



# Pseudocharacters of the modular group from linking numbers of modular knots

**Christopher-Lloyd SIMON**

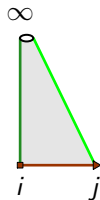
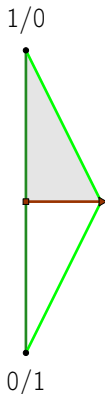
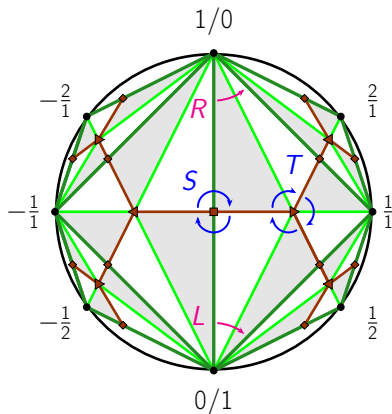
Institut de Recherche MATHématique de Rennes

Texas AMU, 2025-08-27

- 1 Conjugacy classes of the modular group
- 2 The topological meaning of the Rademacher cocycle
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# Modular group $\mathrm{PSL}_2(\mathbb{Z})$ acting on the hyperbolic plane $\mathbb{H}\mathbb{P}$

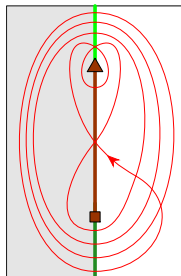
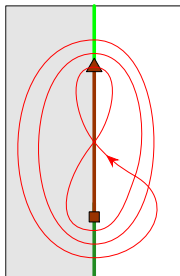
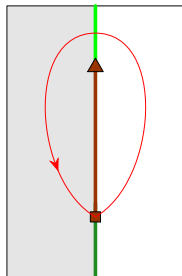
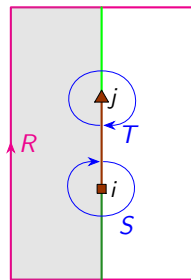
$$S = \begin{pmatrix} 0 & -1 \\ 1 & 0 \end{pmatrix} \quad T = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & -1 \\ 1 & 0 \end{pmatrix} \quad R = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 1 \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \quad L = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 \\ 1 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$$



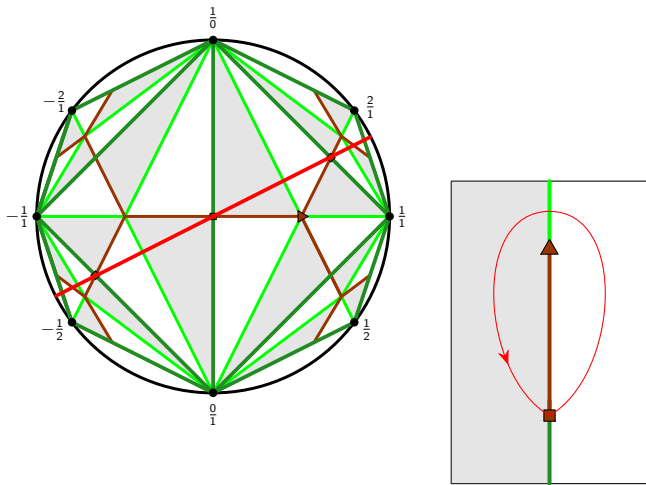
Tiling  $\mathbb{H}\mathbb{P}$  under the action of the modular group  $\mathrm{PSL}_2(\mathbb{Z}) = \mathbb{Z}/2 * \mathbb{Z}/3$ , the basic fundamental tile, and the modular orbifold  $\mathbb{M} = \mathrm{PSL}_2(\mathbb{Z}) \backslash \mathbb{H}\mathbb{P}$ .

# Loops in the modular orbifold $\mathbb{M} = \mathrm{PSL}_2(\mathbb{Z}) \backslash \mathbb{HP}$

Free homotopy classes of oriented loops in $\mathbb{M}$	Conjugacy classes in $\pi_1(\mathbb{M}) = \mathrm{PSL}_2(\mathbb{Z})$
Around conic singularity $i$ or $j$	Elliptic: $S$ or $T^{\pm 1}$
Surround $n$ times the cusp $\infty$	Parabolic: $R^n$ , $n \in \mathbb{Z}$
$\exists!$ geodesic representative $[\alpha]$ of length $\lambda_A$	Hyperbolic: $\mathrm{disc}(A) = \left(2 \sinh \frac{\lambda_A}{2}\right)^2$

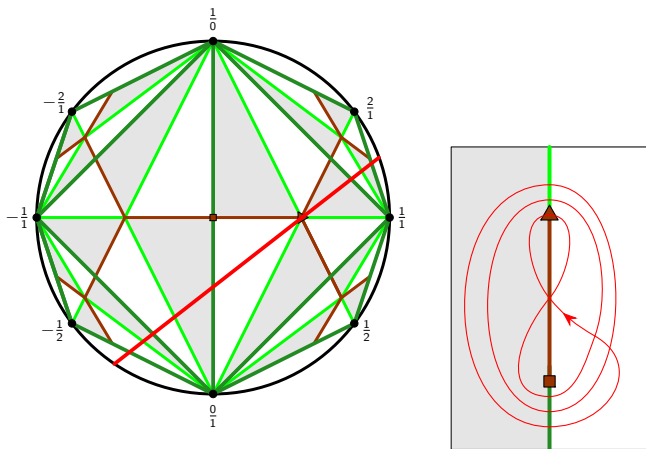


# Modular geodesics as projections of hyperbolic axes



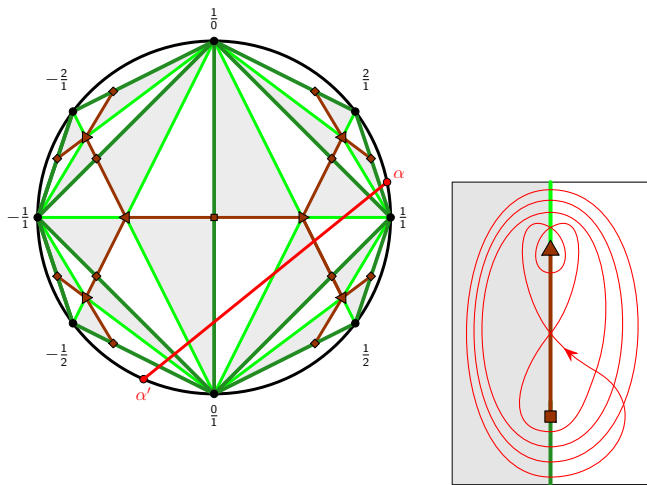
The axis of  $A = RL$  in  $\mathbb{H}P$  from  $\alpha^- = -1/\overline{[1,1]}$  to  $\alpha^+ = \overline{[1,1]}$  in  $\mathbb{R}P^1$ .

# Modular geodesics as projections of hyperbolic axes



The axis of  $A = RLL$  in  $\mathbb{HP}$  from  $\alpha^- = -1/\overline{[2,1]}$  to  $\alpha^+ = \overline{[1,2]}$  in  $\mathbb{RP}^1$ .

# Modular geodesics as projections of hyperbolic axes



The axis of  $A = RLLL$  in  $\mathbb{HP}$  from  $\alpha^- = -1/\overline{[3,1]}$  to  $\alpha^+ = \overline{[1,3]}$  in  $\mathbb{RP}^1$ .

# Conjugacy classes and cyclic binary words

The Euclidean monoid  $\mathrm{PSL}_2(\mathbb{N}) = \{L, R\}^*$

- The monoid  $\mathrm{PSL}_2(\mathbb{N})$  is freely generated by  $L = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$  and  $R = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 1 \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$ .
- For  $A \in \mathrm{PSL}_2(\mathbb{Z})$  we have  $A \in \mathrm{PSL}_2(\mathbb{N}) \iff \alpha^- < 0 < \alpha^+$ .
- For  $A \in \mathrm{PSL}_2(\mathbb{N})$  its  $\{L, R\}$ -factorisation has exponents yielding the convergents in the continued fraction expansion of  $\alpha^+$ .

The conjugacy class  $[A]$  of an infinite order  $A \in \mathrm{PSL}_2(\mathbb{Z})$  satisfies:

- $[A] \cap \mathrm{PSL}_2(\mathbb{N}) =$  cyclic permutations of an  $L$ & $R$ -word  $\neq \emptyset$ .
- Class is primitive  $\iff$  cyclic word is primitive.
- Class is hyperbolic  $\iff \#L > 0$  and  $\#R > 0$ .

- denote its *combinatorial length* by  $\text{len}(A) = \#R + \#L$
- define its *Rademacher cocycle* as  $\text{Rad}(A) = \#R - \#L$



# The Rademacher invariant in arithmetic, topology, physics...

The Rademacher invariant function  $\text{Rad}: \text{PSL}_2(\mathbb{Z}) \rightarrow \mathbb{Z}$  is the

- 3 Cocycle for the Eisenstein series  $E_2$  (logarithm of Dedekind function  $\eta$ )
- 2 Signature defect of the torus bundle with monodromy  $A$
- 5 Special value at 0 of the Shimizu  $L$ -function for  $L_A(s) = \sum \frac{\text{sign } Q_A(m,n)}{|Q_A(m,n)|^s}$

Logarithm of the Dedekind  $\eta$ -Funktion

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It may now be convenient to summarize all our results in an omnibus theorem:

(5.60) **Theorem.** *Let  $A \in \text{SL}(2, \mathbb{Z})$  be hyperbolic. Then the following invariants of  $A$  coincide.*

- 1) Meyer's signature invariant  $\phi(A)$  (see (5.3)).
- 2) Hirzebruch's signature defect  $\delta(A)$ .
- 3) The invariant  $\chi(A)$  describing the transformation properties of  $\log \eta(\tau)$  under  $A$  (see (5.22)).
- 4)  $\mu(A)$  the logarithmic monodromy (divided by  $\pi i$ ) of Quillen's determinant line-bundle  $\mathcal{L}$ .
- 5) The value  $L_A(0)$  of the Shimizu  $L$ -function (see (5.49)).
- 6) The Atiyah-Patodi-Singer invariant  $\eta(A)$ .
- 7) The "adiabatic limit"  $\eta^0(A)$ .

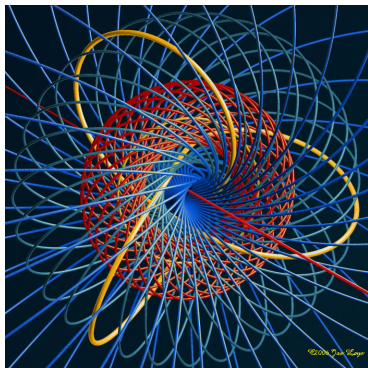
Atiyah's omnibus theorem [Ati87]

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# Unit tangent bundle $\mathbb{U}$ of the modular orbifold $\mathbb{M}$

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \mathrm{PSL}_2(\mathbb{R}) & \xrightarrow{\mathrm{PSL}_2(\mathbb{Z})} & \mathbb{U} \\ \downarrow \mathbb{S}^1 & & \downarrow \mathbb{S}^1 \\ \mathbb{H}^{\mathrm{P}} & \xrightarrow{\mathrm{PSL}_2(\mathbb{Z})} & \mathbb{M} \end{array}$$

The Seifert fibration  $\mathbb{U} \rightarrow \mathbb{M}$  reveals that  $\mathbb{U} \simeq \mathbb{S}^3 \setminus \text{trefoil}$ .

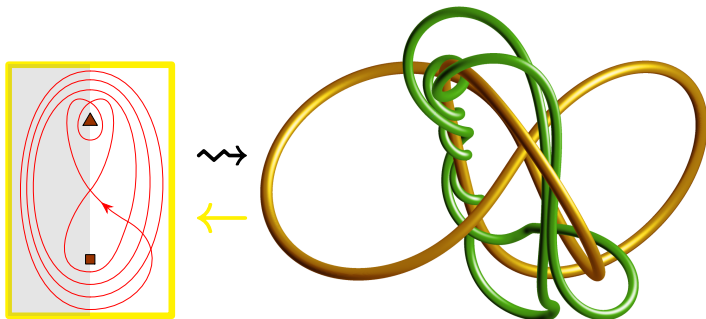


The extension of fundamental group  $\mathbb{S}^1 \hookrightarrow \pi_1(\mathbb{U}) \twoheadrightarrow \pi_1(\mathbb{M})$

yields the universal central extension  $\mathbb{Z} \hookrightarrow \mathcal{B}_3 \twoheadrightarrow \mathrm{PSL}_2(\mathbb{Z})$  which is the quotient of the braid group  $\mathcal{B}_3 = \langle \sigma_1, \sigma_2 \mid \sigma_1 \sigma_2 \sigma_1 = \sigma_2 \sigma_1 \sigma_2 \rangle$  by its center generated by  $(\sigma_1 \sigma_2)^6$  sending  $\sigma_1^{-1} \mapsto L$  and  $\sigma_2 \mapsto R$ .

# Primitive modular geodesics in $\mathbb{M}$ lift to modular knots in $\mathbb{U}$

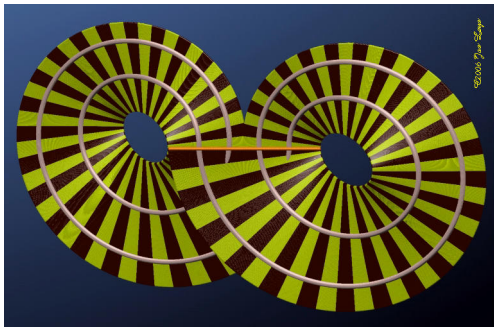
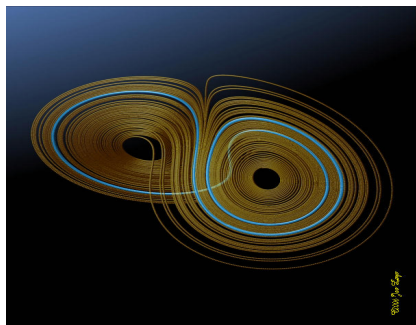
Hyperbolic classes in $\mathrm{PSL}_2(\mathbb{Z})$	Modular geodesics in $\mathbb{M}$	Periodic orbits in $\mathbb{U}$
trace form	intersection form	linking form



The **primitive modular geodesic**  $[\alpha]$  lifts to the **modular knot**  $\vec{\alpha}$

## Master modular link isotopes into the Lorenz template

The **master modular link** isotopes into the **Lorenz template** so that the periodic orbit associated to  $A \in \mathrm{PSL}_2(\mathbb{N})$  follows the sequence follows that sequence of left and right turns according to its  $\{L, R\}$ -factorisation.



This is **shown** in [Ghy07] by opening the cusp of  $\mathbb{M}$ , deforming the Fuchsian representation  $\rho_q: \pi_1(\mathbb{M}) \rightarrow \mathrm{PSL}_2(\mathbb{R})$  to the boundary, so that the unit tangent bundle of  $\mathbb{M}_q$  isotopes to that of the Lorenz template.

## Linking the trefoil recovers the Rademacher cocycle

### Theorems [BG92, Ghy07] :

For hyperbolic  $A \in \mathrm{PSL}_2(\mathbb{Z})$  we have  $\mathrm{Rad}(A) = \mathrm{lk}(\text{trefoil}, k_A)$ .

The function  $\mathrm{Rad}: \mathrm{PSL}_2(\mathbb{Z}) \rightarrow \mathbb{Z}$  is the **pseudocharacter** associated to the central extension  $\mathbb{Z} \hookrightarrow \mathcal{B}_3 \twoheadrightarrow \mathrm{PSL}_2(\mathbb{Z})$ .

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc} 0 & \longrightarrow & \pi_1(S^1) = \mathbb{Z} & \longrightarrow & H_1(S^1) = \mathbb{Z} & & \\ \downarrow & & \downarrow & & \downarrow & & \\ \pi_1(\mathbb{M}') = \mathcal{F}_2 & \longrightarrow & \pi_1(\mathbb{U}) = \mathcal{B}_3 & \xrightarrow{\mathrm{lk}} & H_1(\mathbb{U}) = \mathbb{Z} & & \\ \downarrow & & \downarrow & & \downarrow & & \\ \pi_1(\mathbb{M}') = \mathcal{F}_2 & \longrightarrow & \pi_1(\mathbb{M}) = \mathrm{PSL}_2(\mathbb{Z}) & \xrightarrow{\mathrm{Ab}} & H_1(\mathbb{M}) = \mathbb{Z}/6 & & \end{array}$$

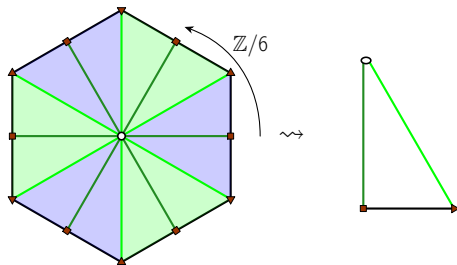
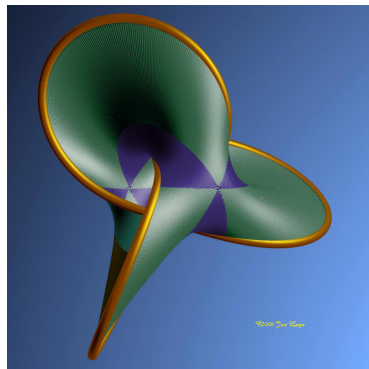
The Euler class in  $H^2(\mathrm{PSL}_2(\mathbb{Z}); \mathbb{Z})$  classifying the central extension of the middle column is the pull back by the abelianisation  $\mathrm{PSL}_2(\mathbb{Z}) \rightarrow \mathbb{Z}/6$  of the Euler class  $H^2(\mathbb{Z}/6; \mathbb{Z})$  classifying the central extension of the right column.

# Linking the trefoil recovers the Rademacher cocycle

## Theorems [BG92, Ghy07] :

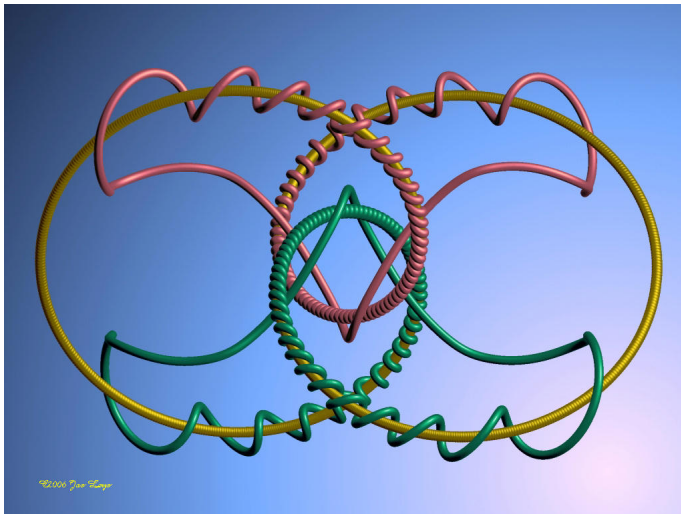
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Pages of the open book decomposition ; the universal abelian cover  $\mathbb{M}' \rightarrow \mathbb{M}$ .

# What about the linking of modular knots ?



Another question would be to give an arithmetical or combinatorial computation of the linking numbers of two knots  $k_A$  and  $k_B$  as a function of  $A, B$  in  $\mathrm{PSL}(2, \mathbb{Z})$

Picture from [GL16] and Question from [Ghy07].



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# Pseudocharacters of a group $\Gamma$ and their Banach quotient

**Definition:** Pseudocharacters are homogeneous quasicharacters

A function  $\phi: \Gamma \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$  is a **quasicharacter** when it has a bounded derivative:

$$d\phi: \Gamma \times \Gamma \rightarrow \mathbb{R} \quad d\phi(A, B) = \phi(B) - \phi(AB) + \phi(A).$$

It is **homogeneous** when  $\phi(A^n) = n\phi(A)$  for all  $A \in \Gamma$  and  $n \in \mathbb{Z}$ .

**Theorem ([MM85, Iva88]) :** a Banach space

The  $\mathbb{R}$ -vector space  $PX(\Gamma)$  has weak\* topology (pointwise convergence).

- Semi-norm  $\|d\phi\|_\infty$  with  $\ker \|d\phi\|_\infty = H^1(\Gamma; \mathbb{R}) \subset PX(\Gamma)$
- The quotient is  $H_{b,0}^2(\Gamma) = PX(\Gamma)/H^1(\Gamma; \mathbb{R}) \dots$  a Banach space!

**Rotation numbers:** from commutative to non-commutative

Characters  $H^1(\Gamma; \mathbb{Z}) = \text{Hom}(\Gamma; \mathbb{S}^1)$ .

Pseudocharacters  $H_b^2(\Gamma; \mathbb{Z}) \supset \text{Hom}(\Gamma; \text{Homeo}(\mathbb{S}^1)) \bmod \text{semi-conj}$  [Ghy87].

# Brooks cocycles for groups acting on trees

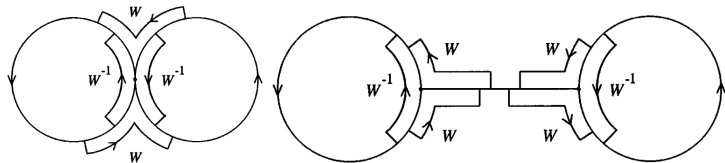
## Brooks-Series cocycles ([BS84, BG91]) and [Gri95, Lemma 5.3]

For a *non-overlapping* pattern  $P \in \text{PSL}_2(\mathbb{N})$ , the measure of  $P$ -asymmetry is the conjugacy invariant function  $\text{mas}_P: \text{PSL}_2(\mathbb{Z}) \rightarrow \mathbb{Z}$  defined:

- $A \in \text{PSL}_2(\mathbb{N}) \mapsto \text{mas}_P(A) = \text{occ}_P(A) - \text{occ}_P(A^*)$   
(In particular for  $P = R$  we have  $\text{Rad}(A) = \text{mas}_R(A)$ .)
- $A \in \text{Tors}(\text{PSL}_2(\mathbb{Z})) \mapsto \text{mas}_P(A) = 0$ .

We have  $\text{mas}_P \in \text{PX}(\text{PSL}_2(\mathbb{Z}))$  and  $\|d \text{mas}_P\|_\infty \leq 6$ .

If  $P \neq P^*$  then  $d \text{mas}_P$  yields a non-zero class in  $H_{b,0}^2(\text{PSL}_2(\mathbb{Z}))$ .



From [Gri95]: some cases in the proof of  $\|d \text{mas}_P\|_\infty \leq 6$ .

## From computing the dimension to describing a basis

The dimension of  $H_b^2(\Gamma)$  is roughly known for many groups:

- 1 If  $\Gamma$  is amenable then  $H_{b,0}^*(\Gamma; \mathbb{R}) = 0$
- 2 If  $\Gamma$  is word hyperbolic then  $\dim H_b^2(\Gamma) = \infty$  [EF97]
- 3 If  $\Gamma = \text{Mod}(\mathbb{F})$  then  $\dim H_b^2(\Gamma) = \infty$  [BF02, Fuj09].

free product of two copies of an infinite cyclic group; that is a free group with two generators. However in [9] there is no discussion about the generation of  $H_b^{(2)}(\mathbb{Z} * \mathbb{Z})$  but only the statement that the dimension of  $H_b^{(2)}(\mathbb{Z} * \mathbb{Z})$  is infinite. Let us analyze this statement.

From [Gri95]: what about generating  $PX(\Gamma)$ ?

**Assertion 5.1** *The bounded 2-cocycles  $\delta^{(1)}f_W$  are all non-trivial cocycles, and are all linearly independent.*

But the last statement of the assertion is not correct as the following ex-

From [Gri95]: beware of independence!

## A Schauder basis for $H_b^2(\Gamma)$

### Definition Schauder basis:

For a topological  $\mathbb{R}$ -vector space  $V$ , a sequence  $(x_n)_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$  is a *basis* when

$$\forall v \in V, \quad \exists! (c_n(v)) \in \mathbb{R}^{\mathbb{N}}, \quad v = \sum c_n(v) \cdot x_n,$$

and a *Schauder basis* when the coefficient functionals  $c_n$  are continuous.

$e_W(g)$  = number of times  $W$  occurs in  $\bar{g}$  – number of times  $W^-$  occurs in  $\bar{g}$ ,

where  $\bar{g}$  is the reduced cyclic word corresponding to the element  $g \in N$ .

Repeating the arguments used when proving Theorem 5.7 we get

**Theorem 5.11** *The space  $H_{b,2}^{(2)}(N)$  is infinite dimensional. It is isomorphic to the space  $PX(N)$  and every element  $f \in PX(N)$  can be uniquely written in the form*

$$f = \sum_{W \in P^+} \alpha_W e_W.$$

for some coefficients  $\alpha_W \in \mathbb{R}$ .

The Schauder base of  $PX(\mathrm{PSL}_2(\mathbb{Z}))$  of [Gri95, Theorem 5.11]

Schauder base:  $\mathrm{mas}_P \in PX(\mathrm{PSL}_2(\mathbb{Z}))$  for non-overlapping  $P \in \mathrm{PSL}_2(\mathbb{N})/\star$ .

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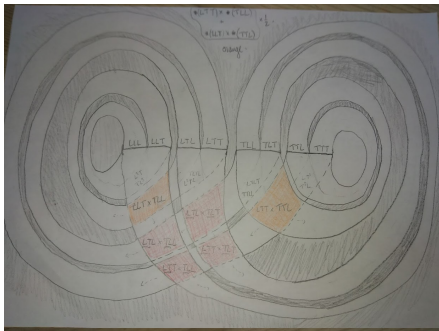
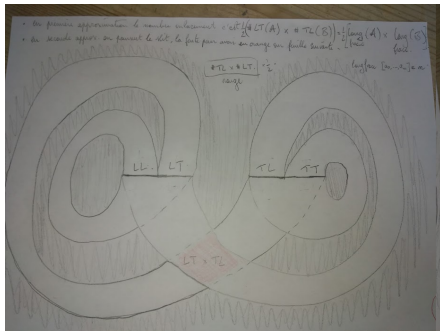
# Linking number: sum crossings indexed by linked patterns

Lemma [Sim22, 4.34] & [Sim24, 7.1]: linking counts sum of crossings

For hyperbolic  $A, B \in \mathrm{PSL}_2(\mathbb{N})$  the corresponding modular knots have:

$$\mathrm{lk}(A, B) = \frac{1}{2} \sum_w \left( \begin{array}{c} \mathrm{occ}_{RwL}(A) \cdot \mathrm{occ}_{LwR}(B) \\ + \\ \mathrm{occ}_{LwR}(A) \cdot \mathrm{occ}_{RwL}(B) \end{array} \right)$$

where the summation extends over all words  $w \in \mathrm{PSL}_2(\mathbb{N})$ .



# Pseudocharacters from asymmetric linking numbers

**Definition [Sim24, 7.6]:** The cosign functions

For  $A \in \mathrm{PSL}_2(\mathbb{Z})$ , define the cosign function  $C_A: \mathrm{PSL}_2(\mathbb{Z}) \rightarrow \mathbb{Z}$  as the antisymmetric linking number:  $C_A(B) := \frac{1}{2} (\mathrm{lk}(A, B) - \mathrm{lk}(A^{-1}, B))$

**Proposition [Sim24, 7.6]:** decompose  $C_A$  in the Schauder basis  $(\mathrm{mas}_P)$

For  $A, B \in \mathrm{PSL}_2(\mathbb{N})$ , we may decompose  $C_A$  as:

$$C_A(B) = \mathrm{lk}(A, B) - \mathrm{lk}(A, B^*) = \frac{1}{2} \sum_w \left( \begin{array}{c} \mathrm{occ}_{RwL}(A) \cdot \mathrm{mas}_{LwR}(B) \\ + \\ \mathrm{occ}_{LwR}(A) \cdot \mathrm{mas}_{RwL}(B) \end{array} \right)$$

the sum over all words  $w \in \mathrm{PSL}_2(\mathbb{N})$  with  $\mathrm{len}(w) < \max\{\mathrm{len} A, \mathrm{len} B\}$ .

**Theorem [Sim24, 7.6, 7.7]:** Pseudocharacters from linking numbers

- For all  $A \in \mathrm{PSL}_2(\mathbb{N})$  we have  $C_A \in \mathrm{PX}(\mathrm{PSL}_2(\mathbb{Z}))$  and  $\|d C_A\|_\infty \leq 6$ .
- Linear relations spanned by  $C_{A^n} = n C_A$  for  $A \in \mathrm{PSL}_2(\mathbb{Z})$  and  $n \in \mathbb{Z}$ .  
(In particular  $C_A$  is trivial if and only if  $A$  is conjugate to  $A^{-1}$ .)



## Link equivalence

To prove the non-triviality and linear independence of the  $C_A$  for  $A \in \mathcal{P}_+$ , we were led to show the non-degeneracy of the linking form.

**Lemma [Sim24] : The linking pairing is non-degenerate**

If hyperbolic  $A, B \in \mathrm{PSL}_2(\mathbb{Z})$  are link equivalent, then they are conjugate.  
(Link equivalence:  $\forall X \in \mathrm{PSL}_2(\mathbb{Z}), \mathrm{lk}(A, X) = \mathrm{lk}(B, X)$ .)

## Linking recovers intersection

For hyperbolic  $A, B \in \mathrm{PSL}_2(\mathbb{Z})$  we have  $\frac{1}{2}I(A, B) = \mathrm{lk}(A, B) + \mathrm{lk}(A^{-1}, B)$ .

## Intersection from modular cocycles

For hyperbolic  $A \in \mathrm{PSL}_2(\mathbb{Z})$ , [DIT17] construct a modular function whose symbol recovers  $I(A, \cdot) = 2(\mathrm{lk}(A, \cdot) + \mathrm{lk}(A^{-1}, \cdot))$ .

What about the cosign  $C_A(\cdot) = \mathrm{lk}(A, \cdot) - \mathrm{lk}(A^{-1}, \cdot)$ ?

# Schauder basis of $PX(\mathrm{PSL}_2(\mathbb{Z}))$ from linking numbers

## Definition: conjugacy classes modulo powers

The set  $\mathcal{P}$  of primitive infinite order conjugacy classes in  $\mathrm{PSL}_2(\mathbb{Z})$  contains the subset  $\mathcal{P}_0$  of those which are stable under inversion.

Partition  $\mathcal{P} \setminus \mathcal{P}_0 = \mathcal{P}_- \sqcup \mathcal{P}_+$  in two subsets in bijection by inversion.

We may choose  $R \in \mathcal{P}_+$ , and note that  $C_R = \mathrm{lk}(\text{trefoil}, \cdot)$ .

## Theorem [Sim24]: Schauder basis for $PX(\mathrm{PSL}_2(\mathbb{Z}))$

The collection of  $C_A \in PX(\Gamma; \mathbb{R})$  for  $A \in \mathcal{P}_+$  is a Schauder basis:

- $\forall f \in PX(\mathrm{PSL}_2(\mathbb{Z}); \mathbb{R}), \quad \exists! (c_A(f))_A \in \mathbb{R}^{\mathcal{P}_+}, \quad f = \sum_A c_A(f) \cdot C_A$
- The period coefficients  $c_A: f \mapsto c_A(f)$  are continuous

$\implies$  Fourier theory of pseudocharacters, with a natural basis of *cosigns*.

## Does $C_A$ yield an extremizer in the duality [Bav91, Theorem] ?

- For  $A \in \Gamma'$ :  $\mathrm{scl}(A) = \sup\{|\varphi(A)| / \|d\varphi\|_\infty : \varphi \in PX(\Gamma) \setminus H^1(\Gamma)\}$
- The extremal  $\varphi$  obtained by Hahn-Banach is not constructed...  $C_A$ ?

# Sketch of a project to find Schauder bases of $PX(\text{Mod}(\mathbb{F}))$

**Problem 4.10** To construct a basis for  $H_b^{(2)}(B_n)$ .

Mapping class group  $\text{Mod}(\mathbb{F})$  acts on curve complex  $\mathcal{C}(\mathbb{F})$ :

- Metric space  $\mathcal{C}(\mathbb{F})$  is hyperbolic and  $\partial\mathcal{C}(\mathbb{F})$  are ending laminations
- The hyperbolic isometries of  $\mathcal{C}(\mathbb{F})$  are pseudo-Anosov elements  $A$
- Fixed points of  $A$  in  $\partial\mathcal{C}(\mathbb{F})$  are stable-unstable measured laminations.

Schauder bases for  $PX(\text{Mod}(\mathbb{F}))$  from *combinatorics of monoids*:

- Define Brooks–Series Barge–Ghys cocycles  $\text{mas}_P$  in  $H_b^2(\text{Mod}(\mathbb{F}); \mathbb{R})$ .
- Find basis of  $\text{mas}_P$  for  $P$  in “train track monoid” of Dehn-twists.

Schauder basis for  $PX(\text{Mod}(\mathbb{F}))$  from *asymetric linking periods*:

- Define  $\text{lk}(A, B)$  as sum cross-ratio of fixed points over double cosets.
- Show basis of  $C_A$  for classes of pseudo-Anosov  $A$  modulo powers.
- Show  $C_A$  are extremizers in Bavard duality.

- 1 Conjugacy classes of the modular group
- 2 The topological meaning of the Rademacher cocycle
- 3 Pseudocharacter of the modular group from Brooks cocycles
- 4 Schauder basis of pseudocharacters from linking numbers
- 5 Bibliography

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Moral of the story...

*So many mysteries are concealed within a simple trefoil !*



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Thank you for your attention and feel free to ask unbounded questions.