

## RATIONALITY IN MAP AND HYPERMAP ENUMERATION BY GENUS

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ABSTRACT. Generating functions for a fixed genus map and hypermap enumeration become rational after a simple explicit change of variables. Their numerators are polynomials with integral coefficients that obey a differential recursion, and the denominators are products of powers of explicit linear functions.

### §1. INTRODUCTION

By a *map* or a *ribbon graph* we understand a finite connected graph with prescribed cyclic orders of half-edges at each vertex. It also can be realized as the 1-skeleton of a polygonal partition of a closed orientable surface. The genus  $g$  of a map (ribbon graph) satisfies the Euler formula

$$2 - 2g = \#v - \#e + \#f,$$

where  $\#v, \#e, \#f$  are the numbers of vertices, edges and faces of the map respectively. By a *hypermap* we understand a bicolored map, i.e., a map whose faces are properly colored in two colors (say, white and black) so that no adjacent faces have the same color. The dual graph to a hypermap is a bipartite ribbon graph, or *Grothendieck's "design d'enfant"*<sup>1</sup>.

We are interested in the weighted count of maps and hypermaps, where the weights are reciprocal to the orders of the corresponding automorphism groups. This is equivalent to counting *rooted* maps and hypermaps (i.e., those with a marked half-edge). The passage from the rooted count to the unrooted one is known, cf. [9, 10].

Denote by  $\tilde{c}_{g,n}$  (respectively,  $c_{g,n}$ ) the number of rooted maps (respectively, hypermaps) of genus  $g$  with  $n$  edges (darts), and consider the genus  $g$  generating functions

$$(1) \quad \tilde{C}_g(s) = \sum_{n=2g}^{\infty} \tilde{c}_{g,n} s^n \quad g \geq 0,$$

$$(2) \quad C_g(s) = \sum_{n=2g+1}^{\infty} c_{g,n} s^n \quad g \geq 0.$$

The classical problem that goes back to Tutte [11] (or even earlier) is to compute the numbers  $c_{g,n}$  and  $\tilde{c}_{g,n}$ . Effective algorithms for computing these numbers first appeared

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<sup>1</sup>As was observed by Grothendieck, the absolute Galois group  $\text{Gal}(\bar{\mathbb{Q}}/\mathbb{Q})$  naturally acts on dessins (hypermaps); we refer the reader to [8] for the details.

in [13] (for maps) and in [14] (for hypermaps)<sup>2</sup>. Recursions for the numbers  $c_{g,n}$  and  $\tilde{c}_{g,n}$ , and differential equations for the generating functions  $C_g(s)$  and  $\tilde{C}_g(s)$  were first obtained in [7] (cf. also [2] for an alternative approach to map enumeration).

In this note we show that the generating functions  $C_g(s)$  and  $\tilde{C}_g(s)$  become rational functions after simple explicit changes of the variable  $s$ . Their numerators are then polynomials with integer coefficients that obey a differential recursion, and the denominators are products of powers of explicit linear functions.

§2. MAIN RESULTS

We start with the case of hypermaps (Grothendieck’s dessins d’enfants).

**Theorem 1.** *Under the substitution  $s = t(1 - 2t)$  we have*

$$\begin{aligned}
 (3) \quad C_0(t(1 - 2t)) &= \frac{t(1 - 3t)}{(1 - 2t)^2}, \\
 C_1(t(1 - 2t)) &= \frac{t^3}{(1 - t)(1 - 4t)^2}, \\
 C_g(t(1 - 2t)) &= \frac{P_g(t)}{(1 - t)^{4g-3}(1 - 4t)^{5g-3}}, \quad g \geq 2,
 \end{aligned}$$

where  $P_g(t) = \sum_{i=2g+1}^{9g-7} p_{g,i} t^i$  is a polynomial with integral coefficients and  $p_{g,2g+1} = \frac{(2g)!}{g+1}$ . The polynomials  $P_g(t)$  can be computed recursively by formula (7).

*Remark 1.* The polynomials  $P_g(t)$  for  $g = 2, 3$  are:

$$\begin{aligned}
 P_2(t) &= 8t^5 - 92t^6 + 464t^7 - 1316t^8 + 2204t^9 - 2048t^{10} + 816t^{11}, \\
 P_3(t) &= 180t^7 - 3648t^8 + 35424t^9 - 218944t^{10} + 958160t^{11} - 3102528t^{12} \\
 &\quad + 7503664t^{13} - 13310768t^{14} + 16365216t^{15} - 11823680t^{16} + 117916t^{17} \\
 &\quad + 6614784t^{18} - 6008320t^{19} + 1823744t^{20}.
 \end{aligned}$$

In principle, they can be computed for much larger values of  $g$ .

*Remark 2.* A similar result was independently obtained in [3] by a different (more complicated) method.

*Proof.* To prove the theorem, we recall a specialization of the Kadomtsev–Petviashvili (KP) equation for the hypermap count derived in [7]:<sup>3</sup>

$$(4) \quad (sC_g)' = 3(2s^2C'_g + sC_g) + 3s^3C'_g + s^3(s(sC_{g-1})')'' + s^3 \sum_{i=0}^g (4C_i + 6sC'_i)C'_{g-i} + 2s\delta_{g,0},$$

where the prime ' stands for the derivative  $\frac{d}{ds}$ . This equation is just the differential form of the recursion (11) in [7] for  $t = u = v = 1$ :

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<sup>2</sup>An effective enumeration of 1-vertex maps was obtained in [4], and of 1-vertex hypermaps in [5] and, independently, in [1]. Enumeration of 1-vertex maps (or genus  $g$  gluings of a  $2n$ -gon) was a crucial point in computing the Euler characteristic of the moduli space of algebraic curves in [4].

<sup>3</sup>The validity of the equations of KP hierarchy and other integrable equations of mathematical physics for generating functions is a common feature of a wide range of problems of enumerative combinatorics. In [6] a survey of a collection of such problems was given, including, among others, the enumeration of maps and hypermaps.

$$(n+1)c_{g,n} = 3(2n-1)c_{g,n-1} + (n-2)c_{g,n-2} + (n-1)^2(n-2)c_{g-1,n-2} + \sum_{i=0}^g \sum_{j=1}^{n-3} (4+6j)(n-2-j)c_{i,j}c_{g-i,n-2-j}.$$

For  $g \geq 1$  we can further rewrite (4) as the differential recursion

$$(5) \quad (s-6s^2-3s^3-4s^3C_0-12s^4C'_0)C'_g + (1-3s-4s^3C'_0)C_g = s^5C'''_{g-1} + 5s^4C''_{g-1} + 4s^3C'_{g-1} + s^3 \sum_{i=1}^{g-1} (4C_i + 6sC'_i)C'_{g-i}.$$

For  $g = 0$  we get an ordinary differential equation that can be solved explicitly:

$$C_0(s) = \frac{-1 + 12s - 24s^2 + (1 - 8s)^{3/2}}{32s^2}.$$

It is easily seen that the substitution  $s = t(1 - 2t)$  considerably simplifies  $C_0$  and makes it a rational function, namely

$$C_0(t(1 - 2t)) = \frac{t(1 - 3t)}{(1 - 2t)^2}$$

(cf. [12]). Substituting  $s = t(1 - 2t)$  in (5), we get

$$(6) \quad t(1-t)^2(1-2t)\dot{C}_g + (1-t)(1-2t+4t^2)C_g = t^3(1-2t)^3 \left( D_t C_{g-1} + \frac{1}{(1-4t)^2} \sum_{i=1}^{g-1} (4(1-4t)C_i + 6t(1-2t)\dot{C}_i)\dot{C}_{g-i} \right),$$

where  $\dot{C}_g = \frac{d}{dt}C_g(t(1 - 2t))$  and

$$D_t = \frac{t^2(1-2t)^2}{(1-4t)^3} \cdot \frac{d^3}{dt^3} + \frac{t(1-2t)(5-28t+56t^2)}{(1-4t)^4} \cdot \frac{d^2}{dt^2} + \frac{4(1-11t+58t^2-144t^3+144t^4)}{(1-4t)^5} \cdot \frac{d}{dt}.$$

Assuming that  $C_0, \dots, C_{g-1}$  are known, we can think of (6) as an ODE for  $C_g$ . The integrating factor for this equation is  $\frac{1-t}{(1-2t)^3}$ , so that we get from (6)

$$\frac{d}{dt} \left( \frac{t(1-t)^3}{(1-2t)^2} C_g \right) = t^3(1-t) \left( D_t C_{g-1} + \frac{1}{(1-4t)^2} \sum_{i=1}^{g-1} (4(1-4t)C_i + 6t(1-2t)\dot{C}_i)\dot{C}_{g-i} \right),$$

or, equivalently,

$$(7) \quad C_g(t(1 - 2t)) = \frac{(1-2t)^2}{t(1-t)^3} \int t^3(1-t) \left( D_t C_{g-1} + \frac{1}{(1-4t)^2} \sum_{i=1}^{g-1} (4(1-4t)C_i + 6t(1-2t)\dot{C}_i)\dot{C}_{g-i} \right) dt.$$

Since by definition  $C_g(0) = 0$  for all  $g \geq 0$ , equation (7) determines  $C_g$  uniquely in terms of  $C_0, \dots, C_{g-1}$ . In particular, this equation immediately yields

$$C_1(t(1 - 2t)) = \frac{t^3}{(1-t)(1-4t)^2},$$

$$C_2(t(1 - 2t)) = \frac{8t^5 - 92t^6 + 464t^7 - 1316t^8 + 2204t^9 - 2048t^{10} + 816t^{11}}{(1-t)^5(1-4t)^7}.$$

Let us show that  $C_g(t(1-2t))$  has the form (3) for any  $g \geq 3$ . We will use the elementary formula

$$(8) \quad \frac{d}{dt} \left( \frac{t^\alpha}{(1-t)^\beta(1-4t)^\gamma} \right) = \frac{\alpha t^{\alpha-1} + (-5\alpha + \beta + 4\gamma)t^\alpha + 4(\alpha - \beta - \gamma)t^{\alpha+1}}{(1-t)^{\beta+1}(1-4t)^{\gamma+1}}.$$

Then we have

$$(9) \quad D_t C_{g-1} = \frac{(2g-1)(2g)^2 p_{g-1,2g-1} t^{2g-2} + \dots - 256 p_{g-1,9g-16} t^{9g-9}}{(1-t)^{4g-4}(1-4t)^{5g-2}}$$

and

$$(10) \quad \frac{1}{(1-4t)^2} \sum_{i=1}^{g-1} (4(1-4t)C_i + 6t(1-2t)\dot{C}_i)\dot{C}_{g-i} = \frac{r_g t^{2g+1} + \dots + 256 p_{g-1,9g-16} t^{9g-9}}{(1-t)^{4g-4}(1-4t)^{5g-2}},$$

where  $r_g$  is some constant. Notice that the top degree term in the numerator on the right-hand side of (10) comes entirely from the product  $C_1 \dot{C}_{g-1}$ . Multiplying both sides of (9) and (10) by  $t^3(1-t)$  and taking their sum, we see that the integrand in (7) has the form

$$(11) \quad \frac{Q_g(t)}{(1-t)^{4g-5}(1-4t)^{5g-2}},$$

where  $Q_g(t) = \sum_{i=2g+1}^{9g-7} q_{g,i} t^i$  is a polynomial with  $q_{g,2g+1} = (2g-1)(2g)^2 p_{g-1,2g-1}$ . Therefore, we can rewrite (7) as

$$(12) \quad C_g(t(1-2t)) = \frac{(1-2t)^2}{t(1-t)^3} \int \frac{Q_g(t)}{(1-t)^{4g-5}(1-4t)^{5g-2}} dt.$$

To perform integration in (12), we decompose the integrand in the sum

$$(13) \quad \frac{Q_g(t)}{(1-t)^{4g-5}(1-4t)^{5g-2}} = a + \sum_{i=2}^{4g-5} \frac{a_i}{(1-t)^i} + \sum_{j=2}^{5g-2} \frac{b_j}{(1-4t)^j}.$$

Note that no terms of the form  $\frac{a_1}{1-t}$  or  $\frac{b_1}{1-4t}$  can appear on the right hand side of (13) because the Taylor series expansion of the left-hand side of (12) has integral coefficients<sup>4</sup>. Integrating, we obtain

$$(14) \quad \int \frac{Q_g(t)}{(1-t)^{4g-5}(1-4t)^{5g-2}} dt = at + b + \sum_{i=1}^{4g-6} \frac{a_{i+1}}{i} \cdot \frac{1}{(1-t)^i} + \sum_{j=1}^{5g-3} \frac{b_{j+1}}{4j} \cdot \frac{1}{(1-4t)^j},$$

where the condition  $C_g(0) = 0$  implies

$$b = - \sum_{i=1}^{4g-6} \frac{a_i}{i} - \sum_{j=2}^{5g-3} \frac{b_{j+1}}{4j}.$$

Multiplying the right-hand side of (14) by  $(1-t)^{4g-6}(1-4t)^{5g-3}$ , we get a polynomial of the form  $R_g(t) = \sum_{i=2g+2}^{9g-8} r_{g,i} t^i$ . To complete the proof, we put  $P_g(t) = \frac{(1-2t)^2}{t} R_g(t)$  and notice that  $p_{g,2g+1} = \frac{(2g-1)(2g)^2}{2g+2} p_{g-1,2g-1}$ . Moreover, we see that  $t = 1/2$  is a root of  $P_g(t)$  of multiplicity 2 provided  $g \geq 2$ .<sup>5</sup>  $\square$

Now we continue with map enumeration.

<sup>4</sup>We owe this observation to F. Petrov.

<sup>5</sup>Numerically, we also have  $p_{g,9g-7} \neq 0$ ,  $P_g(1) \neq 0$ ,  $P_g(1/4) \neq 0$ . In principle, this can be verified along the same lines as above, but computations become too cumbersome to reproduce them here.

**Theorem 2.** *Under the substitution  $s = t(1 - 3t)$  we have*

$$(15) \quad \begin{aligned} \tilde{C}_0(t(1 - 3t)) &= \frac{1 - 4t}{(1 - 3t)^2}, \\ \tilde{C}_1(t(1 - 3t)) &= \frac{t^2}{(1 - 2t)(1 - 6t)^2}, \\ \tilde{C}_g(t(1 - 3t)) &= \frac{\tilde{P}_g(t)}{(1 - 2t)^{3g-2}(1 - 6t)^{5g-3}}, \quad g \geq 2, \end{aligned}$$

where  $\tilde{P}_g(t) = \sum_{i=2g}^{8g-6} \tilde{p}_{g,i} t^i$  with  $\tilde{p}_{g,2g} = \frac{(4g-1)!!}{2g+1}$ . The polynomials  $\tilde{P}_g(t)$  can be computed recursively by (20).

*Remark 3.* The polynomials  $\tilde{P}_g(t)$  for  $g = 2, 3$  are:

$$\begin{aligned} \tilde{P}_2(t) &= 21t^4 - 336t^5 + 2334t^6 - 9108t^7 + 21177t^8 - 27756t^9 + 15876t^{10}, \\ \tilde{P}_3(t) &= 1485t^6 - 41184t^7 + 539073t^8 - 4483458t^9 + 26893989t^{10} - 124232004t^{11} \\ &\quad + 453861279t^{12} - 1307353122t^{13} + 2897271774t^{14} - 4737605112t^{15} \\ &\quad + 5355443952t^{16} - 3723895296t^{17} + 1197496224t^{18}. \end{aligned}$$

Like in the case of hypermaps, they can be computed for much larger values of  $g$ .

*Proof.* The proof of Theorem 2 is quite similar to that of Theorem 1, so we shall only outline its main steps. We recall a specialization of the Kadomtsev–Petviashvili (KP) equation for the map count, derived in [7]:

$$(16) \quad \begin{aligned} (s\tilde{C}_g)' &= 4(2s^2\tilde{C}'_g + s\tilde{C}_g) + 2s^3(2s(s\tilde{C}_{g-1})' + s\tilde{C})'' + s^2(2s(s\tilde{C}_{g-1})' + s\tilde{C})' \\ &\quad + 3s^2 \sum_{i=0}^g (\tilde{C}_i + 2s\tilde{C}'_i)(\tilde{C}_{g-i} + 2s\tilde{C}'_{g-i}) + \delta_{g,0}, \end{aligned}$$

where the prime  $'$  stands for the derivative  $\frac{d}{ds}$ . This equation is merely a differential form of the recursion (16) in [7] for  $t = u = 1$ :

$$(17) \quad \begin{aligned} (n + 1)\tilde{c}_{g,n} &= 4(2n - 1)\tilde{c}_{g,n-1} + (2n - 1)(2n - 3)(n - 1)\tilde{c}_{g-1,n-2} \\ &\quad + 3 \sum_{i=0}^g \sum_{j=0}^{n-2} (2j + 1)(2(n - 2 - j) + 1)\tilde{c}_{i,j}\tilde{c}_{g-i,n-2-j}. \end{aligned}$$

For  $g \geq 1$ , we can further rewrite formula (16) as the differential recursion

$$(18) \quad \begin{aligned} (s - 8s^2 - 12s^3\tilde{C}_0 - 24s^4\tilde{C}'_0)\tilde{C}'_g &+ (1 - 4s - 6s^2\tilde{C}_0 - 12s^3\tilde{C}'_0)\tilde{C}_g \\ &= 4s^5\tilde{C}'''_{g-1} + 24s^4\tilde{C}''_{g-1} + 27s^3\tilde{C}'_{g-1} + 3s^2\tilde{C}_{g-1} + 3s^2 \sum_{i=0}^g (\tilde{C}_i + 2s\tilde{C}'_i)(\tilde{C}_{g-i} + 2s\tilde{C}'_{g-i}). \end{aligned}$$

For  $g = 0$  we get an ordinary differential equation that can be solved explicitly:

$$\tilde{C}_0(s) = \frac{-1 + 18s + (1 - 12s)^{3/2}}{54s^2}.$$

It is easily seen that the substitution  $s = t(1 - 3t)$  simplifies  $\tilde{C}_0$  considerably and makes it a rational function, namely,

$$\tilde{C}_0(t(1 - 3t)) = \frac{1 - 4t}{(1 - 3t)^2}$$

(cf. [11]). Substituting  $s = t(1 - 3t)$  in (18), we get

$$(19) \quad \begin{aligned} & t(1-2t)(1-3t)\dot{\tilde{C}}_g + (1-4t+6t^2)\tilde{C}_g \\ &= t^2(1-3t)^2 \left( \tilde{D}_t \tilde{C}_{g-1} + 3 \sum_{i=1}^{g-1} \left( \tilde{C}_i + \frac{t(1-3t)}{1-6t} \dot{\tilde{C}}_i \right) \left( \tilde{C}_{g-i} + \frac{t(1-3t)}{1-6t} \dot{\tilde{C}}_{g-i} \right) \right), \end{aligned}$$

where  $\dot{\tilde{C}}_g = \frac{d}{dt} \tilde{C}_g(t(1-3t))$  and

$$\begin{aligned} \tilde{D}_t &= \frac{4t^3(1-3t)^3}{(1-6t)^3} \cdot \frac{d^3}{dt^3} + \frac{24t^2(1-3t)^2(1-9t+27t^2)}{(1-6t)^4} \cdot \frac{d^2}{dt^2} \\ &\quad + \frac{9t(1-3t)(3-56t+456t^2-1728t^3+2592t^4)}{(1-6t)^5} \cdot \frac{d}{dt} + 3. \end{aligned}$$

Assuming that  $\tilde{C}_0, \dots, \tilde{C}_{g-1}$  are known, we can think of (19) as an ODE for  $\tilde{C}_g$ . The integrating factor for this equation is  $\frac{t(1-2t)}{1-3t}$ , so that from (19) we get

$$(20) \quad \begin{aligned} & \tilde{C}_g(t(1-3t)) \\ &= \frac{1-3t}{t(1-2t)} \int t^2 \left( \tilde{D}_t \tilde{C}_{g-1} + 3 \sum_{i=1}^{g-1} \left( \tilde{C}_i + \frac{t(1-3t)}{1-6t} \dot{\tilde{C}}_i \right) \left( \tilde{C}_{g-i} + \frac{t(1-3t)}{1-6t} \dot{\tilde{C}}_{g-i} \right) \right) dt. \end{aligned}$$

Since by definition  $\tilde{C}_g(0) = 0$  for all  $g \geq 1$ , formula (20) determines  $\tilde{C}_g$  uniquely in terms of  $\tilde{C}_0, \dots, \tilde{C}_{g-1}$ . In particular, this formula immediately yields

$$\tilde{C}_1(t(1-3t)) = \frac{t^2}{(1-2t)(1-6t)^2}.$$

We show that  $\tilde{C}_g(t(1-3t))$  has the form (15) for any  $g \geq 2$ . Using an analog of (8), we deduce, after some cancellations, that the integrand in (20) has the form

$$(21) \quad \frac{\tilde{Q}_g(t)}{(1-2t)^{3g-2}(1-6t)^{5g-2}},$$

where  $\tilde{Q}_g(t) = \sum_{i=2g}^{8g-6} \tilde{q}_{g,i} t^i$  is a polynomial with  $\tilde{q}_{g,2g} = (2g-1)(4g-1)(4g-3) p_{g-1,2g-2}$ . It can be further decomposed into the sum

$$(22) \quad \frac{\tilde{Q}_g(t)}{(1-2t)^{3g-2}(1-6t)^{5g-2}} = \sum_{i=2}^{3g-2} \frac{\tilde{a}_i}{(1-2t)^i} + \sum_{j=2}^{5g-2} \frac{\tilde{b}_j}{(1-6t)^j}.$$

Integrating it, we obtain

$$(23) \quad \int \frac{\tilde{Q}_g(t)}{(1-2t)^{3g-2}(1-6t)^{5g-2}} dt = \tilde{b} + \sum_{i=1}^{3g-3} \frac{\tilde{a}_{i+1}}{2i} \cdot \frac{1}{(1-2t)^i} + \sum_{j=2}^{5g-3} \frac{\tilde{b}_{j+1}}{6j} \cdot \frac{1}{(1-6t)^j},$$

where the condition  $\tilde{C}_g(0) = 0$  implies

$$\tilde{b} = - \sum_{i=1}^{3g-3} \frac{\tilde{a}_{i+1}}{2i} - \sum_{j=1}^{5g-3} \frac{\tilde{b}_{j+1}}{6j}.$$

Multiplying the right-hand side of (23) by  $(1-2t)^{3g-3}(1-6t)^{5g-3}$ , we get a polynomial of the form  $\tilde{R}_g(t) = \sum_{i=2g+1}^{8g-6} \tilde{r}_{g,i} t^i$ . To complete the proof, we put  $\tilde{P}_g(t) = \frac{1-3t}{t} \tilde{R}_g(t)$  and notice that  $\tilde{p}_{g,2g} = \frac{(2g-1)(4g-1)(4g-3)}{2g+1} \tilde{p}_{g-1,2g-2}$ . Moreover, we see that  $t = 1/3$  is a root of  $\tilde{P}_g(t)$ .<sup>6</sup>  $\square$

<sup>6</sup>Numerically, we also have  $\tilde{p}_{g,8g-6} \neq 0$ ,  $\tilde{P}_g(1/2) \neq 0$ ,  $\tilde{P}_g(1/6) \neq 0$ .

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