



Dynamical invariants and intersection theory on the flex and gothic loci

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Abstract

The flex locus parameterizes plane cubics with three collinear cocritical points under a projection, and the gothic locus arises from quadratic differentials with zeros at a fiber of the projection and with poles at the cocritical points. The flex and gothic loci provide the first example of a primitive, totally geodesic subvariety of moduli space and new $SL_2(\mathbb{R})$ -invariant varieties in Teichmüller dynamics, as discovered by McMullen–Mukamel–Wright. In this paper we determine the divisor class of the flex locus as well as various tautological intersection numbers on the gothic locus. For the case of the gothic locus our result confirms numerically a conjecture of Chen–Möller–Sauvaget about computing sums of Lyapunov exponents for $SL_2(\mathbb{R})$ -invariant varieties via intersection theory.

Keywords Plane cubics · Quadratic differentials · $SL_2(\mathbb{R})$ -invariant varieties · Lyapunov exponents

Mathematics Subject Classification 14H10 · 14H15 · 32G15

1 Introduction

Let $\mathcal{F} \subset \mathcal{M}_{1,3}$ be the flex locus parameterizing elliptic curves with three marked points (E, p_1, p_2, p_3) where E admits a plane cubic model with a projection π from a point $s \in \mathbb{P}^2$ (not in E) such that p_1, p_2, p_3 are three collinear cocritical points of π . Here p_i being a cocritical point means the corresponding fiber of π is of type $p_i + 2q_i$ where q_i is a critical point, i.e. π is ramified at q_i . Let $\mathcal{QF} \subset \mathcal{Q}_{1,3}$ be the locus of quadratic

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differentials (E, q) over \mathcal{F} such that $\operatorname{div}(q) = z_1 + z_2 + z_3 - p_1 - p_2 - p_3$ where $z_1 + z_2 + z_3$ is a fiber of π . Lifting via the canonical double cover identifies $\mathcal{QF} \subset \mathcal{Q}_{1,3}$ with the gothic locus $\Omega\mathcal{G} \subset \Omega\mathcal{M}_4(2^3, 0^3)$ of abelian differentials on curves of genus four where the preimage of each z_i is a double zero and the preimage of each p_i is an ordinary point (i.e. a zero of order zero). Since \mathcal{QF} and $\Omega\mathcal{G}$ are isomorphic away from the locus where some of the z_i collide (see [9, Theorem 4.1]), we abuse notation and also refer to \mathcal{QF} as the gothic locus.

The flex and gothic loci were discovered by McMullen–Mukamel–Wright [9]. They are not only interesting objects in classical algebraic geometry, but they also possess remarkable properties from the viewpoint of Teichmüller dynamics. The flex locus gives the first example of a primitive, totally geodesic subvariety of moduli space, and the gothic locus provides new $\operatorname{SL}_2(\mathbb{R})$ -invariant varieties. In this paper we focus on another fascinating interplay by using intersection theory to study dynamical invariants on these loci.

Let $\overline{\mathcal{F}} \subset \overline{\mathcal{M}}_{1,3}$ be the closure of \mathcal{F} in the Deligne–Mumford compactification. Our first result determines the divisor class of $\overline{\mathcal{F}}$ in terms of the standard generators of $\operatorname{Pic}_{\mathbb{Q}}(\overline{\mathcal{M}}_{1,3})$.

Theorem 1.1 *The divisor class of $\overline{\mathcal{F}}$ in $\overline{\mathcal{M}}_{1,3}$ is*

$$\overline{\mathcal{F}} = \frac{4}{3} \delta_{\text{irr}} + 4(\delta_{0;\{1,2\}} + \delta_{0;\{1,3\}} + \delta_{0;\{2,3\}}) + 4\delta_{0;\{1,2,3\}}. \quad (1)$$

Let $\overline{\mathcal{Q}}_{1,3}$ be the (twisted) quadratic Hodge bundle on $\overline{\mathcal{M}}_{1,3}$ whose fiber over (E, p_1, p_2, p_3) is $H^0(E, K^{\otimes 2}(p_1 + p_2 + p_3))$, i.e. the space of quadratic differentials q with at worst simple poles at the p_i , where K is the dualizing line bundle of the stable curve E . Denote by $\overline{\mathcal{QF}}$ the closure of the gothic locus \mathcal{QF} in $\overline{\mathcal{Q}}_{1,3}$. We use $\mathbb{P}\overline{\mathcal{QF}} \subset \mathbb{P}\overline{\mathcal{Q}}_{1,3}$ to denote their projectivizations.

Let $\mathcal{O}(-1)$ be the tautological bundle on $\mathbb{P}\overline{\mathcal{Q}}_{1,3}$ whose fiber over $(E, [q], p_1, p_2, p_3)$ is spanned by q , and let η be the first Chern class of $\mathcal{O}(-1)$. In [5, Conjecture 4.3] there was a conjectural formula about the sum of Lyapunov exponents for an arbitrary $\operatorname{SL}_2(\mathbb{R})$ -invariant variety in terms of intersection numbers of divisor classes η , λ_1 , and ψ_i , where λ_1 is the first Chern class of the (ordinary) Hodge bundle and ψ_i is the cotangent line bundle class associated to the i -th marked point. For the gothic locus as an $\operatorname{SL}_2(\mathbb{R})$ -invariant variety, all of its periods are absolute, hence no ψ -classes are involved. In this case the conjecture reduces to

$$L^+(\mathcal{QF}) = 2 \frac{\int_{\mathbb{P}\overline{\mathcal{QF}}} \eta^2 \lambda_1}{\int_{\mathbb{P}\overline{\mathcal{QF}}} \eta^3}.$$

Note that [5, Conjecture 4.3] was originally stated for intersection numbers in the strata of abelian differentials. In our context it converts to the above formulation by lifting $\mathbb{P}\overline{\mathcal{QF}}$ into the corresponding stratum of abelian differentials via the canonical double cover. In particular, the positive sign here is because we work with $\mathcal{O}(-1)$ instead of its dual bundle in [5]. Moreover, the extra factor 2 is due to that the quadratic tautological

bundle $\mathcal{O}(-1)$ lifts to the abelian tautological bundle $\mathcal{O}(-2)$ (see [5, Conjecture 1.9] for a similar conversion).

Our next result determines the above intersection numbers.

Theorem 1.2 *We have $\int_{\mathbb{P}\mathcal{Q}\overline{\mathcal{F}}} \eta^2 \lambda_1 = -1/2$, $\int_{\mathbb{P}\mathcal{Q}\overline{\mathcal{F}}} \eta^3 = -13/6$, and*

$$2 \frac{\int_{\mathbb{P}\mathcal{Q}\overline{\mathcal{F}}} \eta^2 \lambda_1}{\int_{\mathbb{P}\mathcal{Q}\overline{\mathcal{F}}} \eta^3} = \frac{6}{13}. \quad (2)$$

We remark that the value $6/13$ matches with computer experiments by using square-tiled surfaces of large degree d in the gothic locus (shared with the author by Möller). For instance for $d = 188$, one approximation gives $0.46155 \dots$ while $6/13 \approx 0.46153 \dots$. Therefore, our result provides a numerical confirmation of [5, Conjecture 4.3] for the gothic locus. Moreover, the Masur–Veech volume of the gothic locus was computed by Torres-Teigell [10] via counting square-tiled surfaces. Note that the denominator 13 in (2) also appears in [10, Theorem 1.1]. This can be explained by the fact that the top intersection number of η on an $\mathrm{SL}_2(\mathbb{R})$ -invariant variety with no REL deformation corresponds to the Masur–Veech volume (up to a volume normalization factor, see [5, Section 2] and [8, Section 3]).

For recent developments about computing invariants in Teichmüller dynamics via intersection theory, such as Masur–Veech volumes and (area) Siegel–Veech constants, see [5, 6] as well as the references therein. Several other special $\mathrm{SL}_2(\mathbb{R})$ -invariant varieties analogous to the gothic locus were discovered by Eskin–McMullen–Mukamel–Wright [7] which we plan to study in future work.

2 Divisor class of the flex locus

We first study the intersection of the flex locus $\overline{\mathcal{F}}$ with the boundary divisors of $\overline{\mathcal{M}}_{1,3}$. In order to do that, we interpret the construction of the flex locus via two (admissible) covers as follows. For $(E, p_1, p_2, p_3) \in \overline{\mathcal{F}}$, there exist two (admissible) covers π and ϕ of degree three to rational curves, whose domain curves (with marked points p_i and q_j) have stable model (E, p_1, p_2, p_3) after forgetting the q_j , such that each $p_i + 2q_i$ is a fiber of π and such that $p_1 + p_2 + p_3$ and $q_1 + q_2 + q_3$ are fibers of ϕ , where the two g_3^1 giving π and ϕ are linearly equivalent, i.e. they provide a g_3^2 that realizes E as a plane cubic with the desired configuration. We remark that the map π follows from the original definition of the flex locus, while the other map ϕ together with its properties was revealed in [9, Sections 2 and 3].

Intersection of $\overline{\mathcal{F}}$ with $\Delta_{0;\{1,2,3\}}$

Let $\Delta_{0;\{1,2,3\}}$ be the boundary divisor of $\overline{\mathcal{M}}_{1,3}$ whose general element parameterizes an elliptic curve E union a rational component R at a node r where the three marked points are contained in R . Using the admissible cover description, one can easily check that a general element in $\overline{\mathcal{F}} \cap \Delta_{0;\{1,2,3\}}$ has two types.

- (I) One case is that E is determined as a double cover of R branched at p_1, p_2, p_3 and the node r . In this case, the (implicitly marked points) q_1, q_2, q_3 are the ramification points, i.e. $2q_i \sim 2r$ in E . We have $3r \sim p_1 + p_2 + p_3 \sim q_1 + q_2 + q_3 \sim p_i + 2q_i$, where $p_i = r$ if we blow down R . In other words, this case occurs when the three cocritical points collide at a flex point in the plane cubic model of E .
- (II) Alternatively, q_1, q_2, q_3 can be contained in R . Then R admits a triple cover of \mathbb{P}^1 such that $p_1 + 2q_1, p_2 + 2q_2, p_3 + 2q_3$ and $2r + t$ (for some t in R) belong to the fibers of a g_3^1 on R , where E admits a double cover induced by $2r$ together with a \mathbb{P}^1 attached to R at t to form the other part of the admissible cover. The other g_3^1 will also have $2r$ contained in a fiber. In this case the plane cubic model contracts E and maps R to a singular plane cubic with a cusp at r . To see this explicitly, consider a cuspidal model of [9, (2.10)] by taking $b(x) = 3$ and $c(x) = -4x^3$ therein. Then one can check that the cocritical line away from the cusp (the one denoted by L'_2 in [9, (2.11)]) cuts out three points p_1, p_2, p_3 that together with the cusp r have two distinct cross-ratios in $R \cong \mathbb{P}^1$. In other words, fixing $(p_1, p_2, p_3) = (0, 1, \infty)$ in R , let c be the number of such special positions of r in R where the above configuration holds, and then $c = 2$. Later we will also provide a sanity check for $c = 2$ by using test curves.

To rule out the other possibilities, consider e.g. the case that E contains q_1, q_2 and R contains q_3 . Since $q_1 + q_2 + q_3$ is in one fiber of ϕ , E and R map to the same target \mathbb{P}^1 -component with restricted ϕ -degree two and one, respectively. It follows that the fiber of ϕ containing p_3 cannot contain p_1, p_2 . The remaining distributions of the q_i can be analyzed similarly.

Intersection of $\overline{\mathcal{F}}$ with $\Delta_{0;\{i,j\}}$

Let $\Delta_{0;\{i,j\}}$ be the boundary divisor of $\overline{\mathcal{M}}_{1,3}$ whose general element parameterizes an elliptic curve E union a rational component R at a node r such that the marked points p_i and p_j are contained in R and the remaining one is contained in E . One checks that a general element in $\overline{\mathcal{F}} \cap \Delta_{0;\{i,j\}}$ parameterizes a one-marked irreducible nodal rational curve N (as a degeneration of E) union R at a node r . More precisely, suppose N contains p_1 and R contains p_2, p_3 for $\{i, j\} = \{2, 3\}$. The plane cubic model contracts R so that $p_2 = p_3 = r$. In this case the tangent line to N at r goes through p_1 , the projection of N from p_1 has another tangent line at q_1 , and q_2, q_3 coincide with the non-separating node n of N . The projection center s is the intersection of the lines $\overline{p_1 q_1}$ and $\overline{n r}$.

To rule out the other possibilities, consider e.g. the case that E is smooth and contains p_1, q_1, q_2, q_3 , and R contains p_2, p_3 . Since $p_1 + 2q_1$ gives a fiber of π , the degree of π restricted to E is three. Then the fiber of π containing $2q_i$ must contain another point in E which cannot be p_i in R for $i = 2, 3$. The remaining configurations can be analyzed similarly.

Test curves

Let Δ_{irr} be the boundary divisor of $\overline{\mathcal{M}}_{1,3}$ whose general element parameterizes an irreducible rational nodal curve. We use δ_{\bullet} to denote the divisor class of each Δ_{\bullet} . The rational Picard group of $\overline{\mathcal{M}}_{1,3}$ is generated by δ_{irr} , $\delta_{0;\{i,j\}}$, and $\delta_{0;\{1,2,3\}}$. Suppose the divisor class of $\overline{\mathcal{F}}$ in $\overline{\mathcal{M}}_{1,3}$ is

$$\overline{\mathcal{F}} = d_1 \delta_{\text{irr}} + d_2 (\delta_{0;\{1,2\}} + \delta_{0;\{1,3\}} + \delta_{0;\{2,3\}}) + d_3 \delta_{0;\{1,2,3\}}.$$

Based on the above descriptions, we will use a number of test curves to determine the coefficients d_i and provide sanity checks.

- (i) Take the family B_1 of a rational curve R union a pencil of plane cubics at a node r where R contains p_1, p_2, p_3 in general position. Then we have

$$\begin{aligned} B_1 \cdot \delta_{\text{irr}} &= 12, \\ B_1 \cdot \delta_{0;\{i,j\}} &= 0, \\ B_1 \cdot \delta_{0;\{1,2,3\}} &= -1, \\ B_1 \cdot \overline{\mathcal{F}} &= 12, \\ 12d_1 - d_3 &= 12. \end{aligned}$$

The intersection number with $\overline{\mathcal{F}}$ is due to that the moduli of E is determined by the double cover ramified over the p_i and r (described as type (I) in the intersection of $\overline{\mathcal{F}}$ with $\Delta_{0;\{1,2,3\}}$) and a pencil of plane cubics mapping to $\overline{\mathcal{M}}_{1,1}$ has degree 12.

- (ii) Take the family B_2 by attaching a pencil of plane cubics to a rational curve R at a node r where R contains p_2, p_3 and we choose a base point of the pencil to be p_1 . Then we have

$$\begin{aligned} B_2 \cdot \delta_{\text{irr}} &= 12, \\ B_2 \cdot \delta_{0;\{2,3\}} &= -1, \\ B_2 \cdot \delta_{0;\{1,2,3\}} &= B_3 \cdot \delta_{0;\{1,2\}} = B_3 \cdot \delta_{0;\{1,3\}} = 0, \\ B_2 \cdot \overline{\mathcal{F}} &= 12, \\ 12d_1 - d_2 &= 12. \end{aligned}$$

The intersection number with $\overline{\mathcal{F}}$ comes from the 12 rational nodal curves parameterized in the pencil.

- (iii) Take the family B_3 arising from a general plane cubic E with a general marked point p_1 and a varying line L through p_1 that cuts out p_2, p_3 in E . In order to label p_2 and p_3 , we need to pass to a double cover, i.e. $B_3 \cong E$ is a double cover of \mathbb{P}^1 (parameterizing the varying lines through p_1). Then we have

$$B_3 \cdot \delta_{\text{irr}} = 0,$$

$$\begin{aligned}
B_3 \cdot \delta_{0;\{2,3\}} &= 4, \\
B_3 \cdot \delta_{0;\{1,2\}} &= B_4 \cdot \delta_{0;\{1,3\}} = 1, \\
B_3 \cdot \delta_{0;\{1,2,3\}} &= 0, \\
B_3 \cdot \overline{\mathcal{F}} &= 24, \\
6d_2 &= 24.
\end{aligned}$$

To see the intersection number with $\overline{\mathcal{F}}$, note that there are four cocritical lines through p_1 that can cut out $p_1 + 2q_1$ and the Hessian $H(E)$ of E has degree three (see [9, Sect. 2]). Hence each of the four cocritical lines meets $H(E)$ at three points, providing in total 12 choices for the projection center s . The additional factor 2 is due to the labeling of p_2 and p_3 .

Note that by now we can already determine the divisor class of $\overline{\mathcal{F}}$ as claimed in Theorem 1.1. Nevertheless, we will work out a few more test curves to do a sanity check as well as to determine the special value c appearing in the analysis for the intersection of $\overline{\mathcal{F}}$ with $\Delta_{0;\{1,2,3\}}$ of type (II).

- (iv) Take the family B_4 arising from a rational curve R attached to a general elliptic curve E at a node r where R contains $(p_1, p_2, p_3) = (0, 1, \infty)$ and r varies in R . Then we have

$$\begin{aligned}
B_4 \cdot \delta_{\text{irr}} &= 0, \\
B_4 \cdot \delta_{0;\{i,j\}} &= 1, \\
B_4 \cdot \delta_{0;\{1,2,3\}} &= -1, \\
B_4 \cdot \overline{\mathcal{F}} &= 6 + c, \\
3d_2 - d_3 &= 6 + c.
\end{aligned}$$

To see the intersection number with $\overline{\mathcal{F}}$, first note that the four branched points of the double cover from E to \mathbb{P}^1 induced by $2r$ has six distinct cross-ratios, which contributes 6 by the description of type (I) for the intersection of $\overline{\mathcal{F}}$ with $\Delta_{0;\{1,2,3\}}$. Moreover, when the varying node r meets the c special positions in the description of type (I) for the intersection of $\overline{\mathcal{F}}$ with $\Delta_{0;\{1,2,3\}}$, we obtain another contribution equal to c . Therefore, we conclude that $c = 2$ (using $d_2 = d_3 = 4$).

- (v) Take the family B_5 arising from a general plane cubic E with a flex point p_1 and a varying line L through p_1 that cuts out p_2, p_3 in E . Then we have

$$\begin{aligned}
B_5 \cdot \delta_{\text{irr}} &= 0, \\
B_5 \cdot \delta_{0;\{2,3\}} &= 3, \\
B_5 \cdot \delta_{0;\{1,2\}} &= B_5 \cdot \delta_{0;\{1,3\}} = 0, \\
B_5 \cdot \delta_{0;\{1,2,3\}} &= 1, \\
B_5 \cdot \overline{\mathcal{F}} &= 16, \\
3d_2 + d_3 &= 16.
\end{aligned}$$

Note that when p_2 and p_3 both coincide with p_1 , we obtain a rational component R union E at a node r such that $2r \sim 2p_1 \sim p_2 + p_3$ gives the same g_2^1 on R , whose elliptic partner (described as type (I) in the intersection of $\overline{\mathcal{F}}$ with $\Delta_{0;\{1,2,3\}}$) can be avoided by choosing a general E . To see the intersection number with $\overline{\mathcal{F}}$, note that the Hessian $H(E)$ meets E at the nine flexes including p_1 . Hence each of the three (non-flex) cocritical lines through p_1 meets $H(E)$ at two other points besides p_1 , providing six choices for the projection center s , and we also need to choose a labeling of p_2 and p_3 . The additional 4 is from the case when $q_1 = p_1$, i.e. the flex line through p_1 becomes a special cocritical line.

- (vi) Take the family B_6 by varying a line through a general point away from a general plane cubic E to cut out p_1, p_2, p_3 in E (after making a base change of degree six in order to label the p_i). Then we have

$$\begin{aligned} B_6 \cdot \delta_{\text{irr}} &= 0, \\ B_6 \cdot \delta_{0;\{i,j\}} &= 18, \\ B_6 \cdot \delta_{0;\{1,2,3\}} &= 0, \\ B_6 \cdot \overline{\mathcal{F}} &= 72, \\ 18d_2 &= 72. \end{aligned}$$

The intersection number with $\overline{\mathcal{F}}$ is due to the base change and the fact that the satellite Cayleyan parameterizing cocritical lines of E in the dual plane has degree 12 (see [9, Section 2]).

- (vii) Take the family B_7 by varying p_1 along a general elliptic curve E attached to a rational curve R containing p_2 and p_3 . Then we have

$$\begin{aligned} B_7 \cdot \delta_{\text{irr}} &= 0, \\ B_7 \cdot \delta_{0;\{2,3\}} &= -1, \\ B_7 \cdot \delta_{0;\{1,2\}} &= B_7 \cdot \delta_{0;\{1,3\}} = 0, \\ B_7 \cdot \delta_{0;\{1,2,3\}} &= 1, \\ B_7 \cdot \overline{\mathcal{F}} &= 0, \\ d_3 - d_2 &= 0. \end{aligned}$$

We can also verify intersection transversality for the test curves with $\overline{\mathcal{F}}$ without much difficulty. For instance, B_6 is a freely moving curve in $\overline{\mathcal{M}}_{1,3}$ by varying the moduli of E and the base point of the lines that cut out the marked points. Hence a general choice of B_6 meets $\overline{\mathcal{F}}$ transversally at its generic points. Similarly one can check this way for test curves contained in the boundary. For instance, B_1 is a freely moving curve in $\Delta_{0;\{1,2,3\}}$ by varying the moduli of E and the marked points in R .

In summary, the above test curves determine and cross check the divisor class of $\overline{\mathcal{F}}$ as claimed in (1).

3 Intersection theory on the gothic locus

Recall that $\mathbb{PQ}\overline{\mathcal{F}} \subset \mathbb{PQ}_{1,3}$ is the closure of the locus $(E, [q], p_1, p_2, p_3)$ where $(E, p_1, p_2, p_3) \in \mathcal{F}$ and $\text{div}(q) = z_1 + z_2 + z_3 - p_1 - p_2 - p_3$ with $z_1 + z_2 + z_3$ as a fiber of the g_3^1 given by the projection of E from s . Note that here the p_i are labeled but we do not label the z_i .

Let $T \subset \mathbb{PQ}\overline{\mathcal{F}}$ be the closure of the locus where $\text{div}(q) = 2q_1 - p_2 - p_3$, i.e. the original zero divisor $z_1 + z_2 + z_3$ of q is chosen to be the special fiber $p_1 + 2q_1$. Note that T can be realized as a (rational) section of $f: \mathbb{PQ}\overline{\mathcal{F}} \rightarrow \overline{\mathcal{F}}$ via $(E, p_1, p_2, p_3) \mapsto (E, [q], p_1, p_2, p_3)$ where $\text{div}(q) = 2q_1 - p_2 - p_3$, which implies that $f_*T = \overline{\mathcal{F}}$.

Lemma 3.1 *The following relation of divisor classes holds on $\mathbb{PQ}\overline{\mathcal{F}}$:*

$$\eta = \psi_{p_1} - T. \quad (3)$$

Proof Let $\pi: \mathcal{E} \rightarrow \mathbb{PQ}\overline{\mathcal{F}}$ be the universal curve. Then we have the relation

$$\pi^*\eta = 2c_1(\omega_\pi) + P_1 + P_2 + P_3 - Z - V \quad (4)$$

where ω_π is the relative dualizing line bundle, each $P_i \subset \mathcal{E}$ is the section corresponding to the marked point p_i , $Z \subset \mathcal{E}$ is the closure of the locus of the zeros z_i , and $V \subset \mathcal{E}$ is the vertical vanishing divisor arising from components of reducible curves E on which q is identically zero (see [4, Section 3]). Intersecting both sides of (4) with P_1 and applying π_* , we conclude that

$$\eta = \psi_{p_1} - \pi_*(Z \cdot P_1) - \pi_*(V \cdot P_1). \quad (5)$$

We first analyze the intersection of Z and P_1 . In this case $z_1 + z_2 + z_3 = p_1 + 2q_1$, i.e. $\text{div}(q) = 2q_1 - p_2 - p_3$. It follows that $\pi_*(Z \cdot P_1) = T$.

Next we show that $\pi_*(V \cdot P_1)$ is the zero divisor class. For this we argue using the level graph terminology as described in [1, 2] for the incidence variety compactification (IVC) over $\mathbb{PQ}\overline{\mathcal{F}}$. Suppose Γ is a level graph where p_1 is contained in the lower level (i.e. a vanishing component of q contains p_1). Observe that if z_1, z_2, z_3 are all contained in the lower level of Γ , then their variation is not recorded in the stable quadratic differential q , as q is identically zero on the lower level. Hence in this case the corresponding locus has codimension higher than one in $\mathbb{PQ}\overline{\mathcal{F}}$, which contributes zero as a divisor class (i.e. it gets contracted from the IVC to $\mathbb{PQ}\overline{\mathcal{F}}$).

Consider curves in $\overline{\mathcal{F}} \cap \Delta_{0;\{1,2,3\}}$ where the rational component R contains p_1, p_2, p_3 . Then q_1, q_2, q_3 are either all contained in E or all contained in R according to the two types of the intersection of $\overline{\mathcal{F}}$ with $\Delta_{0;\{1,2,3\}}$. Suppose q_1, q_2, q_3 are all contained in E . Then the admissible g_3^1 has a semistable rational component B connecting E and R . If z_1, z_2, z_3 are all contained in B , since B is in lower level, this locus drops

dimension from the IVC to $\mathbb{PQ}\overline{\mathcal{F}}$. If z_1, z_2 are in E and z_3 is in R , then the nodes are all poles of order two (i.e. horizontal in the level graph), hence this locus is irrelevant as it does not admit a vanishing component. Suppose q_1, q_2, q_3 are all contained in R . Then the admissible g_3^1 has a rational component C joining R such that the union of C and E gives the other part of the triple cover. If z_1, z_2, z_3 are all contained in R , then R is in lower level compared to E , hence this locus drops dimension from the IVC to $\mathbb{PQ}\overline{\mathcal{F}}$. If z_1, z_2 are in E and z_3 is in C , then after contracting the unstable component C , z_3 goes to R , and the node joining R to E is horizontal, hence this locus is irrelevant as it does not admit a vanishing component.

Finally consider curves in $\overline{\mathcal{F}} \cap \Delta_{0;\{i,j\}}$ where the rational component R contains p_i, p_j and the irreducible rational nodal component N contains the remaining marked pole. In this case N and R are on the same side of the g_3^1 . Note that $z_1 + z_2 + z_3$ is given by the projection of N from s . If $z_1 + z_2 + z_3 \neq p_1 + p_2 + p_3$, then the node r joining R and N is horizontal, hence the locus is irrelevant as it does not admit a vanishing component. If $z_1 + z_2 + z_3 = p_1 + p_2 + p_3$, then the stable quadratic differential q has no pole in N , hence N is on top level. Suppose $z_1 = p_i$ in N and $z_2 + z_3 = p_j + p_k$ are in lower level for $\{i, j, k\} = \{1, 2, 3\}$. Then z_1 is not varying on top level but z_2, z_3 vary in lower level in the g_2^1 determined by $2r \sim p_j + p_k$, hence the locus drops dimension from the IVC to $\mathbb{PQ}\overline{\mathcal{F}}$.

In summary, we have shown that $\pi_*(Z \cdot P_1) = T$ and $\pi_*(V \cdot P_1) = 0$. Hence the desired equation (3) follows from (5). \square

Next we study the intersection ηT . Let S be the IVC compactification of the locus $(E, [q], p_1, p_2, p_3, q_1)$ where $(E, [q], p_1, p_2, p_3) \in \mathcal{F}$ with $\text{div}(q) = 2q_1 - p_2 - p_3$. In other words, the signature of the ambient stratum of the locus is $(2, -1, -1, 0)$ where p_1 is regarded as an ordinary marked point. Let $g: S \rightarrow T$ be the map that forgets q_1 , and g is a birational morphism.

Let Λ_1 be the level graph parameterizing an irreducible rational nodal curve $(N, p_3, q_3, q_1 = q_2 = n)$ union a rational curve (R, p_1, p_2) at a node r such that $q|_R = 0$ and $(q|_{N'}) = -p_3 - r - n_1 - n_2$, where $N' \cong \mathbb{P}^1$ is the normalization of N after blowing up the node n to n_1, n_2 , and the resulting exceptional rational component carries $2q_1 - 3n_1 - 3n_2$ for the corresponding twisted quadratic differential. Let Λ_2 and Λ_3 be the (isomorphic) level graphs parameterizing an elliptic curve E union each one of the two special rational components $(R, p_1, p_2, p_3, q_1, q_2, q_3)$ in the type (II) intersection of $\overline{\mathcal{F}}$ with $\Delta_{0;\{1,2,3\}}$ where $q|_E = (dz)^2$ and $q|_R = 0$. Denote by α_{Λ_i} the divisor class of the corresponding locus of Λ_i in S , and by β_{Λ_i} the corresponding image class in T .

Lemma 3.2 *The following relation of cycle classes holds:*

$$\eta T = \psi_{p_2} T - \beta_{\Lambda_1} - 2\beta_{\Lambda_2} - 2\beta_{\Lambda_3}. \quad (6)$$

Proof Using a similar analysis as in the proof of equation (3), we can obtain the following relation of divisor classes on S :

$$g^* \eta = g^* \psi_{p_2} - \alpha_{\Lambda_1} - 2\alpha_{\Lambda_2} - 2\alpha_{\Lambda_3} \quad (7)$$

where the coefficient of α_{Λ_i} for $i = 2, 3$ has a factor 2 from the twisting order of the edge in the level graph in terms of the smooth strata compactification [3] and the isomorphism in codimension-one around the divisors Λ_i when comparing it with the IVC. Alternatively, over Λ_i for $i = 2, 3$ the part of the vertical vanishing divisor V as in (4) has multiplicity two, because at the separating node r the zero order of $q|_E$ is zero (i.e. an ordinary point) which differs by two from the double pole order of the square of the dualizing bundle at the node r . Then equation (6) follows from applying g_* to (7). \square

Finally we can work out the desired intersection numbers in (2).

Proof of Theorem 1.2 Recall the map $f: \mathbb{PQ}\overline{\mathcal{F}} \rightarrow \overline{\mathcal{F}}$. We have $f_*T = \overline{\mathcal{F}}$, $f^*\lambda_1 = \lambda_1$, and $f^*\psi_{p_i} = \psi_{p_i}$. Moreover, it is easy to see that $\eta\beta_{\Lambda_1} = 1/2$ and $\eta\beta_{\Lambda_2} = \eta\beta_{\Lambda_3} = 1/12$. Also, $\psi_{p_i}\beta_{\Lambda_j} = 0$ for any $i \in \{1, 2\}$ and $j \in \{1, 2, 3\}$ as p_1 and p_2 are marked points in a rational component with fixed moduli in all Λ_i , $\lambda_1\beta_{\Lambda_1} = 0$ as both components in Λ_1 are rational, and $\lambda_1\beta_{\Lambda_2} = \lambda_1\beta_{\Lambda_3} = 1/24$. Then using equations (3) and (6) we conclude that

$$\begin{aligned} f_*(\eta^3) &= f_*(\eta^2\psi_{p_1} - \eta^2T) \\ &= f_*(-\eta\psi_{p_2}T + \eta\beta_{\Lambda_1} + 2\eta\beta_{\Lambda_2} + 2\eta\beta_{\Lambda_3} - \eta\psi_{p_1}T + \eta\psi_{p_1}^2) \\ &= \frac{5}{6} + f_*(-\psi_{p_2}^2T + \psi_{p_2}\beta_{\Lambda_1} + 2\psi_{p_2}\beta_{\Lambda_2} + 2\psi_{p_2}\beta_{\Lambda_3} \\ &\quad - \psi_{p_1}\psi_{p_2}T + \psi_{p_1}\beta_{\Lambda_1} + 2\psi_{p_1}\beta_{\Lambda_2} + 2\psi_{p_1}\beta_{\Lambda_3} + \eta\psi_{p_1}^2) \\ &= \frac{5}{6} - \psi_{p_2}^2\overline{\mathcal{F}} - \psi_{p_1}\psi_{p_2}\overline{\mathcal{F}} - \psi_{p_1}^2\overline{\mathcal{F}} \end{aligned}$$

and

$$\begin{aligned} f_*(\eta^2\lambda_1) &= f_*(-\eta\lambda_1T + \eta\lambda_1\psi_{p_1}) \\ &= f_*(-\lambda_1\psi_{p_2}T + \lambda_1\beta_{\Lambda_1} + 2\lambda_1\beta_{\Lambda_2} + 2\lambda_1\beta_{\Lambda_3} + \eta\lambda_1\psi_{p_1}) \\ &= -\lambda_1\psi_{p_2}\overline{\mathcal{F}} + \frac{1}{6} - \lambda_1\psi_{p_1}\overline{\mathcal{F}}. \end{aligned}$$

On $\overline{\mathcal{M}}_{1,3}$ we have the following intersection numbers:

$$\begin{aligned} \lambda_1\psi_{p_1}\delta_{\text{irr}} &= 0, & \lambda_1\psi_{p_1}\delta_{0;\{1,2\}} &= \lambda_1\psi_{p_1}\delta_{0;\{1,3\}} = 0, \\ \lambda_1\psi_{p_1}\delta_{0;\{2,3\}} &= \frac{1}{24}, & \lambda_1\psi_{p_1}\delta_{0;\{1,2,3\}} &= \frac{1}{24}, \\ \psi_{p_1}^2\delta_{\text{irr}} &= \frac{1}{2}, & \psi_{p_1}^2\delta_{0;\{1,2\}} &= \psi_{p_1}^2\delta_{0;\{1,3\}} = 0, \\ \psi_{p_1}^2\delta_{0;\{2,3\}} &= \frac{1}{24}, & \psi_{p_1}^2\delta_{0;\{1,2,3\}} &= 0, \\ \psi_{p_1}\psi_{p_2}\delta_{\text{irr}} &= 1, & \psi_{p_1}\psi_{p_2}\delta_{0;\{1,2,3\}} &= 0, \\ \psi_{p_1}\psi_{p_2}\delta_{0;\{1,2\}} &= \psi_{p_1}\psi_{p_2}\delta_{0;\{1,3\}} = \psi_{p_1}\psi_{p_2}\delta_{0;\{2,3\}} = 0. \end{aligned}$$

Combining the above with the divisor class of $\overline{\mathcal{F}}$ in (1), it follows that

$$\begin{aligned}\psi_{p_1}^2 \overline{\mathcal{F}} &= \psi_{p_2}^2 \overline{\mathcal{F}} = \frac{5}{6}, & \psi_{p_1} \psi_{p_2} \overline{\mathcal{F}} &= \frac{4}{3}, \\ \lambda_1 \psi_{p_1} \overline{\mathcal{F}} &= \lambda_1 \psi_{p_2} \overline{\mathcal{F}} = \frac{1}{3}.\end{aligned}$$

Finally we obtain that

$$\int_{\mathbb{P}\mathcal{Q}\overline{\mathcal{F}}} \eta^3 = -\frac{13}{6} \quad \text{and} \quad \int_{\mathbb{P}\mathcal{Q}\overline{\mathcal{F}}} \eta^2 \lambda_1 = -\frac{1}{2},$$

thus verifying (2). \square

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