The definition of conformal field theory. In *Differential geometrical methods in theoretical physics* (pp. 165-171). Springer, Dordrecht.
- [Was10] Wassermann, A., 2010. Kac-Moody and Virasoro algebras. arXiv preprint arXiv:1004.1287.

YAU MATHEMATICAL SCIENCES CENTER, TSINGHUA UNIVERSITY, BEIJING, CHINA.

E-mail: binguimath@gmail.com bingui@tsinghua.edu.cn