Knots, Plethysms, and the Riordan Group

Minh-Tâm Quang Trinh

Howard University

1 Fruit

"You can't add together apples and oranges."

Well, not in real life.

But in mathematics, you can make up a new world where this is possible.

The *free vector space* on $X = \{\text{apple}, \text{orange}, \text{pear}\}$:

$$\mathbf{C}\langle X\rangle = \{a \cdot \text{apple} + b \cdot \text{orange} + c \cdot \text{pear} \mid a, b, c \in \mathbf{C}\}.$$

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Maybe dumb, because the sum of the vectors "apple" and "orange" is just "apple + orange".

But there's a vector space where it simplifies further.

(1) Start with some relations like

$$\text{pear} \sim \text{apple} + \text{orange}, \quad \text{orange} \sim 2 \cdot \text{apple}.$$

(2) Let *Rel* be the span of "pear − apple − orange" and "orange − 2 · apple".

(3) Extend $\sim$ to an equivalence relation on $\mathbf{C}\langle X\rangle$:

$$v \sim v' \iff v - v' \in \mathit{Rel}.$$

The set of equivalence classes is a new vector space $\mathbf{C}\langle X\rangle/\mathit{Rel}$, in which $\sim$ defines equality.

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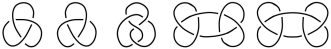
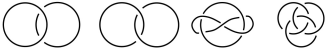
Knot diagrams:



Links allow multiple circles:



An *oriented link diagram* is a link diagram where we give each circle a direction/orientation.

Also interested in diagrams that are strictly inside a given region $\Omega \subseteq \mathbf{R}^2$.

Will mainly focus on $\Omega = \mathbf{R}^2$ and $\Omega = \mathbf{R}^2 \setminus \mathbf{0}$.

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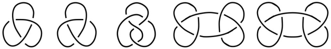

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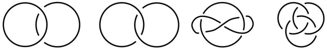

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We will treat two diagrams in Ω as equal as long as they are *isotopic*:

We can deform one into the other within Ω, without tearing any circles.

Let $\mathcal{L}_\Omega$ be the set of all oriented link diagrams in Ω, including the empty diagram.

$$\mathbf{C}\langle \mathcal{L}_\Omega \rangle = \{\text{finite linear combos of elements of } \mathcal{L}_\Omega\}$$

is usually huge!

To study it, try to find equivalence relations on it that give us smaller, more tractable vector spaces.

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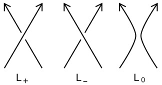
E.g., we might have three diagrams that only differ at one crossing:



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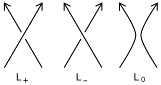

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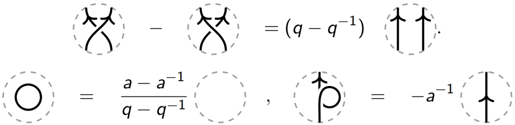
It turns out that the following local *skein relations* are especially interesting.



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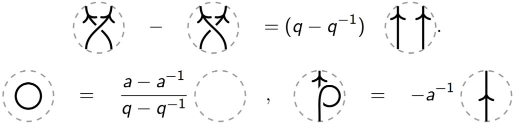

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The relations give us a linear subspace $Rel_\Omega \subseteq \mathbf{C}\langle \mathcal{L}_\Omega \rangle$.

The *HOMFLYPT skein module* of Ω is

$$\mathrm{Sk}_\Omega = \mathbf{C}\langle \mathcal{L}_\Omega \rangle / Rel_\Omega.$$

Thm ($\approx$ HOMFLYPT 1986)

$$\boxed{\mathrm{Sk}_{\mathbf{R}^2} = \mathbf{C}.}$$

That is, any diagram in $\mathbf{R}^2$ is a scalar multiple of the empty diagram modulo the skein relations.

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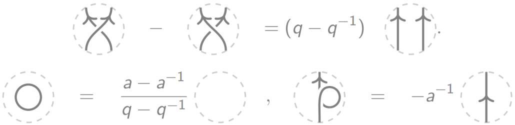

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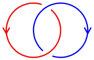
$L =$ 

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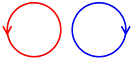
$L =$  $+ (q - q^{-1})$ 

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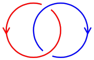
$L =$ 

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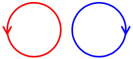
$L =$  $+ (q - q^{-1})$ 

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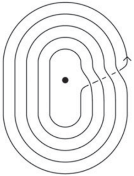
$p_5 =$ 

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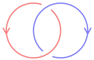
$L =$ 

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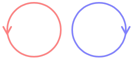
$L =$  $+ (q - q^{-1})$ 

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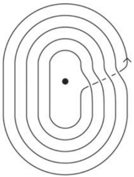
$p_5 =$ 

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If we have two diagrams L and L', then we can put L *around* L' to get a new diagram

$$L \cdot L'.$$

Note that $L \cdot L'$ and $L' \cdot L$ are isotopic.

Extend this to a binary operation on $\mathrm{Sk}_{\mathbf{R}^2 \setminus \mathbf{0}}$, by making it distribute over addition.

Think of this as a multiplication law, which turns $\mathrm{Sk}_{\mathbf{R}^2 \setminus \mathbf{0}}$ into a *ring*.

Monomials in the p_n's, like $p_1 p_2 p_3$ or p_{-1}^2, do not simplify further.

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Thm (Turaev 1988)

The collection of all monomials in the p_n's is a basis for $\mathrm{Sk}_{\mathbf{R}^2\setminus\mathbf{0}}$ as a vector space.

Corollary As a *ring*,

$$\boxed{\mathrm{Sk}_{\mathbf{R}^2\setminus\mathbf{0}} = \mathbf{C}[p_0, p_{\pm1}, p_{\pm2}, \ldots].}$$

Remark

The subring generated by $p_0, p_1, p_2, \ldots$ is isomorphic to a very famous ring in combinatorics, called the *ring of symmetric functions*.

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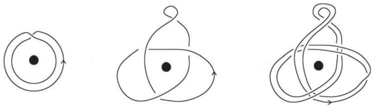

The first diagram above is p_2. Call the middle one L.

The last diagram is the *plethysm* $L \circ p_2$.

If L had multiple knot components, then we would form $L \circ p_2$ by inserting p_2 into each component, following their orientations.

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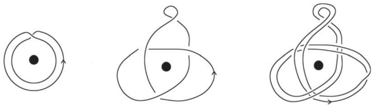

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It is fun to check that:

(1) $p_m \circ p_n = p_{mn}$ for any m, n.

How to define $L \circ K$ for any K and L?

Since any element of $\mathrm{Sk}(\mathbf{R}^2 \setminus \mathbf{0})$ is a polynomial in the p_n's, it is enough to require:

(2) $- \circ K$ distributes over $+$ and $\cdot$, for all K.

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Thm (1)–(3) define a binary operation on $\mathrm{Sk}_{\mathbf{R}^2 \setminus \mathbf{0}}$.

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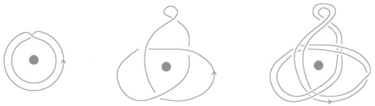

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By comparison, the composition operation

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Remark t^n is analogous to p_1^n, not to p_n:

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4 Riordan Revisited

In combinatorics, we like to study number sequences $c_0, c_1, c_2, \ldots$ through *generating functions*

$$c(t) = c_0 + c_1 t + c_2 t^2 + \ldots,$$

a.k.a. *formal power series*. They form a ring $\mathbf{C}[\![t]\!]$.

The word "formal" means we don't worry about whether $c(t)$ converges at any given value of t.

Any polynomial is a power series:

$$\mathbf{C}[t] \subseteq \mathbf{C}[\![t]\!].$$

But $\circ$ does not extend to a binary operation on $\mathbf{C}[\![t]\!]$.

Let $\mathbf{C}[t]$ be the ring of polynomials in t.

$\mathrm{Sk}_{\mathbf{R}^2 \setminus \mathbf{0}}$	p_1	plethysm
$\mathbf{C}[t]$	t	composition of polynomials

By comparison, the composition operation

$$(g \circ f)(t) = g(f(t))$$

on $\mathbf{C}[t]$ is characterized by:

(1) $t \circ f = f = t \circ f$ for any f.

(2) $- \circ f$ distributes over $+$ and $\cdot$, for any f.

Remark t^n is analogous to p_1^n, not to p_n:
In general, $t^n \circ (f_1 + f_2) \neq t^n \circ f_1 + t^n \circ f_2$.

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But $\circ$ does <u>not</u> extend to a binary operation on $\mathbf{C}[\![t]\!]$.

Example Take $c(t) = 1 + t + t^2 + \ldots$.

$c(1+t)$ is not well-defined. By contrast,

$$\begin{aligned} c(t+t^2) &= 1 + (t+t^2) + (t+t^2)^2 + (t+t^2)^3 + \ldots \\ &= \left\{ \begin{array}{lllll} 1 & & & & \\ + t + t^2 & & & & \\ & + t^2 + 2t^3 + t^4 & & & \\ & & + t^3 & + 3t^4 + \cdots & \\ & & & + t^4 & + \cdots \end{array} \right. \\ &= 1 + t + 2t^2 + 3t^3 + 5t^4 + \ldots \end{aligned}$$

In general, can do $\circ : \mathbf{C}[\![t]\!] \times t\mathbf{C}[\![t]\!] \to \mathbf{C}[\![t]\!]$, where

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Let $\mathbf{C}[\![t]\!]^\circ$ be the further subset of power series with zero constant term and nonzero linear term.

Thm Any element of $\mathbf{C}[\![t]\!]^\circ$ has an inverse under $\circ$.

Thus $\mathbf{C}[\![t]\!]^\circ$ forms a group under $\circ$ with identity t.

If you think about what I've covered, you'll realize:

There is an analogous group where we replace

$$\mathbf{C}[\![t]\!] \supseteq \mathbf{C}[t]$$

with a certain containment

$$\widehat{\mathrm{Sk}}_{\mathbf{R}^2\setminus\mathbf{0}} \supseteq \mathrm{Sk}_{\mathbf{R}^2\setminus\mathbf{0}}$$

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Let me sketch a proof of the theorem relating it to the Riordan group.

Pf sketch For any $f \in \mathbf{C}[\![t]\!]^\circ$, let M_f be the infinite matrix whose columns record the powers of f:

$$M_f = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & & & \\ 0 & c_{1,1} & & \\ 0 & c_{2,1} & c_{2,2} & \\ \vdots & \vdots & & \ddots \end{pmatrix},$$

where the $c_{i,j}$ are given by $f(t)^j = \sum_{i \geq 0} c_{i,j} t^i$.

For example, $M_z = I$, the identity matrix.

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The condition $f \in \mathbf{C}[\![t]\!]^\circ$ implies that M_f is always *lower-triangular* with nonzero diagonal entries.

Thus it is *invertible*.

Now check the following facts:

(1) M_f^{-1} takes the form M_g for some $g \in \mathbf{C}[\![t]\!]^\circ$.

(2) $M_{f_1 \circ f_2} = M_{f_1} \cdot M_{f_2}$.

We deduce that for any f, there's some g s.t.

$$M_{g \circ f} = M_g \cdot M_f = M_f^{-1} \cdot M_f = I = M_z.$$

Thus $g \circ f = z$. $\square$

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Recall that the set $\mathbf{C}[\![t]\!]^\times$ of power series with *nonzero* constant term forms a group under $\times$.

The map $f \mapsto M_f$ can be extended to an embedding

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbf{C}[\![t]\!]^\times \rtimes \mathbf{C}[\![t]\!]^\circ &\hookrightarrow \mathrm{GL}_\infty, \\ (u, f) &\mapsto M_{u,f}. \end{aligned}$$

Shapiro's *Riordan group* is the image.

This also has an analogue in the world of plethysm.

Thank you for listening.