Knot Knotes

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Introduction

These are the notes for a eight-lecture minicourse given at the University of Auckland in July 2023. The course follows a fairly traditional set of topics---fundamental groups, geometric invariants, braids, and knot polynomials---but given the particularities of the audience we will go a bit more deeply into some aspects which do not normally end up in textbooks, in particular the role of group representations (both finite and infinite). We will also give full technical proofs of many of the results we use instead of just taking them for granted. In general we will expect the audience to have a good understanding of basic topology, group theory, and hyperbolic geometry. References on the background for each section may be found in the individual introductions.

> *``Oh, there we are back to those parallel lines," answered Whatif, ``I admit that you can prove that if the alternating angles are equal then those lines must be parallel, but nobody could prove the converse. This is why Euclid put the converse (or what is equivalent to it), as his famous fifth postulate for the Euclidean plane. But now we are in a..."*
>
> *``diabolic plane?" asked Alice.* [44, p. 64]

Chapter 1

Classical knot theory

In this first week, we will look at classical knot theory---by this, we mean knot theory pre-Thurston (so up until the 1970s). A lengthy description of the history of knotting, including the mathematics, may be found in the delightful anthology [50]. We will emphasise the algebraic aspects, in particular the representation theory of knot complement groups (following R. Riley).

For these notes, we follow in particular the textbooks of Crowell--Fox [15], Kauffman [24], and Lickorish [27]; but since these books do not go deeply into a lot of what we want to do (Riley's work). The prerequisite topology and group theory may be found in the book by Stillwell [43].

1.1 Basic definitions and first examples

A **knot** is an embedding $k : \mathbb{S}^1 \to \mathbb{S}^3$. A **link** is an embedding $k : \mathbb{S}^1 \sqcup \cdots \sqcup \mathbb{S}^1 \to \mathbb{S}^3$. A **component** of a link is just a topological component of the image. The actual parameterisation k is not important, we usually identify the knot or link with the image.

1.1 Example. The **unknot** is the image of the map $[0, 2\pi] \to \mathbb{R} \times \mathbb{C} = \mathbb{R}^3$ given by $t \mapsto (0, \exp(it))$. The **figure eight knot** and the **trefoil knot** (also called the **cloverleaf knot**) are shown along with the unknot in Fig. 1.1.

Knots are defined up to ambient isotopy in $\mathbb{S}^3$: two knots k, l are equivalent if there exists a continuous map $F : \mathbb{S}^3 \times [0, 1] \to \mathbb{S}^3$ such that $F(\cdot, 0)$ is the identity map, $F(\cdot, t) : \mathbb{S}^3 \to \mathbb{S}^3$ is an isotopy for all $t \in [0, 1]$, and $F(k(\cdot), 1) = l(\cdot)$.

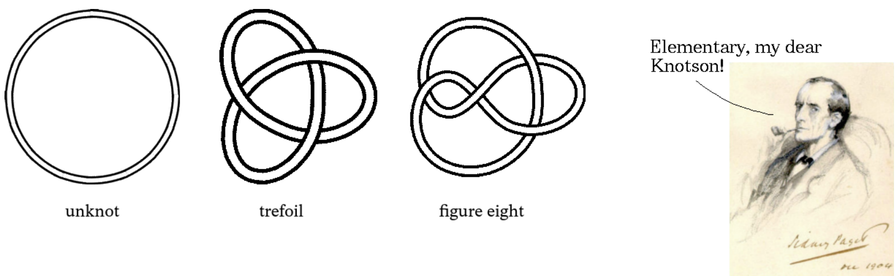

Figure 1.1: Three elementary knots.

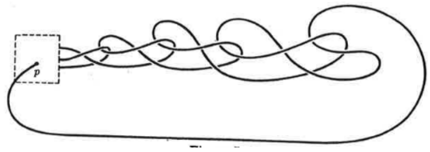

Figure 1.2: A wild knot, the **Fox knot** [15, p. 6]. Observe that this can somehow be unravelled! See also [24, p. 52].

Remark. Some people say that knots are defined up to homeomorphism of $\mathbb{S}^3$, i.e. if there exists a homeomorphism $f : \mathbb{S}^3 \to \mathbb{S}^3$ which sends one knot onto the other. Clearly if two knots are equivalent up to ambient isotopy then they are equivalent up to ambient homeomorphism. The converse is almost true. If two knots are equivalent under orientation-preserving homeomorphism then they are equivalent up to ambient isotopy [15, p. 10]. Two knots which are equivalent up to orientation-reversing homeomorphism are said to form a **chiral pair**, and a knot equivalent up to ambient isotopy with its chiral twin (mirror image) is called **amphichiral**.

Finally we say that a knot is **polygonal** if it is piecewise linear except for finitely many vertices, and a knot is **tame** if it is equivalent to a polygonal knot. In Fig. 1.2 we show an example of a **wild** (i.e. non-tame) knot. We shall from this point assume that every knot is tame unless otherwise stated.

Usually we will work with planar projections of knots. We will give a formal definition but in reality the technicalities get in the way so we will hardly ever phrase anything in terms of the function ob which we are about to define.

1.2 Definition. A **knot diagram** of a link k is a planar[1] 4-valent graph δ together with a function $\mathrm{ob} : V(\delta) \to 2^{E(\delta)}$ which assigns to every vertex v an unordered pair $\mathrm{ob}(v) = \{e, f\}$ $(e \neq f)$ of edges incident with v such that in the planar embedding $k \hookrightarrow \mathbb{R}^2$ the edges e and f are on opposite sides of v, i.e. any arc from the midpoint of e to the midpoint of f crosses an edge originating from v that is neither e nor f.

Almost all projections $\mathbb{R}^3 \to \mathbb{R}^2$ of a 3-plane containing a link to a 2-plane not incident with the knot induce a knot diagram: the projection induces a 4-valent graph, and the function ob sends v to the pair of edges of the diagram which are the projection of the piece of the knot furthest away from the plane of projection (Fig. 1.3). Conversely a knot diagram clearly induces a knot (by simply separating the two strands into the third dimension at each vertex).

One can play around with `bad' projections and produce some amusing results: `https://youtu.be/SqpzP81ZOBA`.

We will describe here a couple of other things we need from knot diagrams. Suppose k is an oriented knot, that is take an orientation of $\mathbb{S}^1$ and push it forward onto the image $k(\mathbb{S}^1)$; let δ be a diagram of k. Then every edge $e \in E(\delta)$ inherits an orientation, and the `divalence' (number of in edges minus number of out edges) of every vertex $v \in V(\delta)$ is zero.

1. We can assign a **sign** $\epsilon(v)$ to each vertex $v \in V(\delta)$ according to the convention Fig. 1.4.

2. Define an equivalence relation $\leftrightsquigarrow$ on the set of edges $E(\delta)$ by $e \leftrightsquigarrow f$ iff there exists a vertex v such that $\{e, f\} = \mathrm{ob}(v)$. This sets up a partition $V(\delta)/\leftrightsquigarrow$ of the set of vertices, and the parts of this partition are the **arcs** of the diagram. We will write $\mathrm{arcs}(\delta)$ for this set of arcs. Note also that ob sets up a map $V(\delta) \to \mathrm{arcs}(\delta)$ which we also denote by ob; it is this function which is really what we are trying to formalise (a crossing is a place where an arc crosses over another arc). In Fig. 1.5 we show a diagram of the figure eight knot with four arcs (the connected

[1] i.e. comes equipped with a given fixed embedding into $\mathbb{R}^2$

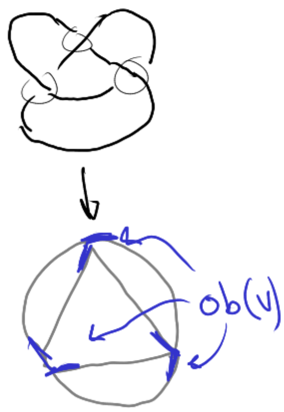

Figure 1.3: Formally encoding the data of a crossing via the function ob.

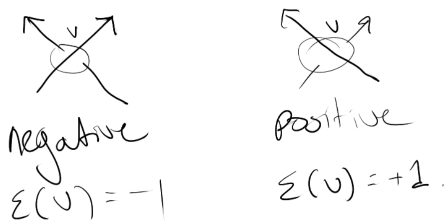

Figure 1.4: Sign of a vertex v.

components of the left-hand image). The **arc graph** of δ is the graph with vertex set arcs(δ) and an edge between arcs α and β iff there is a vertex of δ at which α and β meet (right hand image of Fig. 1.5)

On the subject of arcs, let k be a knot in $\mathbb{S}^3$ which meets a plane $\mathbb{R}^2$ in $2m$ points such that the arcs (in the usual topological sense) of k contained in each halfspace cut out by $\mathbb{R}^2$ are orthogonally projected onto arcs on $\mathbb{R}^2$ which are simple and mutually disjoint from the other arcs from the same halfspace. The minimal m for which this is possible is called the **bridge number** of k. It is very hard to compute this number in general. The only 1-bridge knot is the trivial knot; we will classify 2-bridge knots later on; and m-bridge knots for $m > 2$ do not admit a known classification.

It is an important (but hard to prove) theorem of Reidemeister that the topological definition of knot equivalency can be reinterpreted in terms of the combinatorics of knot diagrams:

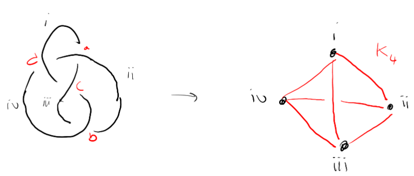

Figure 1.5: The arc graph of the figure eight knot.

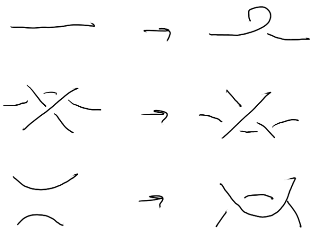

Figure 1.6: The three Reidemeister moves.

1.3 Theorem (Reidemeister)**.** *Two links k, k' are equivalent if and only if there exists a finite sequence of **Reidemeister moves** (Fig. 1.6) changing a diagram of k into a diagram of k'.*

In practice this theorem is useful when trying to define so-called *knot invariants*.

1.4 Definition. Let k be a knot with diagram δ and arc graph $\mathrm{arcs}(\delta)$. Then $\mathrm{arcs}(\delta)$ is said to be **tricolourable** if it admits a (possibly non-proper) vertex colouring on 3 colours such that (i) at least two colours are used, (ii) any lollipop is coloured with either exactly one or exactly two colours, and (iii) any 3-cycle is coloured with either exactly one or exactly three colours.

1.5 Lemma. *Let k be a knot. If there exists a diagram δ of k which has tricolourable arc graph, then every diagram of k has tricolourable arc graph. Hence the function $t : \mathsf{Knots} \to \{0, 1\}$ which assigns to each knot the value 1 if it is tricolourable and 0 otherwise is well--defined, i.e. it does not depend on the diagram chosen.*

Proof. Reidemeister moves preserve tricolourability.

This is the first example of a **knot invariant**, a function $\mathsf{Knots} \to S$ where S is a known set. It is not a very good one, but at least we get the following:

1.6 Corollary. *The figure eight knot is nontrivial (i.e. is not equivalent to the unknot).*

Proof. The incidence graph of the figure eight knot is K_4 (Fig. 1.5), but the unknot is tricolourable (its arc graph is a single vertex with no edges).

We have distinguished at least two knots, but we need better invariants---for instance we still cannot prove that the trefoil (Fig. 1.3) is knotted. (We will do this in Example 1.23.)

We can define slightly finer invariants almost immediately for links.

1.7 Lemma. *Let $L = l \sqcup k$ be a link of two oriented components. Let $l \cap k$ be the set of crossings in some diagram. Then the **linking number***

$$\mathrm{lk}(l, k) = \frac{1}{2} \sum_{p \in l \cap k} \varepsilon(p)$$

where $\varepsilon(p)$ is the sign of the crossing (i.e. depending on the orientation) is independent of the diagram and hence is an invariant of the link.

Proof. Reidemeister moves preserve lk.

1.8 Corollary. *There exists a nontrivial link (i.e. a link which is not equivalent to two unknots that lie in disjoint 3-balls in $\mathbb{S}^3$).*

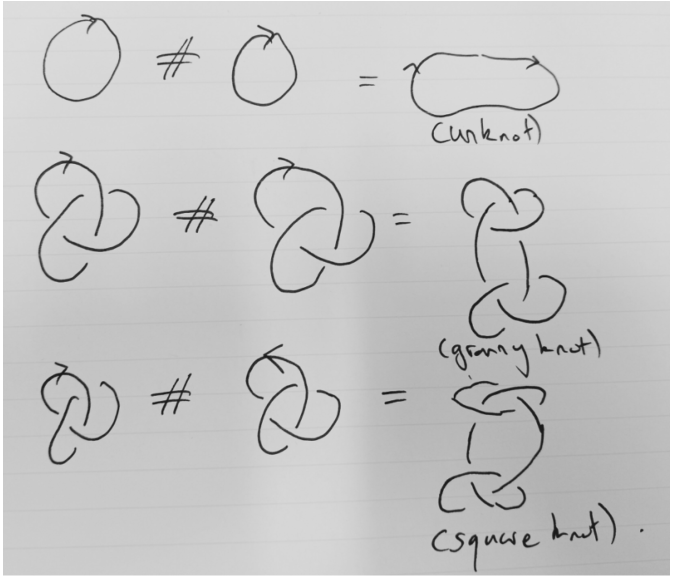

Figure 1.7: Three connected sums.

Again this invariant is not good enough for simple examples like the Borromean rings.

In the next lecture we will derive a function $\pi_1 : \mathsf{Knot} \to \mathsf{Group}$ which provides a better invariant (and which is algorithmically computable), and the definition of even better (faster, easier to compute, more geometrically meaningful: pick any two) knot invariants is a theme of the next few weeks. But for the rest of today we will pause to have a look at some fun tricks and constructions to pick up some intuition that will be very useful.

1.9 Construction. The **connected sum** of two *oriented* knots k, k', denoted $k\#k'$, is defined by cutting tiny arcs out of k and k' and gluing the ends in an orientation-compatible way. Clearly if 1 is the unknot then $k\#1 = k = 1\#k$.

1.10 Lemma. *Connected sum is associative and commutative (up to knot equivalence).*

1.11 Example. We exhibit the **granny knot** and the **square knot** as connected sums of trefoil knots in Fig. 1.7. Observe that the sum depends on orientation!

A knot is called **prime** if whenever $k = k'\#k''$ then either $k = k'$ or $k = k''$. The following trick shows that the unknot is prime.

1.12 Trick. Knots don't cancel: i.e. given two knots k, k', if $k\#k'$ is unknotted then k and k' are unknotted. We follow the proof indicated in [24, Theorem 4.6, p.55]. Suppose $k\#k'$ is unknotted; then form the wild knot $k\#k'\#k\#k'\#\cdots$ (c.f. Fig. 1.2). But

$$k\#k'\#k\#k'\#\cdots = (k\#k')\#(k\#k')\#\cdots = 1\#1\#\cdots = 1.$$

On the other hand,

$$k\#k'\#k\#k'\#\cdots = k\#(k'\#k)\#(k'\#k)\#\cdots = k\#1\#1\#\cdots = k.$$

Thus $k = 1$.

Figure 1.8: The Kinoshita--Terasaka knot (L) and the Conway knot (R) [27, Figure 3.3].

Remark. Compare the proof of Conway, `https://youtu.be/1wWeRMmXIoU`, where he basically uses the idea that we use to prove associativity of connected sum and so (really) it is the same proof.

1.13 Construction (Mutation)**.** The **Kinoshita--Terasaka knot** [25] and the **Conway knot** [13, ???] of Fig. 1.8 are distinct (we will prove next time). They are related by the process of **mutation**: if $k \subseteq \mathbb{S}^3$ is a knot and $B \subseteq \mathbb{S}^3$ is a 3-ball with $|\partial B \cap k| = 4$ then cut B out of $\mathbb{S}^3$ and glue it back in after a rotation by π so that the four bits of the knot are matched up.

We end with a final remarkable construction of knots due e.g. to Brauner, though we follow the excellent exposition of Milnor [31].

1.14 Construction. Let $V \subseteq \mathbb{C}^2$ be an affine algebraic curve cut out by a square-free polynomial $f(w, z)$. Let r be the number of local analytic branches of V passing through $(0, 0)$. Since $(0, 0)$ is either a simple point or an isolated singularity, there exists $\varepsilon > 0$ such that the intersection $S_\varepsilon \cap V$ of a 3-sphere of radius ε with V is a smooth compact 1-manifold with r components, i.e. it is a link of r components. Such a link is called an **algebraic link**.

1.15 Exercises.

1. Show that the figure eight knot is amphichiral.
2. A knot diagram is **alternating** if overcrossings and undercrossings alternate as one walks around the knot (in the formal language, if every arc is made up of exactly two edges of the diagram). Show that this is actually a property of the knot, not of the diagram (i.e. if one diagram is alternating then they all are). Show that if k is any alternating knot and if $\pi : k \to \mathbb{R}^2$ is some projection which induces a diagram then there exists an alternating knot k' with the same projection as a subset of $\mathbb{R}^2$ (Tait, late 1800s).
3. Define the **writhe** of a diagram δ of a knot k to be
$$w(\delta) = \sum_{v \in V(\delta)} \varepsilon(v)$$
(compare Lemma 1.7, where the sum is only over intersections of two different components). Show that w is invariant under the second and third Reidemeister moves, but not the first: in fact adding a single `loop' (either over or under) to a knot diagram adds 1 to the writhe. In fact the writhe is a topological invariant of the knot $k$ *together with* a choice of section of the unit normal bundle to $k$, or (equivalently) a `ribbon' thickening of k. This additional structure on k is called a **framed knot** (and has an obvious generalisation to links).

1.2 The fundamental group

Recall that a knot is **prime** if it does not decompose under connected sum, i.e. k is prime iff whenever $k = k' \# k''$ one of k' or k'' is the unknot, and a knot is **tame** if it is isometric to a knot which is made up of finitely many straight line segments. We write $\mathbb{S}^3 \setminus k$ for the complement 3-manifold of k, and $\pi_1(k) := \pi_1(\mathbb{S}^3 \setminus k)$.

1.16 Theorem (Gordon--Luecke, 1989 [20])**.**

1. *Fundamental groups are knot invariants: If* $(\mathbb{S}^3 \setminus k) \simeq_{homeo.} (\mathbb{S}^3 \setminus k')$, *then* $k \sim k'$.
2. *The converse is true for prime knots: If k and k' are prime, and $\pi_1(k) \simeq \pi_1(k')$, then $k \sim k'$.*

The Gordon--Luecke theorem *does not hold* for links [38, §9.H].

Usually when we compute the fundamental group we will obtain it in terms of generators and relations. Having a group in terms of generators and relations is not to really *know* the group! Hence this invariant, while `easy' to compute (we will see an algorithm in a bit), is not in practice so useful on its own.

We recall first some basic algebraic topology which we will use throughout the remainder of the lecture.

1.17 Definition. Let H_1 and H_2 be groups, and L be a third group equipped with maps $\Phi_1 : L \to H_1$ and $\Phi_2 : L \to H_2$. Then the **amalgamated free product** $H_1 *_L H_2$ is a group equipped with maps $f_1 : H_1 \to H_1 *_L H_2$ and $f_2 : H_2 \to H_1 *_L H_2$ such that $f_1 \circ \Phi_1 = f_2 \circ \Phi_2$ satisfying the universal property ``if G is a group equipped with maps $g_1 : H_1 \to G$ and $g_2 : H_2 \to G$ such that $g_1 \circ \Phi_1 = g_2 \circ \Phi_2$, then there exists a unique map $\Psi : H_1 *_L H_2 \to G$ such that the following diagram commutes:

$$\begin{tikzcd}
 & H_1 \arrow[dr, "f_1"] \arrow[drr, bend left, "g_1"] & & \\
L \arrow[ur, "\Phi_1"] \arrow[dr, "\Phi_2"'] & & H_1 *_L H_2 \arrow[r, dotted, "\Psi"] & G.\text{''} \\
 & H_2 \arrow[ur, "f_2"'] \arrow[urr, bend right, "g_2"'] & &
\end{tikzcd}$$

This group is $(H_1 * H_2)/K$, where K is the normal closure of the subgroup of $H_1 * H_2$ generated by the words $\Phi_1(l)\Phi_2(l)^{-1}$ for all $l \in L$.

1.18 Theorem (Seifert--Van Kampen [10, Theorem III.9.4])**.** *Let $X = U \cup V$ with each of U, V, $U \cap V$ open, non-empty, and path connected. Fix a common base point $x_0 \in U \cup V$. Then the canonical maps of the fundamental groups of U, V, and $U \cap V$ into that of X induce an isomorphism*

$$\pi_1(U) *_{\pi_1(U \cap V)} \pi_1(V) \simeq \pi_1(X).$$

The following technical lemma is the fount of all places that coprime pairs will appear.

1.19 Lemma. *Coordinatise $\mathbb{S}^1 \subseteq \mathbb{C}$ in the usual way via* $\exp$, *and let the `standard torus' be $\mathbb{T}^2 = \mathbb{S}^1 \times \mathbb{S}^1$. The fundamental group $\pi_1(\mathbb{T}^2, (1,1))$ is a free Abelian group with standard basis given by the images of $\alpha, \beta : (I, \partial I) \to (\mathbb{T}^2, (1,1))$ defined by*

$$\alpha(t) = (e^{2\pi i t}, 1), \qquad \beta(t) = (1, e^{2\pi i t}).$$

(So far so good.) An element of $\pi_1(\mathbb{T}^2)$ is represented by a simple loop iff it has homotopy class $[\alpha]^p[\beta]^q$ with $(p,q) = 1$.

Proof. ``$\Leftarrow$'': if it has given homotopy class then it is parametrised by $t \mapsto (e^{2\pi p i t}, e^{2\pi q i t})$ which is simple (Fig. 1.10). ``$\Rightarrow$'': suppose $\omega(t)$ parameterises a simple curve, and cut along it, opening the torus into an annulus. Since α also has this property there is a homeomorphism $h : \mathbb{T}^2 \to \mathbb{T}^2$ with $h\alpha = \omega$ (cut via omega and reglue via alpha to define h). Define $p, q, r, s \in \mathbb{Z}$ by $h_*(\alpha) = [\omega] = [\alpha]^p[\beta]^q$ and $h_*(\beta) = [\alpha]^r[\beta]^s$. Since h_* is an automorphism of $\pi_1 \simeq [\alpha] \times [\beta]$, we have $\begin{vmatrix} p & r \\ q & s \end{vmatrix} = \pm 1$.

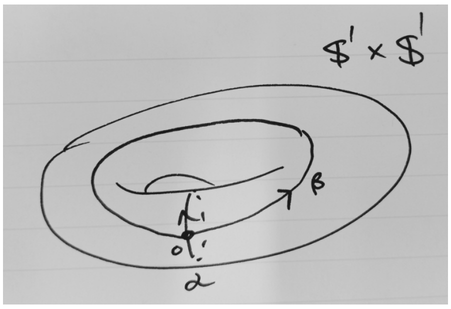

Figure 1.9: Median and latitude of a torus.

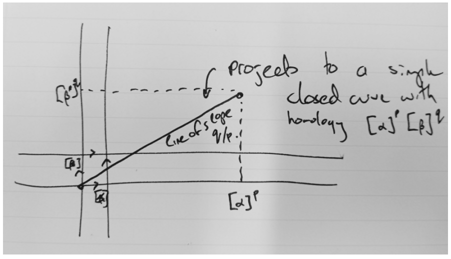

Figure 1.10: Every simple closed curve on the torus is a projection of a line of rational slope.

1.20 Example (Torus knots)**.** Let $p, q \in \mathbb{Z}$ be coprime. Fix a basis $[\alpha], [\beta]$ for $\pi_1(\mathbb{T}^2)$. Then there exists a unique up to homotopy curve on the torus $\mathbb{T}^2$ with homotopy class $[\alpha]^p[\beta]^q$ (Lemma 1.19). Embed $\mathbb{T}^2$ into $\mathbb{S}^3$ in an unknotted way. The resulting curve is the (p, q) **torus knot** $k_{p,q}$. We can apply Theorem 1.18 to compute $\pi_1(k_{p,q})$. Let T be the torus, U be a slight open thickening of the portion of $\mathbb{S}^3 \setminus k$ not exterior to T, and V a slight open thickening of the portion of $\mathbb{S}^3 \setminus k$ not interior to T. Both U and V are solid torii, so $\pi_1(U) = \langle x \rangle$ and $\pi_1(V) = \langle y \rangle$. Now observe that from the perspective of U, $U \cap V$ is a thickened annulus winding p times around, and from the perspective of V $U \cap V$ winds q times. We therefore have $\pi_1(U \cap V) = \langle x^p \rangle \subseteq \pi_1(U)$ and $\pi_1(U \cap V) = \langle y^q \rangle \subseteq \pi_1(V)$. Thus $\pi_1(U \cup V) = \langle x, y \,:\, x^p = y^q \rangle$.

In general we can give an algorithm for the computation of the fundamental group, first described by Wirtinger circa. 1905 (according to the historical notes to [12, Chapter 3]).

1.21 Algorithm (Wirtinger presentation)**.** Let δ be a diagram of an oriented knot k.

1. Enumerate the arcs of δ, so $\text{arcs}(\delta) = \{x_1, \dots, x_n\}$.
2. For every vertex v of δ, let i, j, k be the indices of the three arcs at v in such a way that $\text{ob}(v) = x_k$ and such that x_i is walked before x_j when travelling in the orientation direction. If $\epsilon(v) = +1$ then let $W_v = x_k x_i x_k^{-1} x_j^{-1}$, otherwise set $W_v = x_k^{-1} x_i x_k x_j^{-1}$. Let $\text{words}(\delta) = \{W_v \,:\, v \in V(\delta)\}$.
3. Then $\langle \text{arcs}(\delta) \,:\, \text{words}(\delta) \rangle$ is a presentation for $\pi_1(k)$, the **Wirtinger presentation**.

1.22 Example. The unknot has fundamental group $\mathbb{Z}$.

1.23 Example. We can compute the group of the trefoil knot k as follows. Label the three arcs of k by x, y, z as in Fig. 1.11. Then by applying the vertex rules we get the following relations for each vertex:

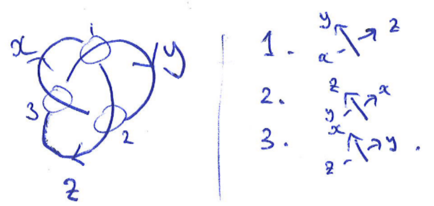

Figure 1.11: Generators and relations for the Wirtinger presentation of the trefoil knot.

1. $z = yxy^{-1}$,
2. $x = zyz^{-1}$,
3. $y = xzx^{-1}$.

Hence

$$\pi_1(k) = \langle x, y, z \,:\, yxy^{-1}z^{-1} = zyz^{-1}x^{-1} = xzx^{-1}y^{-1} = 1\rangle.$$

But by relation (1) we can eliminate the generator z; this also eliminates one of the other two generators (one becomes the inverse of the other) and in total we have

$$\pi_1(k) = \langle x, y \,:\, yxy = xyx\rangle.$$

We now observe that there is a surjective map $\pi_1(k) \to S_3$: the symmetric group is generated by (1 2) and (2 3), so define the map $\phi : \pi_1(k) \to S_3$ by $x \mapsto (1\ 2)$ and $y \mapsto (2\ 3)$; this is possible since

$$(2\ 3)(1\ 2)(2\ 3) = (1\ 3) = (1\ 2)(2\ 3)(1\ 2).$$

By another application of the algorithm, we get that the fundamental group of the figure eight knot l is

$$\pi_1(l) = \langle x, y \,:\, yxy^{-1}xy = xyx^{-1}yx\rangle.$$

We claim that there is no surjective map $\pi_1(l) \to S_3$, and prove this by contradiction. First note that x and y are conjugate so their images in S_3 must be distinct (as S_3 is not cyclic) conjugate elements. Further since the map is surjective their images cannot be cycles of length 3, since two cycles of length 3 generate a proper subgroup of S_3. We therefore see that x and y must be mapped to two transpositions, without loss of generality $x \mapsto (1\ 2)$ and $y \mapsto (2\ 3)$. But one can easily check that the relation

$$(2\ 3)(1\ 2)(3\ 2)(1\ 2)(2\ 3) = (1\ 2)(2\ 3)(2\ 1)(2\ 3)(1\ 2)$$

does not hold---the left hand side is (1 2) and the right hand side is (1 3), so the only possible map $\{x, y\} \to \mathbb{S}^3$ cannot extend to a homomorphism, giving the desired contradiction.

By Theorem 1.16 we therefore see that since $\pi_1(k) \not\cong \pi_1(l)$, $k \not\equiv l$.

Note that for the trefoil and figure eight knots we could reduce the number of generators down to 2 from the *a priori* number 3.

1.24 Lemma. *The minimal number of generators of a Wirtinger presentation is exactly the bridge number of the knot.*

Proof. Let b be the bridge number of k and let m be the minimal number of generators of a Wirtinger presentation. Since the number of generators in the Wirtinger presentation coming from a b-bridge presentation is b, we have $m \le b$. On the other hand the bridge number is bounded above by the number of arcs in any given diagram, and each of these gives a presentation, so $b \le m$.

We shall now turn to the proof of correctness of Algorithm 1.21 which is fairly standard; we steal pictures from the version given in §10.2 of Armstrong [4] since they are particularly clearly drawn. Observe without loss of generality we may assume our link is embedded in $\mathbb{R}^3$.

Proof of correctness of Algorithm 1.21. Let k be a link, let $P = \{(x, y, z) : z = 0\}$ be the plane disjoint from k which induces a diagram δ via orthogonal projection π; the claim is that a presentation for $\pi_1(k)$ is given by $\langle \text{arcs}(\delta) : \text{words}(\delta)\rangle$. Let S be a bounded closed disc in P which includes in its interior the diagram δ, for every crossing $v \in V(\delta)$ let R_v be a closed subset of k which is projected onto a small closed neighbourhood of v of the undercrossing at v chosen in such a way that all the R_v are mutually disjoint (except for if R_v and R'_v are adjacent). In Fig. 1.12 the arcs R_v are the lighter coloured arcs. It should now be clear that we can move the knot via an isotopy such that the sets R_v are all disjoint subsets of P and the remainder of the knot lies entirely in one of the open half-spaces bounded by P, say $P_+ = \{(x, y, z) : z > 0\}$---see Fig. 1.13. We can identify the components $P_+ \cap k = \alpha_1 \amalg \cdots \amalg \alpha_r$ with the elements of the set arcs(δ) and without loss of generality we can assume that the orthogonal projections $\pi(\alpha_i)$ of these components to P are disjoint.

Pick a basepoint in P_+ that is far away from P and the knot, say $x_0 = (0, 0, z_0)$ where $z_0 \gg 0$ and let $\overline{P_+} = \{(x, y, z) : z \geq 0\}$ be the closed half-space. For each arc α_i let x_i be a loop based at z_0 which goes around α_i according to the right-hand rule and comes straight back up, as in Fig. 1.14.

Claim: $\pi_1(\overline{P_+} \setminus k, z_0)$ is the free group generated by the x_i. *Proof of claim:* For each arc α_i let B_i be a thickening (i.e. small open neighbourhood) of the set $\bigcup_{x\in\alpha_i}[x, \pi(x)]$; the latter set looks like a wall under α_i (Fig. 1.15). Delete all these neighbourhoods and start adding them (minus the knot) back in one at a time inductively---the set $P_* \setminus \bigcup B_i$ is simply connected, each $B_i \setminus k$ has cyclic fundamental group generated by x_i; to be fully rigorous we need to adjoin to B_i a long thin open `noodle' which goes up to z_0 and doesn't intersect any other B_i except in a tiny ball around z_0, then these intersections have trivial fundamental group and so by Theorem 1.18 the fundamental group of $(P_+ \setminus \bigcup B_i) \cup (B_1 \setminus k) \cup \cdots \cup (B_r \setminus k)$ is exactly the free product $\langle x_1\rangle * \langle x_2\rangle * \cdots \langle x_r\rangle$ as desired. *This ends the proof of the claim.*

We now need to add in the lower half-space $\overline{P_-} \setminus k$. Suppose we look at the local picture at some vertex with incident arcs indexed i, j, k and with the lower arc going from i to j as you look along k (the other orientation is the same argument), depicted in Fig. 1.16. Suppose for the sake of labelling that this is vertex v. Draw a small box D_v made up of the square cylinder in P_- capped with a square ∂D_v on P surrounding the underpass R_v. Topologically, we can thicken D_v slightly into P_+. The fundamental group of the thickened D_v is still trivial but the intersection of this thickening with $P_+ \setminus k$ is an annulus, namely it is a thickening of the square ∂D_v minus the central arc R_v (see Fig. 1.17). The fundamental group of this intersection is generated by the loop indicated in Fig. 1.16. Observe that this loop is homotopic in P_+ to the loop $x_i x_k x_j^{-1} x_k^{-1}$. By Theorem 1.18 we therefore have that $\pi_1(P_+ \setminus k \cup D_v) = \pi_1(P_+ \setminus k) *_N \pi_1(D_v)$, where N is the (normal closure of the) group generated by $x_i x_k x_j^{-1} x_k^{-1}$. This is exactly the element of words(δ) coming from the vertex v . By induction, since all the D_v for different groups are disjoint, we get

$$\pi_1((P_+ \setminus k) \cup \bigcup D_v) = \langle x_1, ..., x_r : \text{words}(\delta)\rangle.$$

Finally observe that the remaining part of P_i is simply connected and has simply connected intersection with the set whose fundamental group was just computed, so by a final application of Theorem 1.18 we get

$$\pi_1(\mathbb{R}^3 \setminus k) = \langle x_1, ..., x_r : \text{words}(\delta)\rangle$$

as desired. ⅅ⥃

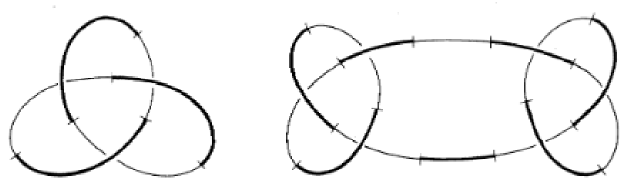

Figure 1.12: Undercrossings (light) and arcs (dark). Figure from [4, Fig. 10.6].

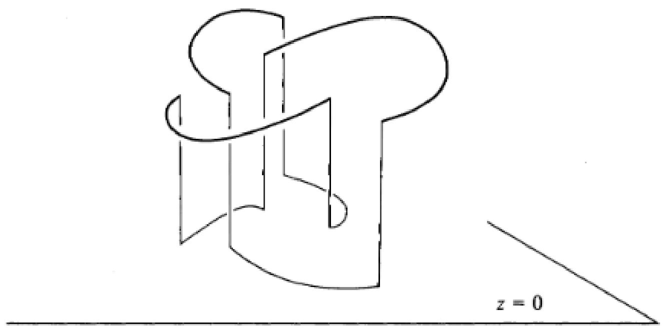

Figure 1.13: A knot isotoped to lie entirely in the plane $z = 0$ except for the finitely many arcs of some diagram. Figure from [4, Fig. 10.7].

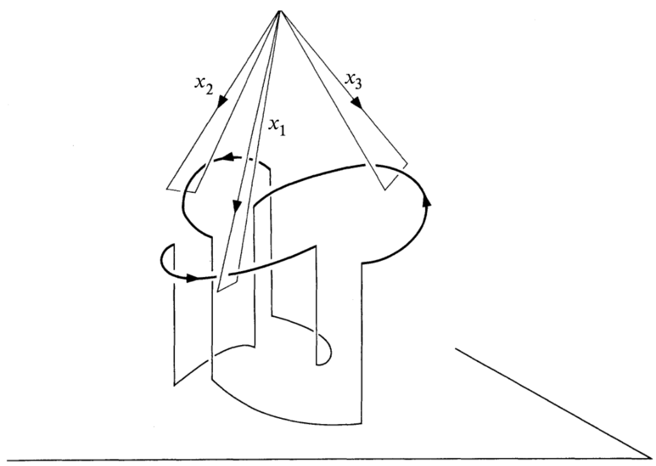

Figure 1.14: The generators of the Wirtinger presentation. Figure modified from [4, Fig. 10.8].

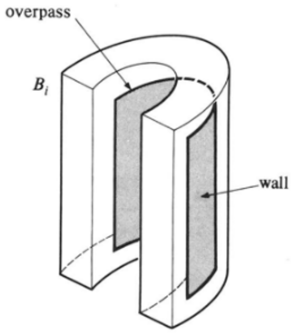

Figure 1.15: The open set B_i is a thickening of the `wall' set $\bigcup_{x\in\alpha_i}[x,\pi(x)]$. Figure modified from [4, Fig. 10.9].

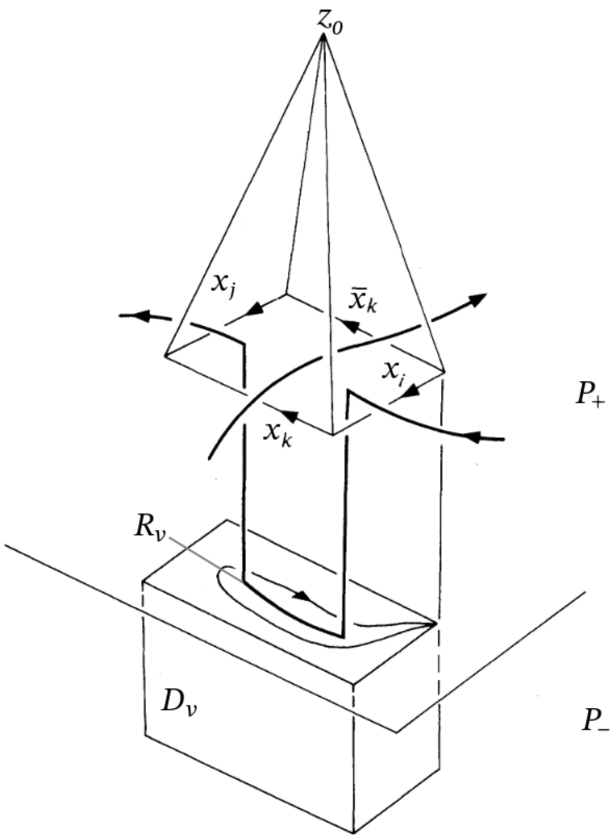

Figure 1.16: The local picture of the fundamental group around the vertex with incident arcs indexed i, j, k (and with the lower arc going from i to j as you look along k). Figure modified from [4, Fig. 10.10].

Figure 1.17: Square doughnuts. Image from `https://www.bakingbusiness.com/articles/54433-square-is-the-new-round-at-udf`.

We already mentioned that just knowing presentations of groups is not good enough to distinguish them. The most classical way of dealing with this is to study representations onto simpler groups; we now exhibit some results of Riley for the case of representations onto finite groups. (In fact this is not the simplest possible case: when the representations go into cyclic groups then we obtain the Alexander invariants that we will study much later on.)

1.25 Example. We will now check that the Kinoshita--Terasaka knot and the Conway knot are distinct (c.f. Construction 1.13), following Riley [37]. The point will be the consideration of representations $\pi_1 \to \mathrm{PSL}(2, \mathbb{F}_7) =: L_7$, and the reduction of the enumeration of these to a small computer search. To this end, we make some observations about the simple group L_7:

- $|L_7| = 7(7^2 - 1)/2 = 168$;
- L_7 has $7^2 - 1 = 48$ elements of order 7, and these lie in two conjugacy classes;
- if $\alpha \in L_7$ has order 7 then $\alpha \simeq \alpha^n$ iff n is a square mod 7;
- if $\beta \in L_7$ is a second element of order 7 then either $\beta = \alpha^m$ for some m or α and β generate L_7;
- all elements of order 7 are either powers of α or lie in one of $7 - 1 = 6$ orbits of 7 elements each under conjugation by α;
- the only automorphisms of L_7 which leave α fixed are conjugations by α and its powers;
- for any pair of elements of order 7, there is an automorphism mapping one to the other.

One can check that KT and C have presentations on three generators and two relations, by taking the Wirtinger presentation and then eliminating all but the three generators shown in Fig. 1.18. One now checks considers representations $\theta : \pi_1 \to L_7$

Remark. Many other amazing results on knot groups and $\mathrm{PSL}(2, \mathbb{F}_p)$ are known; for instance, $\pi_1(KT)$ has quotient groups isomorphic to $\mathrm{PSL}(2, \mathbb{F}_p)$ for infinitely many p [28, Theorem 2] and there are some knots which admit homomorphisms onto $\mathrm{PSL}(2, \mathbb{F}_p)$ for all p [37, pp. 609–610], this is particularly remarkable since the groups $\mathrm{PSL}(2, \mathbb{F}_p)$ are incredibly varied, see e.g. [39, pp. 224–227]

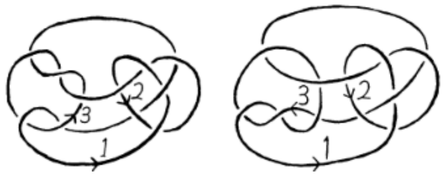

Figure 1.18: Generators for the Wirtinger presentations of the Kinoshita--Terasaka and Conway knots [37, Figure 2].

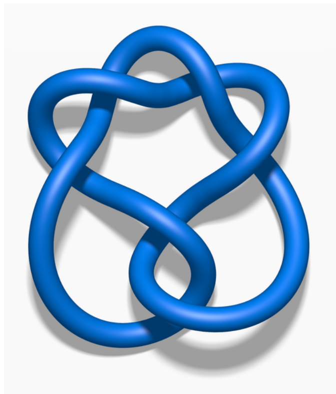

Figure 1.19: The stevedore's knot. Image by Jim.belk, released to public domain (see `http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Blue_Stevedore_Knot.png`)

1.26 Exercises. 1. Show that the fundamental groups of two separated rings and two linked rings (the **Hopf link**) are not isomorphic.

2. Exhibit 3-bridge presentations for the Kinoshita--Terasaka and Conway knots.

3. Find all presentations of the fundamental group of the trefoil knot onto A_5.

4. Show that the fundamental group of the Klein bottle is $\pi_1(K) = \langle x, y : y = xyx\rangle$. Show that no knot group admits a representation into $\pi_1(K)$.

5. Show that tricolourability of k is equivalent to the existence of a *surjective* homomorphism $\pi_1(k) \to S_3$.

6. Show that the trefoil knot is the $(2, 3)$ torus knot. Show that the (p, q) and (q, p) torus knots are equivalent.

7. Show that the stevedore's[2] knot (Fig. 1.19) is 2-bridge and give a two generator presentation for its group.

8. Show that $\langle x, y : yxy = xyx\rangle \simeq \langle a, b : a^2 = b^3\rangle$. Hint: $b = xy$ and $a = xyx$. Observe that this is a presentation for $\mathrm{PSL}(2, \mathbb{Z})$ [42, Example 1.5.2 of Chapter I]. This will be explained in Example 2.11.

[2]"A workman employed either as overseer or labourer in loading and unloading the cargoes of merchant vessels." (OED)

9. (Brauner's theorem, [31, p. 4]) The (p, q)-torus knot is cut out by intersecting a sufficiently small 3-sphere in $\mathbb{C}^2$ with the algebraic curve $\mathbf{V}(z^p + w^q)$, i.e. it is an algebraic knot (Construction 1.14).

Chapter 2

Geometric knot theory

In this week we will study the hyperbolic geometry of knot complements. A very nice historical overview of the contributions of Thurston may be found in his article [48]. We will begin by reviewing briefly hyperbolic geometry; we will then give the historical motivation for, and some examples of, the Riley--Thurston theorem (``most knot complements are hyperbolic''). In the second lecture we will compute some geometric invariants and explain how they can be mechanicised following the work of Jeff Weeks.

There are a plethora of nice books on this area, but we will mainly follow Thurston [49, 47] and Purcell [33]. We also found several sets of notes very useful in the preparation of this chapter: [8, 40]. Basic hyperbolic geometry may be found in [44, Chapter 4] and [5, Chapter 7].

2.1 Geometric structures on knot complements

Let us recall that hyperbolic 3-space is the unique simply connected Riemannian manifold of constant sectional curvature -1. The upper half-space model is given by the topological manifold

$$\mathbb{H}^3 \coloneqq \{(z,t) \in \mathbb{C} \times \mathbb{R} \,:\, t > 0\}$$

equipped with the Riemann metric

$$ds^2 = \frac{dz^2 + dt^2}{t};$$

as is well-known, the geodesic lines in this metric are the half-circles which are orthogonal to the sphere $\hat{\mathbb{C}} = \mathbb{C} \cup \{\infty\}$.

A 3-manifold M is said to be **hyperbolic** if it admits an atlas $\{\phi_\alpha \,:\, M \to \mathbb{H}^3\}_{\alpha \in A}$ of open charts such that $\phi_\beta \phi_\alpha^{-1}$ is the restriction of an isometry of $\mathbb{H}^3$ for each $\alpha, \beta \in A$. The holonomy group of a hyperbolic manifold M is equipped with an action on the universal covering space $\mathbb{H}^3$ of M via isometries (this is shown via analytic continuation).

There is a natural isomorphism between the group $\mathrm{Isom}^+(\mathbb{H}^3)$ of orientation-preserving isometries of $\mathbb{H}^3$ and the group of conformal maps of the sphere $\hat{\mathbb{C}}$ which is identified with the group of Möbius transformations $\mathbb{M}$ given via extension of the action on geodesics to their endpoints; we identify $\mathrm{Isom}^+(\mathbb{H}^3) \simeq \mathbb{M} \simeq \mathrm{PSL}(2,\mathbb{C})$. A discrete subgroup of $\mathbb{M}$ is called **Kleinian**.

2.1 Theorem. *Given any Kleinian group G, the quotient $\mathbb{H}^3/G$ is a hyperbolic manifold with holonomy group G. Conversely, given any hyperbolic manifold M with holonomy group G, G is a Kleinian group with $\mathbb{H}^3/G \simeq_{\text{isom.}} M$.*

By standard algebraic topology, since $\mathbb{H}^3$ is simply connected there is a natural identification between the discrete group G and $\pi_1(\mathbb{H}^3/G)$. To see this concretely, given a nontrivial $g \in G$ there are four possibilities for its action on $\mathbb{H}^3$:

Elliptic: there is a hyperbolic geodesic λ which is fixed pointwise by g, and g acts as a finite-order rotation around λ;

Hyperbolic: there is a hyperbolic geodesic λ which is left invariant by g, and g acts as a translation along λ;

Loxodromic: g is a composition of an elliptic and an hyperbolic with the same axis;[1]

Parabolic: there is exactly one family of horospheres in $\mathbb{H}^3$ (that is, a Euclidean sphere in the upper half-plane model of $\mathbb{H}^3$ tangent to $\hat{\mathbb{C}}$; locally they are E) which are preserved by g.

We will always assume in these notes that Kleinian groups are torsion-free (so we exclude elliptics, but all three other types are possible). Take a loxodromic element with axis λ; the quotient of λ by $\langle g \rangle$ is a circle of circumference the translation length of g, and the projection of λ to $M = \mathbb{H}^3/G$ is a homotopically nontrivial loop in M of minimal length in its homotopy class. (There is also some twisting going on because of the rotational component of g but this is not relevant to the homotopy theory.) On the other hand, given a parabolic element g fix a horosphere Σ. One can always pick a horocircle σ on Σ which is preserved by g, and this projects down to a homotopically nontrivial loop in M. However one may always pick a smaller horosphere Σ' and obtain a shorter loop which is homotopically equivalent; thus g represents a homotopy class of nontrivial curves in M with lengths tending to zero. One should think of loxodromic elements of $G \simeq \pi_1(M)$ as representing hyperbolic geodesics in M of definite length that wrap around large homotopy obstructions (for instance a crossing in a knot complement), while parabolic elements represent infinitesimal obstructions at infinity known as **cusps** (e.g. a single arc of the knot). In a hyperbolic knot complement, one expects the group to be generated by loops around just the arcs, i.e. be generated by parabolics.

2.2 Question. Does every hyperbolic n-bridge knot group admit a faithful representation into $\mathbb{M}$ with n parabolic generators?

We will show that the figure eight knot complement is hyperbolic. One way to do this is to exhibit a polyhedron $P \subseteq \mathbb{H}^3$ and an edge-pairing structure on P in the sense of the Poincaré polyhedron theorem, and this is how the result was proved by Thurston [47, §3.1]---but it does not give an explicit holonomy group. In the next section we will give the original proof of Riley [36]. The history surrounding this discovery is very interesting; various accounts beyond [48] include [35] and the accompanying commentary [11], and the additional references given in the historical notes to Section 10.3 on p.504 of [34].

2.3 Theorem. *The figure eight knot k is hyperbolic.*

Thurston's proof. Consider an ideal hyperbolic triangular bipyramid: that such a vegetable exists can be seen by gluing a pair of regular tetrahedra, and we can take these two tetrahedra to have vertex sets $\{0, 1, \omega, \infty\}$ and $\{1, \omega, \omega + 1, \infty\}$ where $\omega = e^{2\pi i/3}$. Two of the tetrahedron faces are already equal (the convex hull of $\{1, \omega, \infty\}$), and we pair the remaining six faces as in the labelling of Fig. 2.1. This pairing satisfies the hypotheses of the Poincaré polyhedron theorem if all the angles are $\pi/3$.

We can write down the corresponding group in terms of matrices:

$$\pi_1(k) = \left\langle \phi_B = \frac{i}{\sqrt{\omega}} \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 1 \\ 1 & -\omega^2 \end{bmatrix}, \phi_C = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & \omega \\ 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix}, \phi_D = \begin{bmatrix} 2 & -1 \\ 1 & 0 \end{bmatrix} \right\rangle. \tag{2.4}$$

[1] The OED cites *Penny Cyclopaedia* XIV. 183/1: ``Loxodromic spiral, the curve on which a ship sails when her course is always on one point of the compass. It is called in English works Rhumb Line.''

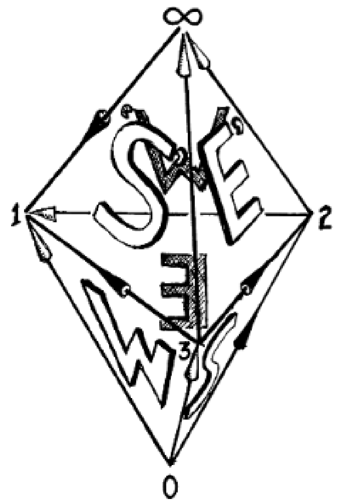

Figure 2.1: Thurston's hexahedral face pairing. Figure taken from [17, Fig. 2 of Chapter 8].

(In one of the exercises you are invited to struggle to show that ϕ_B is redundant and hence we have a parabolic representation.)

It remains to convince ourselves that the result is indeed the figure eight knot... this can be done via the deformations shown in Fig. 2.2.

In general given any geometric space X (in the sense of Thurston, [49, §3.8]) one can define an X-manifold in the analogous way via charts, and there is a similar correspondence between discrete groups of isometries of X and X-manifolds.

We would like to give criteria for a given knot complement to have a geometric (and more specifically hyperbolic) structure. Such a criteria comes as a consequence [33, Theorem 8.17] of a very deep theorem of Thurston, the geometrisation theorem for Haken manifolds [48, 45] whose detailed proof occupies the monograph of Kapovich [23]. The specific case for knot complements requires a couple of definitions:

2.5 Definition. A knot k is a **satellite** if its complement contains an incompressible torus which is not boundary-parallel. A knot is a **torus knot** if it can be embedded (without crossings) onto the boundary of a torus. (We already classified all such knots, Example 1.20.)

We will now state the Riley--Thurston theorem:

2.6 Theorem (Riley--Thurston (c.1982), [48, Corollary 2.5])**.** *Let $k \subseteq S^3$ be a knot. Then k has a geometric structure if and only if k is not a satellite knot, and k has a hyperbolic structure iff it is neither a satellite nor a torus knot.*

We will look at some hyperbolic knots in the next section; now we spend some time on more exotic beasts.

2.7 Definition (Some Lie groups)**.** We recommend Fulton and Harris [19] for full detail, but we only need a brief precis of the land all of which one may have seen in 725. A **Lie group** is a smooth manifold which also admits a group action such that multiplication and inversion are smooth. Examples of Lie groups are $\mathrm{SL}(n,\mathbb{C})$, $\mathrm{GL}(n,\mathbb{C})$, $\mathrm{Mat}(n,\mathbb{C})$; also the universal cover of a Lie group is a

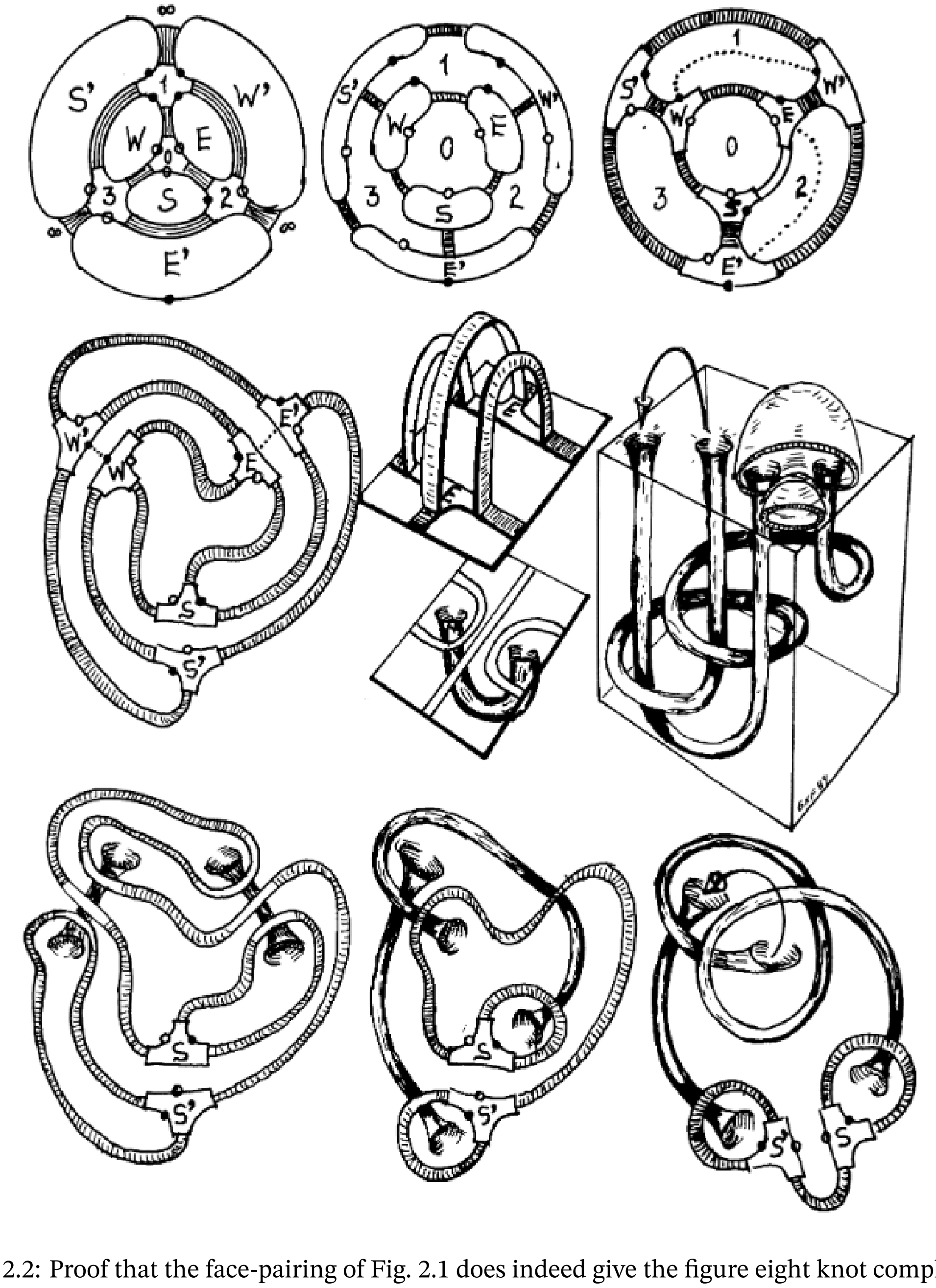

Figure 2.2: Proof that the face-pairing of Fig. 2.1 does indeed give the figure eight knot complement. Figure taken from [17, Fig. 3 of Chapter 8].

Table 2.1: Little list of Lie groups (always $n \geq 2$).

G	$\mathfrak{g}$	$\dim / F$	$B(X, Y)$
$\mathrm{GL}(n, F)$	$\mathfrak{gl}(n, F) = \mathrm{Mat}(n, F)$	n^2	$2n \operatorname{tr} XY - 2 \operatorname{tr} X \operatorname{tr} Y$
$\mathrm{SL}(n, F)$	$\mathfrak{sl}(n, F) = \{A \in \mathfrak{gl}(n, F) : \operatorname{tr} A = 0\}$	$n^2 - 1$	$2n \operatorname{tr} XY$
$\mathrm{SO}(n)$	$\mathfrak{so}(n) = \{A \in \mathfrak{gl}(n, \mathbb{R}) : \operatorname{tr} A = 0 \text{ and } A + A' = 0\}$	$n(n-1)/2$	$(n-2) \operatorname{tr} XY$
$\mathrm{SU}(n)$	$\mathfrak{su}(n) = \{A \in \mathfrak{gl}(n, \mathbb{C}) : \operatorname{tr} A = 0 \text{ and } A + A^* = 0\}$	$n(n-1)/2$	$2n \operatorname{tr} XY$

Lie group, the most important example for us is $\widetilde{\mathrm{PSL}}(2, \mathbb{C})$ which does not admit a faithful matrix representation. Fix a Lie group G. Then G acts on itself by conjugation, say $\phi_g : G \to G$ is conjugation by g. Let T_eG be the tangent space to G at the identity. Then $d\phi_g : T_eG \to T_eG$ induces a map $\mathrm{Ad} : G \times T_eG \to T_eG$, this is the **adjoint action** of G on T_eG and has kernel $Z(G)$ if G is connected. We can further take the differential of this map with respect to the first argument, obtaining a map $\mathrm{ad} : T_eG \times T_eG \to T_eG$. For matrix Lie groups, i.e. $G \leq \mathrm{Mat}(n, F)$ for a field F, $\mathrm{Ad}(g) : T_eG \to T_eG$ is defined by $\mathrm{Ad}(g)(X) = gXg^{-1}$ and $\mathrm{ad}(X) : T_eG \to T_eG$ is given by $\mathrm{ad}(X)(Y) = [X, Y] = XY - YX$. More generally a **Lie algebra** is an algebra admitting a skew-symmetric bilinear may $[\cdot, \cdot]$ which admits the Jacobi identity $[X, [Y, Z]] + [Y, [Z, X]] + [Z, [X, Y]] = 0$, and if G is a Lie group then the canonical Lie algebra T_eG is denoted $\mathfrak{g}$. A Lie algebra is equipped with a second natural bilinear form, the **Killing form** $B : \mathfrak{g} \times \mathfrak{g} \to \mathfrak{g}$ defined by

$$B(X, Y) := \operatorname{tr}(\mathrm{ad}(X) \circ \mathrm{ad}(Y)).$$

For convenience, we include a table of Lie groups, Table 2.1.

2.8 Trick (The belt trick)**.** A whimisical version of this may be found in [24, §VI.1], but the poetry is questionable. We will take a particularly representation-theoretic view that follows [10, §III.10] but is more algebraic. We do it this way because later on we will study the geometric structures on torus knot complements and exactly the same technique will apply there!

First, observe that SU(2) is a 3-sphere. More precisely, write the generic element of SU(2) as

$$U = \begin{bmatrix} \alpha & \beta \\ -\overline{\beta} & \overline{\alpha} \end{bmatrix} \tag{2.9}$$

where $\det U = \|\alpha\|^2 + \|\beta\|^2 = 1$; this exibits SU(2) as the usual 3-sphere in $\mathbb{C}^2$ with $\pm I$ being the north and south poles $(\pm 1, 0, 0, 0)$.

Putting topology aside for a moment, we now define a continuous representation $\varphi : \mathrm{SU}(2) \to \mathrm{SO}(3)$, or equivalently an isometric action by SU(2) on $\mathbb{S}^2$. Observe that $\mathfrak{su}(2)$ is isomorphic (as a vector space) to $\mathbb{R}^3$ via the following basis:

$$u_1 = \begin{bmatrix} i & 0 \\ 0 & -i \end{bmatrix}, u_2 = \begin{bmatrix} 0 & 1 \\ -1 & 0 \end{bmatrix}, \text{ and } u_3 = \begin{bmatrix} 0 & i \\ i & 0 \end{bmatrix}.$$

With this basis, the matrix of the Killing form B is $\mathrm{diag}(-2, -2, -2)$, hence $-\frac{1}{2}B$ is the usual Euclidean quadratic form on $\mathbb{R}^3$. The adjoint action $\mathrm{Ad} : \mathrm{SU}(2) \times \mathfrak{su}(2) \to \mathfrak{su}(2)$ preserves B (exercise) hence preserves $-\frac{1}{2}B$. In particular we have a morphism $\varphi : \mathrm{SU}(2) \to \mathrm{SO}(3)$, where SU(2) is acting on the level-sets.

Since $\mathrm{SU}(2) \simeq \mathbb{S}^3$ is connected, the kernel of this map is $Z(\mathrm{SU}(2)) = \{\pm I\}$ and so φ induces an injective continuous map $\overline{\varphi} : \mathrm{SU}(2)/\{\pm I\} \to \mathrm{SO}(3)$; by invariance of domain,[2] $\overline{\varphi}$ is open; but domain

[2]**Theorem.** *If M and N are topological n-manifolds and $f : M \to N$ is continuous and injective, then f is open.*
Proof. [10, Corollary IV.19.9].

and codomain are connected compact manifolds so this implies that $\overline{\varphi}$ is onto. Viewing SU(2) as the 3-sphere and $\pm I$ as the two poles, it should be clear that $\mathbb{RP}^3 \simeq \mathrm{SU}(2)/\{\pm I\} \simeq \mathrm{SO}(3)$, hence $\pi_1(\mathrm{SO}(3)) = \mathbb{Z}/2\mathbb{Z}$.

Consider now the embedded 1-sphere $\overline{\gamma}$ in SO(3) given by taking the projection via $\overline{\varphi}$ of the path γ from $\gamma(0) = I$ to $\gamma(1) = -I$ given by

$$[0, \pi] \ni t \mapsto \begin{bmatrix} e^{it} & 0 \\ 0 & e^{-it} \end{bmatrix} \in \mathrm{SU}(2).$$

This loop cannot be contracted since the path above cannot be contracted to a point. Thus it represents the nontrivial element of $\pi_1(\mathrm{SO}(3))$.

One now observes that $\overline{\gamma}(t)$ represents (as an element of SO(3)) rotation by an angle $2\pi t$. In particular since $\overline{\gamma} * \overline{\gamma}$ (as an element of $\pi_1(\mathrm{SO}(3))$) is trivial, this means that the map $\lambda : t \mapsto$ rotation by $4\pi t$ represents a homotopically trivial loop in SO(3). That is, there is a homotopy $F : [0,1]^2 \to \mathrm{SO}(3)$ with

$$F(s,0) = \mathrm{id} F(s,1) = \lambda(s)$$
$$F(0,t) = \mathrm{id} F(1,t) = \mathrm{id}.$$

With this defined, consider the map $\Phi : \mathbb{R}^3 \times [0,1] \to \mathbb{R}^3$ given by

$$\Phi(x,t) = \begin{cases} F(|x| - 1, 1 - t)x & \text{for } 1 \le |x| \le 2 \\ x & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases}$$

This sets up the following physical experiment (following Bredon). Suspend a hollow ball (of radius 1 centred at the origin) in an infinite bath of ideal jelly; rotate the ball twice around some axis; fix the ball from any further movement and let go. Then the jelly can return to its original (unwound) state via the isotopy F which leaves the ball fixed and which also leaves the jelly far away from the origin fixed. This is known as the **belt trick**.

2.10 Definition. We will endow $\widetilde{\mathrm{SL}(2,\mathbb{R})}$ with a geometric structure, following [14, §10]. We have already seen that conjugation by SU(2) acts on the sphere $\mathbb{S}^3$ and gives it a fibre bundle structure (Trick 2.8), and similarly we will construct a decomposition of $\mathrm{SL}(2,\mathbb{R})$ as a fibre bundle over $\mathbb{H}^2$. Consider the adjoint action of $\mathrm{SL}(2,\mathbb{R})$ on $\mathfrak{sl}(2)$ (2×2 real matrices with zero trace). The Killing form on $\mathfrak{sl}(2)$ is given by

$$B(X,Y) = 4\,\mathrm{tr}(XY)$$

and has signature $(2,1)$. Level sets of this form are $\mathbb{H}^2$'s and are the orbits of the $\mathrm{SL}(2,\mathbb{R})$ action; the point-stabilisers are topologically $\mathbb{S}^1$'s (they are isomorphic to $O(2)$) and hence we have $\mathrm{SL}(2,\mathbb{R}) \simeq \mathbb{H}^2 \times \mathbb{S}^1$; the universal cover $\tilde{(}\mathrm{SL}(2,\mathbb{R}))$ is a line bundle over $\mathbb{H}^2$ of curvature 1, also called $\mathbb{H}^2 \tilde{\times} \mathbb{E}^1$. For some visualisations, see [32].

2.11 Example (The trefoil knot)**.** Recall that the trefoil knot is a torus knot. By the Riley--Thurston theorem, it has a geometric but not hyperbolic structure. We claim that it has $\widetilde{\mathrm{SL}(2,\mathbb{R})}$ structure (which is a special case of Example 2.14 below) and in fact we can exhibit it explicitly as

$$\widetilde{\mathrm{SL}(2,\mathbb{R})} \Big/ \widetilde{\mathrm{SL}(2,\mathbb{Z})} \tag{2.12}$$

We give a proof of this fact which was written up by Milnor [30, p. 84], though he attributes it to D. Quillen, and which ties together all the remarkable views of this manifold enumerated in [42, Example 1.5.2 of Chapter I].

Observe first that we can reduce the problem to the study of

$$M = \mathrm{SL}(2,\mathbb{R})\big/\mathrm{SL}(2,\mathbb{Z})$$

since by definition $\widetilde{\mathrm{SL}(2,\mathbb{Z})}$ is the inverse image of $\mathrm{SL}(2,\mathbb{Z})$ in $\mathrm{P}\widetilde{\mathrm{SL}(2,\mathbb{Z})}$. The manifold M is naturally identified with the space of unit-area lattices in $\mathbb{C}$.

Consider the space of *all* lattices in $\mathbb{C}$, call it $\hat{M}$. Given any lattice L there is a **Weierstrass function** $\wp_L$ which is meromorphic on $\mathbb{C}$, doubly periodic with respect to L, and with poles exactly at the lattice points $\lambda \in L$ of the form

$$\wp_L(z+\lambda) = z^{-2} + \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} a_{2n} z^{2n}.$$

The Weierstrass function satisfies the differential equation [2, §7.3.3]

$$\left(\frac{\mathrm{d}\wp_L}{\mathrm{d}z}\right)^2 = 4\wp_L^3 - g_2\wp_L - g_3$$

where g_2 and g_3 are defined respectively as

$$g_2 = 60 \sum_{\lambda\in L^*} \lambda^{-4}, \qquad g_3 = 140 \sum_{\lambda\in L^*} \lambda^{-6}.$$

Further the pair (g_2, g_3) determine $\wp_L$ and L uniquely. Conversely a pair (g_2, g_3) determines a lattice iff the three roots of the polynomial $f(z) = 4z^3 - g_2 z - g_3$ are all distinct [2, §7.3.4], and hence the manifold $\hat{M}$ is diffeomorphic to the complement of the variety cut out by the discriminant of f, i.e.

$$\hat{M} \simeq \mathbb{C}^2 \setminus \mathbf{V}(27g_3^2 - g_2^3).$$

We have already seen that the trefoil knot is the $(2,3)$-torus knot and that the $(2,3)$-torus knot is the algebraic knot corresponding to the point $(0,0)$ on $\mathbf{V}(w^2 - z^3)$ (for both statements see Exercises 1.26). Hence (modulo scaling one coordinate, which a diffeomorphism) we see that the trefoil knot is $\hat{M} \cap S_\varepsilon$ for some small $\varepsilon > 0$. But for every element of M (i.e. every unit-area lattice) there is a unique lattice on the sphere S_ε of $\hat{M}$ obtained by scaling; this scaling is a smooth map and hence we have a diffeomorphism $M \simeq \hat{M} \cap S_\varepsilon$ as desired.

2.13 Definition. A **Seifert fibration** on a 3-manifold M is a decomposition of M into disjoint simple closed curves (**fibres**) such that every fibre has a neighbourhood U that is diffeomorphic to the quotient of the solid torus $\mathbb{S}^1 \times \mathbb{B}^2$ ($\mathbb{B}^2$ the closed disc) by the free action of a finite group respecting the product structure and such that the fibres of M in U correspond to the images $\{x\} \times \mathbb{B}^2$.

Warning. A Seifert fibration of a knot complement is *not* to be confused with a fibration by Seifert surfaces: the figure eight knot complement admits the latter structure [17, pp. 159–160] but not the former (as it is hyperbolic).

2.14 Example. Torus knot complements admit Seifert fibrations. First observe that if γ is a curve on the boundary of the solid torus, then the solid torus admits a Seifert fibration which restricts to a foliation parallel to γ on the boundary (Fig. 2.3). Now given the p/q-torus knot, cut along the embedded torus so obtaining one solid torus glued to another along the boundary with a p/q-curve on one glued to a median on the other. Fibre each torus separately, and then the two surface foliations on the torus agree giving a fibration of the whole thing. The converse is also true

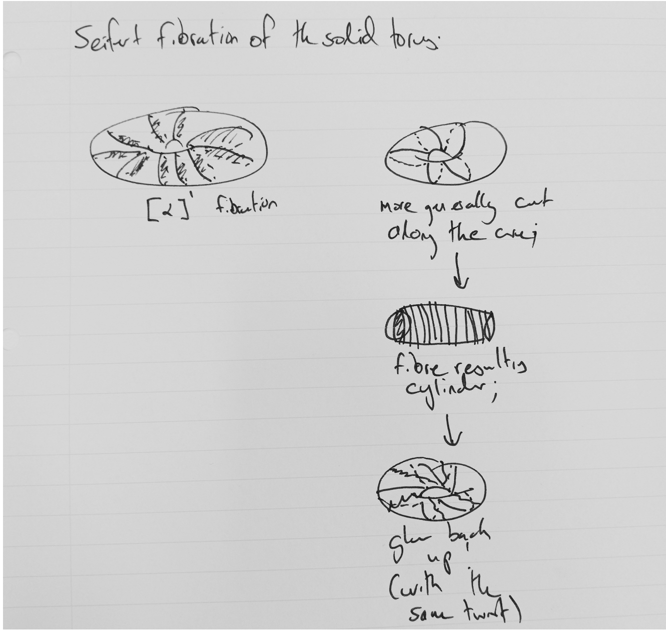

Figure 2.3: The Seifert fibrations of solid torii.

2.15 Theorem. *If the complement of a knot k admits a Seifert fibration, then it admits a* $\widetilde{\mathrm{SL}}(2,\mathbb{R})$ *geometry and a* $\mathbb{H}^2 \times \mathbb{R}$ *geometry.*

2.16 Exercises.

1. Check that the map f of Theorem 2.3 is indeed a homomorphism by checking that X and Y satisfy the relation.
2. If you know Chapter VII of Maskit [29]: write the figure eight group in terms of the amalgamated products and HNN extensions of the cyclic groups generated by

$$\begin{bmatrix} 1 & \omega \\ 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} \text{ and } \begin{bmatrix} 2 & -1 \\ 1 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$$

   where $\omega = e^{2\pi/3}$.

3. On the belt trick, Trick 2.8. Consider the generic $U(\alpha,\beta) \in \mathrm{SU}(2)$ as in Eq. (2.9) and fix a copy of $\mathbb{S}^2$ in SO(3) given by the level set $-\frac{1}{2}B = 1$; observe the basis element u_1 lies in this set.
   (a) Show that $\mathrm{Ad}(U)(u_1) = u_1$ if and only if $\|\alpha\|^2 = 1$.
   (b) From (a) conclude that the stabiliser of any point in SO(3) is an $\mathbb{S}^1$.
   (c) From (b) show that $\mathbb{S}^3$ surjects onto $\mathbb{S}^2$ with $\mathbb{S}^1$-fibres. This is the **Hopf fibration**.
   (d) Describe in SU(2), in terms of the group structures
      i. the latitudes: the set of all $U \in \mathrm{SU}(2)$ such that $\Re\alpha$ is some fixed value (hint: this was already done for $x = \pm 1$);
      ii. the longitudes: the set of $U \in \mathrm{SU}(2)$ cut out by any hyperplane ($\mathbb{R}^3$) in $\mathbb{C}^2$ which passes through $\pm I$.

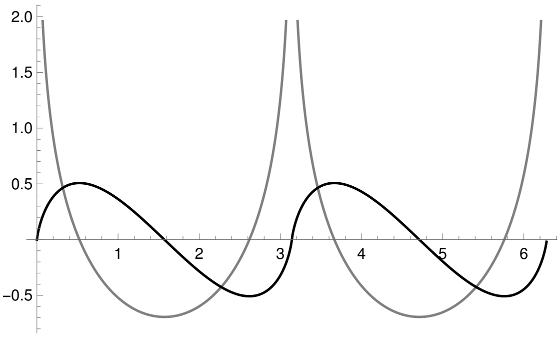

Figure 2.4: The Lobachevskii function Л and its derivative (in grey).

2.2 Hyperbolic invariants and computation

Our main geometric invariant is volume.

2.17 Theorem. *A hyperbolic 3-manifold M has finite volume iff either*

- *M is compact without boundary, or*
- *M is homeomorphic to the interior of a compact manifold $\overline{M}$ with torus boundary components, such that $\overline{M}$ is neither a solid torus or $\mathbb{T}^2 \times [0,1]$.*

In particular, knot complements which admit hyperbolic metrics have finite volume.

Proof. The proof goes via the thick-thin decomposition of 3-manifolds [6]. First if M is compact without volume then it is the image of a compact fundamental domain in $\mathbb{H}^3$ which is finite volume. If M is the interior of a manifold with only torus boundary components and is not elementary (the two excluded homeomorphism classes) then we can write it as the union of a compact piece (finite volume) and neighbourhoods of rank 2 cusps, and these neighbourhoods are finite volume. Conversely, if M has finite volume and is not compact without boundary then (i) it cannot have any high-genus surfaces at infinity since they will have nbds of infinite volume and (ii)

For knot invariant construction the outlook is not very good unless the hyperbolic structure is unique (otherwise different structures on the same topological knot complement might give different volumes).

2.18 Theorem. *Let M be a hyperbolic 3-manifold. Then M admits at most one complete finite-volume hyperbolic structure.*

Here, **complete** means in the usual metric sense, and can also be detected locally in fundamental domains for the uniformising group. The conditions for a given structure to be complete are polynomial conditions, but are complicated.

2.19 Corollary. *The map* $\mathrm{Vol} : \mathsf{Knot} \to \hat{\mathbb{R}}_{>0}$ *which sends a hyperbolic knot to the hyperbolic volume of its complement and a torus or satellite knot to ∞ is a well-defined knot invariant.*

2.20 Definition. The **Lobachevskii function** [26] $Л : [0, 2\pi] \to \mathbb{R}$ is defined by

$$Л(\theta) = -\int_0^\theta \log|2\sin u|du,$$

and is plotted in Fig. 2.4.

2.21 Proposition. *There is a bijection between (i) the triplets $\alpha, \beta, \gamma \in (0, \pi)$ such that $\alpha + \beta + \gamma = \pi$ and (ii) the set of ideal tetrahedra in $\mathbb{H}^3$. The volume of the tetrahedron determined by the triplet $\{\alpha, \beta, \gamma\}$ is $Л(\alpha) + Л(\beta) + Л(\gamma)$.*

Proof.

2.22 Example. The volume of the figure eight knot complement is twice the volume of the tetrahedron with all angles $\pi/3$.

We would like to ask how `good' this invariant actually is. The two main results in this area form the following theorem.

2.23 Theorem.

1. *Given some $v \in \mathbb{R}_{>0}$, the number of hyperbolic 3-manifolds with volume v is finite.*
2. *The set of all volumes is a well-ordered subset of $\mathbb{R}_{>0}$ (without the axiom of choice).*

This theorem follows from Thurston's Dehn filling theorem. The motivation is the classification of *incomplete* hyperbolic structures on hyperbolic manifolds, of which there are infinitely many.

2.24 Definition. Let M be a manifold with torus boundary component T, and let $\gamma_{p/q}$ be an isotopy class of simple closed curves on t. The manifold obtained by attaching a solid torus to T such that $\gamma_{p/q}$ bounds a disc is called the **Dehn filling** of M along $\gamma_{p/q}$.

2.25 Definition. Let M be a manifold, let k be a knot in M, and let $p/q \in \hat{\mathbb{Q}}$. The manifold M' obtained from M by drilling out a solid torus neighbourhood of k and performing a p/q Dehn filling along the result is called the result of **Dehn surgery** along k.

The result of Dehn surgery in a hyperbolic manifold is usually hyperbolic:

2.26 Theorem (Thurston)**.** *Let X be a complete hyperbolic manifold with n torus boundary components $T_1, \ldots, T_n$. For each T_i, exclude finitely many Dehn fillings. The resulting Dehn fillings yield a manifold with a complete hyperbolic structure.*

Proof. [33, Corollary 6.15]

Conversely, all 3-manifolds arise by Dehn surgery:

2.27 Theorem (Lickorish/Wallace, 1960--1962)**.** *Let M be a closed orientable 3-manifold. Then M is the result of Dehn surgery along some link in $\mathbb{S}^3$.*

The combination of Theorem 2.26 and Theorem 2.27 implies roughy speaking that most 3-manifolds are hyperbolic.

Theorem 2.23 follows directly from the following result:-

2.28 Theorem. *If M is a hyperbolic manifold obtained by Dehn surgery from a hyperbolic manifold M_0, then* $\mathrm{Vol}(M) < \mathrm{Vol}(M_0)$.

Chapter 3

Braids

3.1 4-plats and 2-bridge knots

In this section, we mainly follow the exposition of [12, Chapters 10--12] and Chapter 10 of [33].

Recall that a **2-bridge link** is a link $k \subseteq \mathbb{S}^3$ which can be arranged via isotopy in such a way that k intersects a fixed plane (taken to be $\mathbb{R}^2$) transversely in exactly four points such that the intersection of k with each half-space cut out by the plane (consisting of two space arcs) projects injectively to two disjoint arcs on the plane. Without loss of generality (i.e. by applying an appropriate isotopy) we can assume that the image of the two arcs on one side of $\mathbb{R}^2$ is exactly the two invervals $[0, 1]$ and $[2, 3]$, and the other two arcs projecting from the other side of $\mathbb{R}^2$ end up as two curves u, v winding in a spiral fashion like the figure. The number of double points is even since each of u and v intersects both $[0, 1]$ and $[2, 3]$ the same number of times: call this number of intersectons $\alpha - 1$. If α is odd then k is a knot and if α is even then it is a two-component link.

Now observe that there is a natural double cover $\mathbb{T}^2 \to \mathbb{S}^2$ given by the hyperelliptic involution $\tau \circlearrowright \mathbb{T}^2$. Lifting u and v we see that $v - \tau v$ and $u - \tau u$ are isotopic homotopy chains (where the minus signs show only that the orientation needs to be reversed in order to obtain well-defined chains); they intersect alterately with the lifts of the two intervals, $(1 - \tau)[0, 1]$ and $(1 - \tau)[2, 3]$. Choose a basis for $H_1(\mathbb{T}^2)$ consisting of a meridian M (isotopic to $(1 - \tau)[0, 1]$) and a longitude L (isotopic to one of the lifts of a simple closed curve separating $\{1, 2\}$ from $\{0, 3\}$). Assume that $\alpha > 1$ (exercises for $\alpha \in \{0, 1\}$). Then $(1 - \tau)u$ (and $(1 - \tau)v$, being isotopic to it) is of $\mathbb{Z}$-homology type $\beta M + \alpha L$ where $|\beta| < \alpha$ and where β is positive or negative according to whether v crosses $[0, 1]$ in one direction or the other (in the sense of Fig. 1.4). We also see that $(\alpha, \beta) = 1$, as a consequence of Lemma 1.19.

Thus:-

3.1 Proposition. *For any 2-bridge link, there is a pair of integers* (α, β) *with*

(TBL) $\qquad \alpha > 0, \qquad |\beta| < \alpha, \qquad (\alpha, \beta) = 1, \qquad$ *and* β *odd.*

Further, the number of components of the link is $\mu \equiv \alpha \pmod 2$ *where* $1 \leq \mu \leq 2$.

The invariants are respectively called the **torsion** (α) and the **crossing number** (β).

There are two natural questions arising from Proposition 3.1.

1. Does the converse of Proposition 3.1, i.e. existence of a knot given a pair of integers, also hold?

2. Is the map from 2-bridge knots to pairs of integers a 1--1 correspondence?

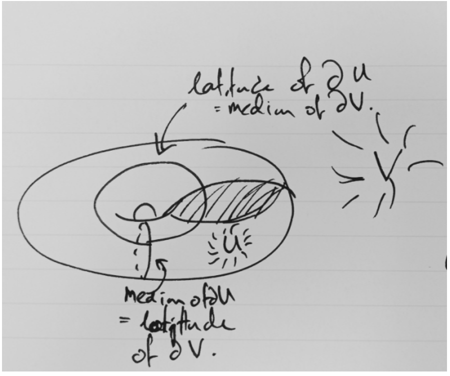

Figure 3.1: The 3-sphere admits a Heegard splitting.

The answer to (1) is *yes*, and in order to prove it (Corollary 3.4) we will consider 2-fold coverings of the 3-manifold $\mathbb{S}^3$ branched along the knot. The answer to (2) is *no*, and is the theorem of Schbert (Theorem 3.5).

3.2 Construction (Lens spaces and Heegard splittings)**.** Identify $\mathbb{S}^{2n-1}$ with the set $\{z \in \mathbb{C}^n : \|z\| = 1\}$. Fix an integer p and set $\zeta = e^{2\pi i/p}$. Choose $q_1, \dots, q_n$ integers such that $(p, q_i) = 1$ for all i, and define an action of ζ on $\mathbb{S}^{2n-1}$ by the rule

$$\zeta.(z_1, \dots, z_n) := (\zeta^{q_1} z_1, \dots, \zeta^{q_n} z_n).$$

This action is isometric with respect to the angular metric on the sphere, and is properly discontinuous since $gx = x$ implies g is the identity. Hence the quotient $\mathbb{S}^{2n-1}/\langle\zeta\rangle$ is a spherical manifold, the **lens space** $L(p; q_1, \dots, q_n)$. In the special case $n = 2$ and $q_1 = 1$ we write $L(p, q) := L(p; 1, q)$, this is a smooth 3-manifold modelled on $\mathbb{S}^3$. In the sequel this will be the only class of lens spaces we want.

A (genus g) **Heegard splitting** of a compact oriented 3-manifold M is a decomposition $M \simeq_{\text{homeo.}} U \cup_f V$ where (i) both U and V are solid handlebodies of genus g, (ii) f is a orientation-reversing homeomorphism $U \to V$ (the notation $\cup_f$ means `take the disjoint union and quotient by the equivalence relation set up by f'). We will classify the 3-manifolds which admit a genus one splitting, for details see Hempel [21, pp. 20–23]. Before doing any work we immediately observe that $\mathbb{S}^3$ itself admits such a splitting, Fig. 3.1.

Suppose $M = U \cup_f V$ where U, V are solid genus 1 handlebodies. The homeomorphism $f : \partial U \to \partial V$ is isotopic to a map which glues a simple closed curve ω on ∂U to the curve $[\alpha]$ on ∂V, and different choices of ω (mod homotopy) give different homeomorphisms---this is just the classification of mapping classes on the torus. Hence by Lemma 1.19 the Heegard splittings are indexed by the pairs (p, q) of coprime integers.

We now claim that the manifold with Heegard splitting (p, q) is exactly the Lens space $L(p, q)$. To do this consider the **Clifford torus**

$$C = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2}}\mathbb{S}^1 \times \frac{1}{\sqrt{2}}\mathbb{S}^1 = \{\frac{1}{\sqrt{2}}(e^{i\theta}, e^{i\phi}) : 0 \le \theta, \phi < 2\pi\} \subseteq \mathbb{C}^2$$

which lies in $\mathbb{S}^3$. The action of ζ on C is

$$\zeta.\frac{1}{\sqrt{2}}(e^{i\theta}, e^{i\phi}) = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2}}(e^{i(\theta+2\pi/p)}, e^{i(\phi+2q\pi/p)})$$

Figure 3.2: Closing a 4-braid to obtain a 4-plat [27, Fig. 1.8].

so the quotient of C by $\langle\zeta\rangle$ sets up a p-fold cover of a torus T in $L(p,q)$ by C; the image of $[\alpha]$ on C is the meridian of T and the image of $[\beta]$ is a curve wrapping p times in the meridian direction and q times in the longitudinal direction (where `meridian' and `longitudinal' are with respect to looking at C from infinity). If one instead looks at the exterior of the Clifford torus then the (p,q) curve is the quotient of the meridian of this second solid torus. This completes the proof. (Draw some pictures, following [16, §4.3].)

Remark. By looking at the Klein bottle and not the torus, one sees that there is a unique non-orientable 3-manifold with genus one Heegard splitting, the non-orientable 2-sphere bundle over $\mathbb{S}^1$.

Remark. A lens space is exactly a Dehn surgery of $\mathbb{S}^3$ along the trivial knot.

3.3 Theorem. *If k is a 2-bridge knot with invariants (α,β) (in the sense of Proposition 3.1), then the two-fold covering of $\mathbb{S}^3$ branched along k is precisely $L(\alpha,\beta)$.*

3.4 Corollary. *Given any pair (α,β) of integers satisfying the conditions (TBL) in Proposition 3.1, then there exists a 2-bridge link of μ components with the given invariants; we call it $\mathfrak{b}(\alpha,\beta)$.*

Remark. One can even visualise these branched coverings: see the Thurston lecture *Knots to Narnia* [46] and the software *Polycut* [9].

3.5 Theorem (Schubert, 1956).

1. *$\mathfrak{b}(\alpha,\beta)$ and $\mathfrak{b}(\alpha',\beta')$ are equivalent as oriented links iff $\alpha=\alpha'$ and $\beta^{\pm 1}=\beta' \pmod{2\alpha}$.*
2. *$\mathfrak{b}(\alpha,\beta)$ and $\mathfrak{b}(\alpha',\beta')$ are equivalent as unoriented links iff $\alpha=\alpha'$ and $\beta^{\pm 1}=\beta' \pmod{\alpha}$.*

Proof.

There is an alternative construction of 2-bridge knots via braids. We will concern ourselves only with a geometric consideration of Artin's braid theory here; in the next lecture we will look at the algebra.

3.6 Definition. Let R be a rectangle (i.e. a product $[0,1]\times[0,1]$ embedded isometrically) in $\mathbb{R}^3$; place on the line $0\times[0,1]$ n equidistant points P_i and on the line $1\times[0,1]$ n equidistant points Q_i; also choose a permutation $\pi\in S_n$. A **braid on n strings** is then a choice of n simple disjoint polygonal arcs $f_i:[0,1]\to\mathbb{R}^3$ such that $f_i(0)=P_i$, $f_i(1)=Q_{\pi(i)}$, and such that (i) $\varpi_1 f_i(t+\varepsilon)>\varpi_1\pi f_i(t)$ for all $\varepsilon>0$ where π_1 is projection onto the first component (this is the condition that the braids have to run strictly upwards) and (iii) $0<\varpi_2 f_i(t)<1$ for all t where ϖ_2 is projection onto the second component (this is the condition that the braids have to lie within the `frame' R).

Braids are defined up to **level-preserving isotopy** (the reader should supply the obvious definition), and the set of n-braids admits (up to this isotopy) a natural group operation, namely identifying the P_i of the second with the Q_i of the first. This is called the **braid group** B_n.

We now restrict ourselves to the case $n=4$.

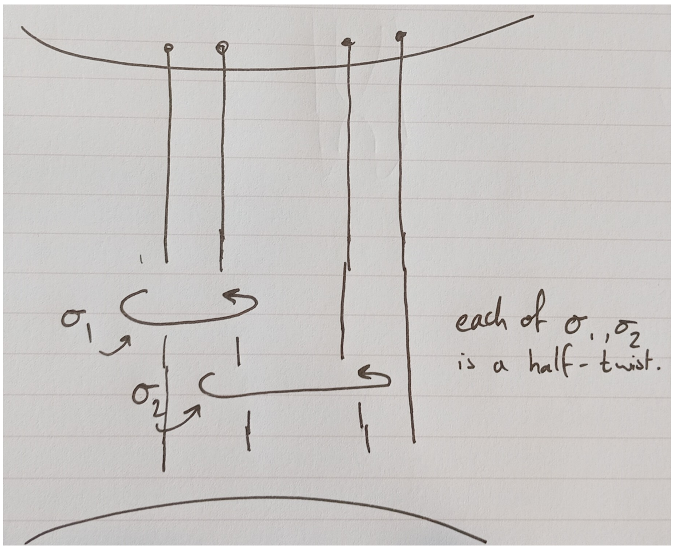

Figure 3.3: The two Artin generators σ_1 and σ_2 of the spherical braid group on four strands.

3.7 Definition. A **4-plat**,[1] or **Viergeflechte**, is obtained by taking a 4-braid and closing it by adding four arcs in the manner of Fig. 3.2.

Warning. The `plat' manner of closing a braid (which makes sense for any braid on an even number of strands) should be contrasted with the **closure** of a braid (for which see the exercises and which makes sense for any braid at all).

Cut a 4-plat diagram in the orientation of Fig. 3.2 by a vertical line placed as far to the right as possible that cuts the diagram transversely in exactly four places. Lifting this back into 3-space, we have a representation of the 4-plat as the closure of a rational tangle:

3.8 Definition. A **tangle** in a 3-ball $\mathbb{B}^3 \subseteq \mathbb{S}^3$ in the sense of Conway is a collection of disjointly embedded (piecewise-linear) arcs in $\mathbb{B}^3$, with endpoints in $\partial\mathbb{B}^3$. The tangle is **rational** if it consists of exactly two arcs.

3.9 Proposition (Conway, 1970)**.** *There is a bijective correspondence between equivalence classes of rational tangles (i.e. up to isotopy with $\partial\mathbb{B}^3$ fixed) and the set $\hat{\mathbb{Q}} = \mathbb{Q} \cup \{\infty\}$.*

The proof of the proposition as stated will become clear as we continue our discussion; we will instead prove the analogous theorem for knots, Theorem 3.13 below.

Consider braids which are, instead of being bounded by two segments (as in Definition 3.6 above), bounded by two spheres. The rigorous definition will be given in the next section; all we need to know is that the braid group is generated by the two Artin generators shown in Fig. 3.3. Let $\mathfrak{b}(\alpha, \beta)$ be a 2-bridge knot, and view it as a 4-braid with four additional arcs; that is, we cut $\mathbb{S}^3$ into two 3-balls B_0 and B_1 and a complement $[0, 1] \times \mathbb{S}^2$ such that each B_0 and B_1 contains a pair of disjoint arcs and such that the braid is contained entirely in $[0, 1] \times \mathbb{S}^2$. Consider the lens space $L(\alpha, \beta)$ which is the 2-fold cover of $\mathbb{S}^3$ branched along $\mathfrak{b}(\alpha, \beta)$. Let $\mathbb{T}^2$ be the torus of the Heegard splitting of this lens space which is the lift of the ball B_0.

3.10 Lemma. *With the notation as just described, the two homeomorphisms of B_0 induced by σ_1 and σ_2 respectively lift to Dehn twists about the curves $\hat{s}_1$ and $\hat{s}_2$ of Fig. 3.4.* 𝔸⥂

[1] Beware! the correct English is `plait', yet the mathematical term for this general kind of object is ($2m$-)`plat'...

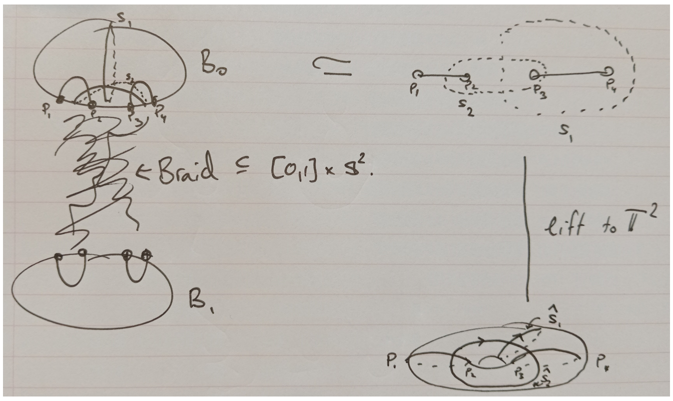

Figure 3.4: The two generators σ_1 and σ_2 of the spherical braid group on four strands induce homeomorphisms on the bridge plane B_0 (left), namely half-twists along the indicated curves. These lift to Dehn twists on the covering space $\mathbb{T}^2$ (right).

Hence, considering the action of the Dehn twists on the canonical basis of $H_1(\mathbb{T}^2)$ given by M and L (notation again as above), we have a natural representation of the braid group into $\mathrm{PSL}(2,\mathbb{C})$ given by

$$\sigma_1 \mapsto L = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & -1 \\ 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} \qquad \text{and} \qquad \sigma_2 \mapsto R = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 \\ 1 & 1 \end{bmatrix}.$$

In fact this is a faithful representation (it is exactly the orientation-preserving part of the mapping class group of the four-punctured sphere).

The Heegard splitting which gives us $L(\alpha,\beta)$ is induced by some homeomorphism $h \circlearrowright \mathbb{T}^2$. With respect to some choice of bases for the homology groups of the tori, the induced map $h_* : H_1(T_1) \to H_1(T_2)$ (T_1 and T_2 the two tori which are glued to form the whole 3-manifold) is represented by some element of $\mathrm{SL}(2,\mathbb{Z})$,

$$A = \begin{bmatrix} \beta & \alpha' \\ \alpha & \beta' \end{bmatrix}.$$

The matrix entries are defined modulo multiplication on the right by powers of L, since these do not change the isotopy class of the knot. We can therefore replace A with a matrix that factors as a product of L's and R's ending on the right with a nonzero power of R:

$$A = R^{a_1}L^{-a_2}\cdots L^{-a_{m-1}}R^{a_m} = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 \\ a_1 & 1 \end{bmatrix}\begin{bmatrix} 1 & a_2 \\ 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix}\cdots\begin{bmatrix} 1 & a_{m-1} \\ 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix}\begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 \\ a_m & 1 \end{bmatrix}$$

where $a_m \neq 0$. Considering the matrices multiplied from right to left we obtain a Euclidean algorithm, in the sense that we obtain a sequence of equations

$$\begin{aligned} r_0 &= a_1 r_1 + r_2 \\ r_1 &= a_2 r_2 + r_3 \\ \vdots &= \vdots \\ r_{m-1} &= a_m r_m + 0, \qquad |r_m| = 1 \end{aligned} \tag{3.11}$$

where $r_0 = \alpha$ and $r_1 = \beta$ from the intermediate steps

$$R^{-a_i}\begin{bmatrix} r_i & * \\ r_{i-1} & * \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} r_i & * \\ r_{i-1} - a_i r_i & * \end{bmatrix} =: \begin{bmatrix} r_i & * \\ r_{i+1} & * \end{bmatrix}$$
$$L^{a_{i+1}}\begin{bmatrix} r_i & * \\ r_{i+1} & * \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} r_i - a_{i+1} r_{i+1} & * \\ r_{i+1} & * \end{bmatrix} =: \begin{bmatrix} r_{i+2} & * \\ r_{i+1} & * \end{bmatrix}.$$

(something is reversed here...)

Conversely, from any such Euclidean algorithm for β/α (i.e. any sequence of integers $a_1, \dots, a_m$ and such that there exist integers $r_0, \dots, r_m$ with $|r_m| = 1$ and $0 \le r_i < r_{i-1}$ for all i such that $r_0 = \alpha$ and $r_1 = \beta$ satisfying Eq. (3.11)) we obtain a matrix factorisation

$$\begin{bmatrix} \beta & \alpha' \\ \alpha & \beta' \end{bmatrix} = \begin{cases} R^{a_1} L^{-a_2} \cdots R^{a_m} \begin{bmatrix} \pm 1 & * \\ 0 & \pm 1 \end{bmatrix} & m \text{ odd} \\ R^{a_1} L^{-a_2} \cdots L^{a_m} \begin{bmatrix} 0 & \pm 1 \\ \pm 1 & * \end{bmatrix} & m \text{ even.} \end{cases}$$

In the first case the induced Heegard splitting is the covering of the knot $\mathfrak{b}(\alpha, \beta)$ since the final matrix is the lift of a power of σ_1 and hence does not change the knot type. On the other hand when m is even we observe that the final factor can be `fixed' by

$$\begin{bmatrix} 0 & -1 \\ 1 & b \end{bmatrix} = R^{-b} \begin{bmatrix} 0 & -1 \\ 1 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$$

and where the final factor corresponds to having to close the plat in a nontrivial way.

3.12 Example. (Do the example of Fig 12.4 of [12])

Observing that we have simply given the decomposition of β/α as a **continued fraction**,

$$\frac{\beta}{\alpha} = [a_1, \dots, a_m] := \cfrac{1}{a_1 + \cfrac{1}{a_2 + \cfrac{1}{a_3 + \cfrac{1}{\ddots + \cfrac{1}{a_m}}}}},$$

and that continued fraction decompositions of *odd* length always exist and are unique, we have the following result:

3.13 Theorem. *The knot $\mathfrak{b}(\alpha, \beta)$ with $0 < \beta < \alpha$ has a presentation as a 4-plat with a defining braid*

$$\sigma_2^{a_1} \sigma_1^{-a_2} \cdots \sigma_2^{a_m}$$

where each $a_i > 0$ and where m is odd, such that the a_i are the quotients of the continued fraction $[a_1, \dots, a_m] = \beta/\alpha$. Sequences $(a_1, \dots, a_m)$ and $(a'_1, \dots, a'_{m'})$ define the same knot iff $m = m'$ and $a_i = a'_i$ or $a_i = a'_{m-i}$ for $1 \le i \le m$.

(All that remains is to observe that the very final possibility---$a_i = a'_{m-i}$---comes from the fact that we assumed everything was defined with respect to B_0, while B_0 and B_1 are in fact symmetric.)

--Riley's representations

$$\Gamma_\rho = \dots \tag{3.14}$$

--Mention triangulation but too combinatorial to include.

3.15 Exercises. 1. Classify the 2-bridge links with $\alpha \in \{0, 1\}$.

2. Give the rational number corresponding to (a) the figure eight knot, (b) the stevedore's knot, Fig. 1.19.

3. On lens spaces, Construction 3.2.

   (a) $\pi_1(L(p, q)) = \mathbb{Z}/p\mathbb{Z}$.

   (b) A homeomorphism $h : \partial U \to \partial U$ extends to an autohomeomorphism of U iff $h_*(\beta) = [\beta]^{\pm 1}$. (Here β is one of the loops in the standard basis, same notation as above.)

   (c) $L(1, 0) = \mathbb{S}^3$ and $L(0, 1) = \mathbb{S}^2 \times \mathbb{S}^1$. In fact, $L(1, q) = \mathbb{S}^3$ for all q.

   (d) $L(p, q) = L(p, q')$ if and only if $q \equiv \pm q' \pmod{p}$ or $q \equiv \pm q'^{-1} \pmod{p}$. Hint:- under these conditions there is a homeomorphism $h : L_{p,q} \to L_{p,q'}$ which preserves the two handebodies in the first case and swaps them in the second case.

   (e) Computer project. Draw pictures of lens spaces [14].

4. If an n-braid is chosen with permutation π, as in the definition, then there exists a link with μ components obtained by identifying the P_i with $Q_{\pi(i)}$. Give a formal definition of this link (the **closure** of the braid). Prove (Alexander, 1928) that every link can be obtained as the closure of some braid [12, §2D].

5. Prove Proposition 3.9 from Theorem 3.13.

6. Show that the group of Eq. (3.14) is isomorphic to Thurston's group from Eq. (2.4).

3.2 Braids in general and mapping classes

Chapter 4

Knot polynomials

4.1 The Alexander and Conway polynomials

We have all seen physicists get very excited about minimal surfaces (Fig. 4.1). A minimal surface spanning a knot is called a Seifert surface. More precisely:-

4.1 Definition. A **Seifert surface** for a link $L \subseteq \mathbb{S}^3$ is an embedded orientable surface S in $\mathbb{S}^3$ such that $\partial S = L$. The **genus** of a link is the minimal genus of a Seifert surface for the link.

4.2 Example. See three views of a Seifert surface for the figure eight knot in Fig. 4.2.

Remark. One cannot compute the genus easily. The algorithm below does not usually give a surface of minimal genus. The knot genus is additive with respect to the operation # (Construction 1.9) and is NP-complete [1]. One can also try to visualise the genus; see the interesting discussion in [51].

4.3 Algorithm. Let K be an oriented knot and let δ be an oriented diagram of K. (It will be clear that one can work with each component of a link `separately'.) Then the following algorithm produces a Seifert surface for K [24, Proposition 5.8].

1. For every vertex of δ, cut and deform the two intersecting arcs into two disjoint arcs while respecting orientation. The result will be a collection of disjoint topological circles in the plane of δ called the **Seifert circles**.

2. In the interior of each circle (that is, the disc bounded by the circle which does not intersect any of the other Seifert circles) attach a disc.

3. At each vertex of the diagram glue in a twisted band according to the orientation.

Historical remark. Proof of existence of Seifert surfaces was given originally by Frankl and Pontryagin in 1930 [18] and the above algorithm was given by Seifert in 1934 [41].

4.4 Example. See the figure eight knot (Fig. 4.3) and the trefoil knot (Fig. 4.4).

We begin by following the discussion of Chapter 6 of [27], but an alternative (slower) presentation is given in Chapter VII of [15].

Let M be a module over a (commutative with unity) ring R. An R-module is **free** if there exists a subset B called a **basis** such that every element of the module admits a unique expression as an R-linear combination of elements of B. A **finite presentation** for an R-module M is an exact sequence

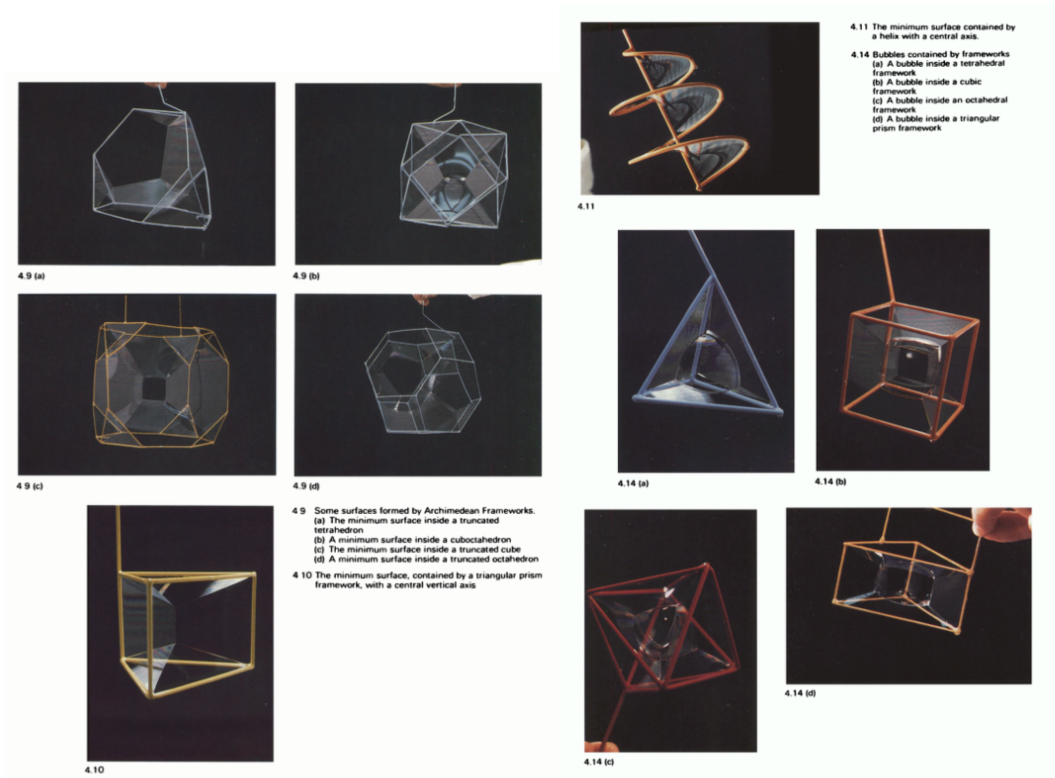

Figure 4.1: Minimal surfaces spanned by soap films [22].

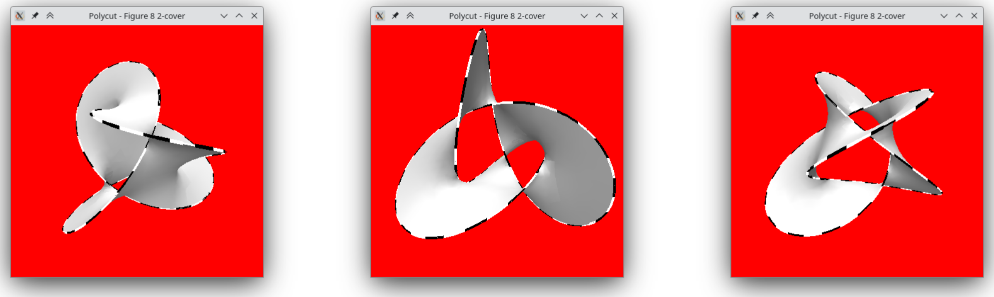

Figure 4.2: Three views of a Seifert surface for the figure eight knot, using the `soapfilm' feature of *Polycut* [9].

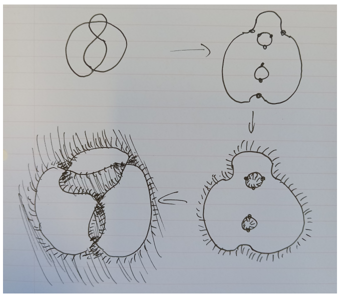

Figure 4.3: A Seifert surface for the figure eight knot following Seifert's algorithm.

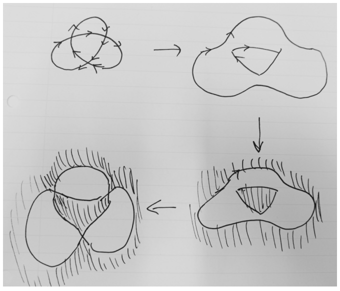

Figure 4.4: A Seifert surface for the trefoil knot following Seifert's algorithm.

$F \to E \to M \to 0$ where F and E are free R-modules with finite bases Suppose that the bases for F and E are respectively $(f_1, \dots, f_m)$ and $(e_1, \dots, e_n)$, and let A be the matrix with respect to these bases for the map $F \to E$; we say that A is a **presentation matrix** for M. The images of (e_i) in M generate M, and the images of (f_i) in E give linear relations between these generators; since these relations are encoded in A we may simply speak of the presentation matrix in leiu of carrying F around.

Let M be a finitely presented R-module with $m \times n$ presentation matrix A. The rth **elementary ideal** of M, $\mathcal{E}_r$, is the ideal of R generated by all the $(m - r + 1) \times (m - r + 1)$ ideals of A. One can show that $\mathcal{E}_r$ is independent of the choice of presentation matrix. Since a finite abelian group G is a $\mathbb{Z}$-module, and if it is finitely generated then it has a square presentation matrix, we have $\mathcal{E}_1$ in this case being the determinant of the presentation matrix which is exactly the order of the group (proof: 320).

The special case of the latter which we are interested in is the integer homology group of an oriented compact connected surface S of genus g with n boundary components. Algebraic topology tells us that this homology is

$$H_1(S, \mathbb{Z}) = \bigoplus_{2g+n-1} \mathbb{Z}$$

where the summed cyclic groups are generated by the $[\alpha_i]$ depicted in the figure.

4.5 Proposition. *Suppose that $S \subseteq \mathbb{S}^3$ is a piecewise linear connected, compact, orientable surface with non-empty boundary. Then the homology groups $H_1(\mathbb{S}^3 \setminus S, \mathbb{Z})$ and $H_1(S, \mathbb{Z})$ are isomorphic and there is a unique nonsingular bilinear form*

$$\beta : H_1(\mathbb{S}^3 \setminus S, \mathbb{Z}) \times H_1(S, \mathbb{Z}) \to \mathbb{Z}$$

such that $\beta([c], [d]) = \mathrm{lk}(c, d)$ for any oriented simple closed curves c and d in $\mathbb{S}^3 \setminus S$ and S respectively.

Restrict now to the case that S is Seifert surface for an oriented link L. Delete a collar neighbourhood of $L = \partial S$ from S---i.e. let X be $\mathbb{S}^3 \setminus N$ for N a regular neighbourhood of L and take $S \cap X$. This new surface (which we will also call S) admits a regular neighbourhood $S \times [-1, 1]$, where the orientation is chosen so that medians to L enter the neighbourhood across $S \times -1$ and leave across $S \times 1$. Let $i^\pm : S \to \mathbb{S}^3 \setminus S$ denote the two embeddings defined by $x \mapsto x \times \pm 1$ and if c is an oriented simple closed curve in S wrote $c^\pm$ for $i^\pm c$ respectively. This identification of curves on S with nearby curves in $\mathbb{S}^3 \setminus S$ induces a bilinear form:

4.6 Definition. Let S be the Seifert surface of an oriented link L; the **Seifert form** of L is the bilinear form

$$\alpha : H_1(S, \mathbb{Z}) \times H_1(S, \mathbb{Z}) \to \mathbb{Z}$$

defined by $\beta(x, y) = \alpha((i^-)_* x, y)$.

Let us now perform some magic. Let Y be obtained by taking X and cutting out $S \times (-1, 1)$. Then Y can be turned back into X by gluing $S \times -1$ to $S \times 1$, but instead we will take infinitely many copies of Y, $(Y_i : i \in \mathbb{Z})$, and form a space X_∞ by identifying $S_i^+ \subset Y_i$ with $S_i^- \subset Y_{i+1}$ (Fig. 4.5).

Remark. The construction of X_∞ is intended to be reminiscent of the construction of the developing map of a manifold. It is known as the **cyclic covering** of the knot or link complement by Rolfsen [38, §5C].

On X_∞ there is a natural automorphism t given by a one-unit shift sending each $Y_i \mapsto Y_{i+1}$. We therefore have an action of $\langle t \rangle$ on $H_1(X_\infty, \mathbb{Z})$ and hence an action of the group algebra $\mathbb{Z}[\langle t \rangle]$ on $H_1(X_\infty, \mathbb{Z})$ given by

$$\langle (\sum_{n \in \mathbb{Z}} \lambda_n t^n) \rangle x = \sum_{n \in \mathbb{Z}} \lambda_n (t^n x)$$

where the outer summation and multiplication by integers λ_n are the group addition and integer multiplication in the abelian group $H_1(X_\infty, \mathbb{Z})$. Also recall that the group R-algebra of an infinite cyclic group is just the R-algebra of Laurent polynomials $R[t, t^{-1}]$ and hence we have constructed an action of the ring of integer Laurent polynomials $\mathbb{Z}[t, t^{-1}]$ on $H_1(X_\infty, \mathbb{Z})$.

We remark now that X_∞ and the action on it by $\langle t \rangle$ are both determined up to orientation-preserving homeomorphism entirely by the link L and so the $\mathbb{Z}[t, t^{-1}]$-module $H_1(X_\infty, \mathbb{Z})$ is an invariant of L called the **Alexander module**. The rth elementary ideal of the Alexander module of a link L is called the rth **Alexander ideal** of L. Every Alexander ideal is contained in a minimal principal ideal (generated by the gcd of all elements in the ideal), and the generator of this ideal is the rth **Alexander polynomial**. The first Alexander polynomial is called *the* Alexander polynomial $\Delta_L(t)$.

4.7 Lemma. *Let A be a matrix for the Seifert form of L with respect to any basis of $H_1(S, \mathbb{Z})$ (S any Seifert surface). Then $tA - A^\top$ is a presentation matrix for the Alexander module of L.*

By the lemma, we see that that $\mathcal{E}_1$ itself is principal:- the Alexander module has a square presentation matrix, $tA - A^\top$, hence a unique minor of maximal rank and so $\Delta_L(t) = \det(tA - A^\top)$ (up to multiplication by a unit, i.e. a power of $\pm t$, so we normalise such that no power of t divides Δ_L).

4.8 Example. If 1 is the unknot, then $\Delta_1(t) = t$.

4.9 Example. Let $P(p, q, r)$ ($p, q, r \in \mathbb{Z}$ odd) be the (p, q, r) **pretzel knot** shown in Fig. 4.6 and choose the basis (α_1, α_2) for $H_1(S, \mathbb{Z})$ depicted. Then, since the Seifert prodict $\alpha([c], [d])$ is defined by taking the linking number of c and d with d shifted slightly off S in a consistent way, we can see by inspection that

$$\alpha([\alpha_1], [\alpha_1]) = \frac{1}{2}(p + q)\alpha([\alpha_1], [\alpha_2]) = \frac{1}{2}(q + 1)$$
$$\alpha([\alpha_2], [\alpha_1]) = \frac{1}{2}(q - 1)\alpha([\alpha_2], [\alpha_2]) = \frac{1}{2}(q + r)$$

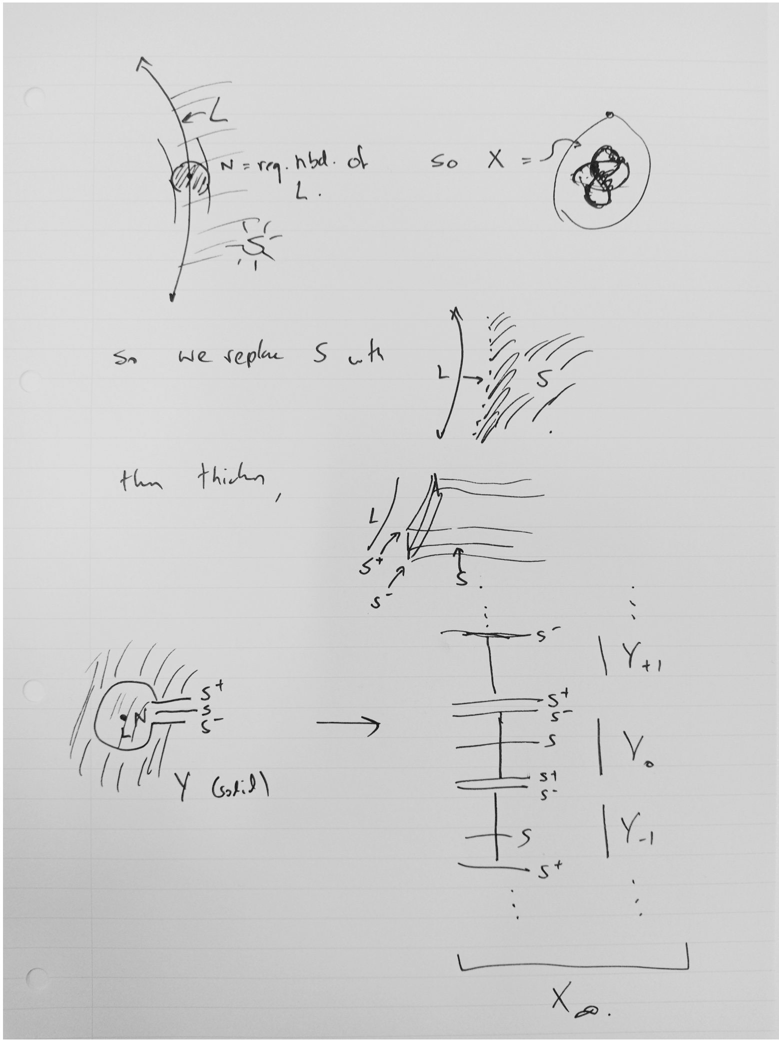

Figure 4.5: The construction of the cyclic covering of the complement of L via the collared Seifert surface S.

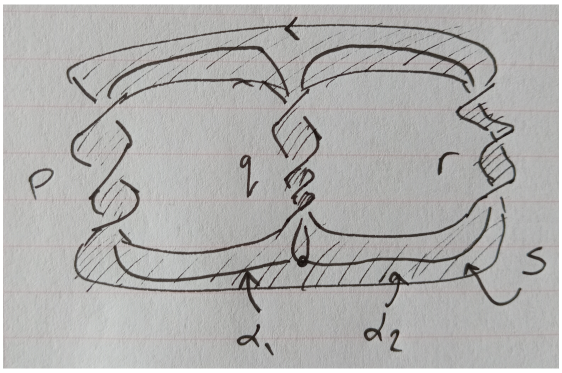

Figure 4.6: The (p, q, r) pretzel knot and a Seifert surface spanning it. If any of the parameters is negative, the twisting direction for the corresponding 2-braid is reversed.

(where the 1/2 factors come from the definition of lk, Lemma 1.7). If A is the corresponding matrix we have

$$\Delta_{P(p,q,r)}(t) = \det\big(tA - A^\top\big) = \frac{1}{4}\big((pq + qr + rp)\big(t^2 - 2t + 1\big) + t^2 + 2t + 1\big).$$

We see that for $(p, q, r) = (-3, 5, 7)$ then the corresponding knot has polynomial $\Delta(t) = t$, equal to that of the unknot. This pretzel knot is called **Seifert's knot**, and to see that it is nontrivial we can use the Jones polynomial (next lecture). Anyway, the Alexander polynomial is still a fairly good invariant:- it completely classifies all knots with at most eight crossings (see the table on p. 59 of [27]).

Remark. An alternative characterisation of the Alexander polynomial: it is the characteristic polynomial of the linear map $t_* : H_1(X_\infty, \mathbb{Q}) \to H_1(X_\infty, \mathbb{Q})$ where t is the translation map of the cyclic cover.

One can compute the Alexander polynomial inductively using the **Skein relations** discovered by Conway [13]---actually, the relations were given by Alexander [3] but Conway was the first (according to Birman [7, §2]) to observe that they allow the reconstruction of the Alexander polynomial without the ambiguity of divisibility by units in $\mathbb{Z}[t^{\pm 1}]$.

4.10 Theorem.

4.11 Exercises. 1. Use Conway's inductive characterisation directly to show that the Alexander--Conway polynomials are knot invariants (i.e. show that the Skein relations are invariant under Reidemeister moves).

4.2 Modern polynomials

Jones, HOMFLY--PT.

4.12 Example. The Jones polynomial is invariant under mutation, hence does not distinguish between the Kinoshita--Terasaka and Conway knots (Construction 1.13).

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