

# An asymptotic bijection and a scaling limit result for fixed genus factorizations of a long cycle

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## Context

We consider

$$\mathcal{F}_n^g = \left\{ (t_1, \dots, t_{n-1+2g}) \text{ transpositions in } S_n : t_1 \cdots t_{n-1+2g} = (12 \cdots n) \right\},$$

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**Question (Hurwitz, 1891)**

Compute  $h_{g,n} := |\mathcal{F}_n^g|$ .

**Remark:**  $h_{g,n}$  is a particular case of **Hurwitz number**. It has a more geometric interpretation as the number of genus  $g$  covering of the sphere with given types of ramification points (up to isomorphism).

## (Asymptotic) enumeration of $\mathcal{F}_n^g$

Dénes ('59) solved the **case  $g = 0$** :  $|\mathcal{F}_n^0| = n^{n-2}$  (bijective proofs given later by Moszkowski '89, Goulden–Pepper '93, Goulden–Yong '02, Biane '05).

**General case** (Jackson '88, Shapiro–Shapiro–Vainshtein '97, Poulhalon–Schaeffer '02):

$$h_{g,n} = \frac{n^{n-2+2g}}{2^{2g}} \sum_{\ell=0}^g \binom{n-1+2g}{\ell+2g} \sum_{\substack{\mu \vdash g \\ \ell(\mu)=\ell}} \frac{1}{\text{Aut}(\mu)} \binom{\ell+2g}{2\mu_1+1, \dots, 2\mu_\ell+1}.$$

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Proofs use representation theory, **no combinatorial proof** is known!

In particular, for fixed  $g$ , as  $n$  tends to  $+\infty$ ,

$$h_{g,n} \sim \frac{n^{n-2+5g}}{24g g!}.$$

## Main results

For fixed  $g > 0$ , as  $n$  tends to  $+\infty$ , we obtain:

- 1 An “asymptotic bijection” proving the asymptotic formula

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- 2 A scaling limit result for a uniform random element in  $\mathcal{F}_n^g$ .

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## Motivations:

- We need to understand the combinatorial structure (1) in order to analyze random elements (2);
- For (2): there is a large literature on **random product of transpositions**: independent transpositions, minimal factorizations into adjacent transpositions (sorting networks), ...
- Connections with **(random) combinatorial maps**;
- An asymptotic bijection could be a **first step towards finding a bijection**...

## Our asymptotic bijection $\Lambda$ (1/2)

We start with:

- a **factorization**  $F = (t_1, \dots, t_{n-1+2(g-1)})$  of  $(1, \dots, n)$  genus  $g - 1$ ;
- a **pair of positions**  $(v, w)$  in  $[1, n - 1 + 2g]$  with  $v < w$ ;
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**Step 1.** We define

$$\overline{F}_1 = (t_1, t_2, \dots, t_{v-1}, (ac), t_v, \dots, t_{w-2}, (ab), t_{w-1}, \dots, t_{n-1+2(g-1)});$$

$$\overline{F}_2 = (t_1, t_2, \dots, t_{v-1}, (ab), t_v, \dots, t_{w-2}, (ac), t_{w-1}, \dots, t_{n-1+2(g-1)}).$$

Easy claim:  $\overline{F}_1$  and  $\overline{F}_2$  are either long cycles or product of three cycles.

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Lemma (F.–Louf–Thévenin, '21)

For almost all  $(F, v, w, a, b, c)$ , *exactly one of  $\bar{F}_1$  and  $\bar{F}_2$  is a factorization of a long cycle (but not of  $(1, \dots, n)$  in general!).*

## Our asymptotic bijection $\Lambda$ (2/2)

**Step 2.** Take the  $\overline{F}_i$  which is a factorization of a long cycle, say  $\zeta$ , and **conjugate all transpositions in  $\overline{F}_i$**  to turn it into a factorization of  $(1, \dots, n)$ .

Namely, let  $\sigma$  be such that  $\sigma(1) = 1$  and  $\sigma^{-1}\zeta\sigma = (1 \cdots n)$  and let  $\overline{F}_i = \tau_1, \dots, \tau_{n-1+2g}$ ;

We set  $\Lambda(F, v, w, a, b, c) := (\sigma^{-1}\tau_1\sigma, \dots, \sigma^{-1}\tau_{n-1+2g}\sigma)$ .

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$\Lambda(F, v, w, a, b, c)$  is a **genus  $g$  factorization** of  $(1, \dots, n)$ . In other words,  $\Lambda$  maps (almost all)  $\mathcal{F}_n^{g-1} \times \binom{[1, n-1+2g]}{2} \times \binom{[1, n]}{3}$  to  $\mathcal{F}_n^g$ .

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**Theorem (F.–Louf–Thévenin, '21)**

*There exists subsets  $\mathcal{A}_{g-1, n} \subset \mathcal{F}_n^{g-1} \times \binom{[1, n-1+2g]}{2} \times \binom{[1, n]}{3}$  and  $\mathcal{C}_{g, n} \subset \mathcal{F}_n^g$  of asymptotic proportion 1 such that*

$$\Lambda : \mathcal{A}_{g-1, n} \longrightarrow \mathcal{C}_{g, n}$$

*is a **surjective  $2g$ -to-1 mapping**.*

# Recovering the asymptotic enumeration of $\mathcal{F}_n^g$

Recall our theorem:

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$$\lim_{n \rightarrow +\infty} \frac{|\mathcal{A}_{g-1,n}|}{\frac{n^5}{12} |\mathcal{F}_n^{g-1}|} = 1, \quad \lim_{n \rightarrow +\infty} \frac{|\mathcal{C}_{g,n}|}{|\mathcal{F}_n^g|} = 1, \quad |\mathcal{A}_{g-1,n}| = 2g |\mathcal{C}_{g,n}|,$$

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from which we get  $\frac{|\mathcal{F}_n^g|}{|\mathcal{F}_n^{g-1}|} \sim \frac{n^5}{24g}$ . An easy induction from  $|\mathcal{F}_n^0| = n^{n-2}$  gives

$$|\mathcal{F}_n^g| \sim \frac{n^{n-2+5g}}{24^g g!}.$$



## Encoding factorizations through maps (1/3)

- 1 Start with the following factorization in  $\mathcal{F}_9^2$ :

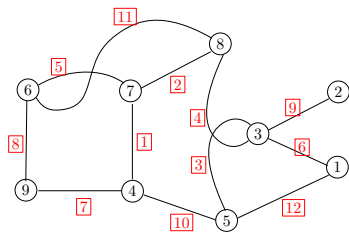
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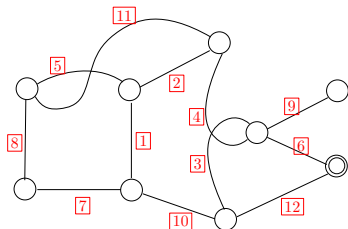


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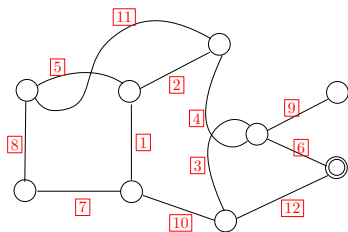
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(Around each vertex, edges are oriented counterclockwise in increasing order of their labels.)
- 3 Root the map at vertex 1 and forget vertex labels.



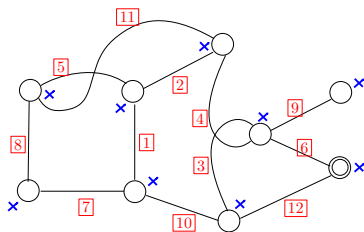
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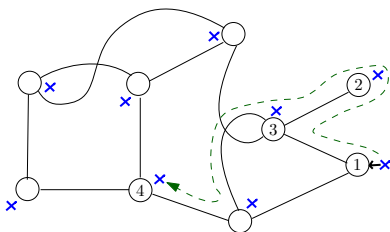
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- 1 Find the corner of each vertex which is between the incident edges of minimal and maximal labels (called special corner).
- 2 Start at the special corner of the root, turn around the map and label vertices from 1 to  $n$  in increasing order when crossing their special corner.

NB: to label all vertices, the map must be unicellular!

## Encoding factorizations through maps (3/3)

### Definition

A Hurwitz map is an edge-labelled map such that around each vertex, edges are oriented counterclockwise in increasing order of their labels (Hurwitz condition).

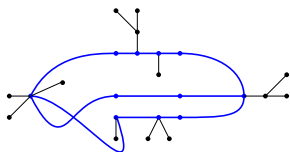
### Theorem (Irving, '04)

The construction in the previous slide is a *bijection* from  $\mathcal{F}_n^g$  to the set  $\mathcal{H}_n^g$  of vertex-rooted *unicellular Hurwitz maps* with  $n$  vertices and genus  $g$ .

# Typical structure of unicellular (Hurwitz) maps

## Lemma

Take  $g$  fixed and  $n$  large. Typically, *most vertices* of a unicellular (Hurwitz) maps in  $\mathcal{H}_n^g$  are *outside its 2-core*.



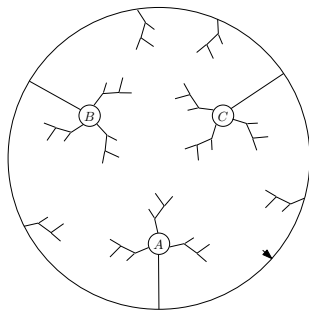
The 2-core of a map

Proof by analytic combinatorics: one can decompose maps (with a marked vertex) as a skeleton where we attach trees. . .



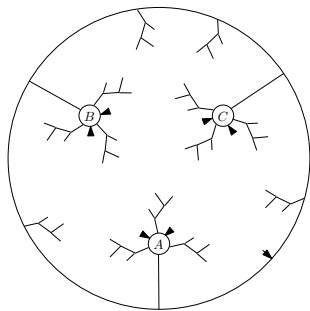
## Adding 2 edges to increase the genus

Here is a schematic representation of a Hurwitz map with three marked vertices: the outer circle is the 2-core which has been unfolded (recall that the map is unicellular).



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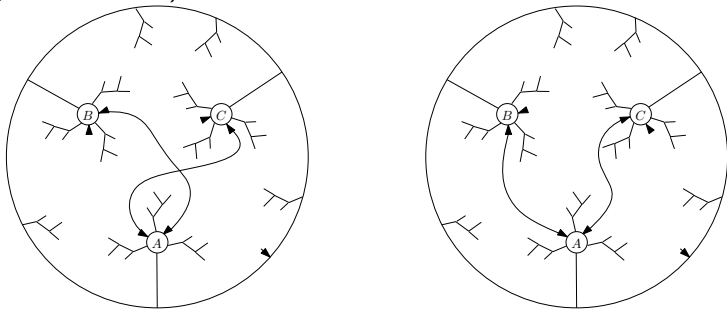
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We want to add two edges  $\{A; B\}$  and  $\{A, C\}$  with labels  $v$  and  $w$  between these three vertices. Because of the Hurwitz condition, we need to add them at specific corners of  $A$ ,  $B$  and  $C$  (we do not know which corner corresponds to  $v$ , and which to  $w$ !).

## Adding 2 edges to increase the genus

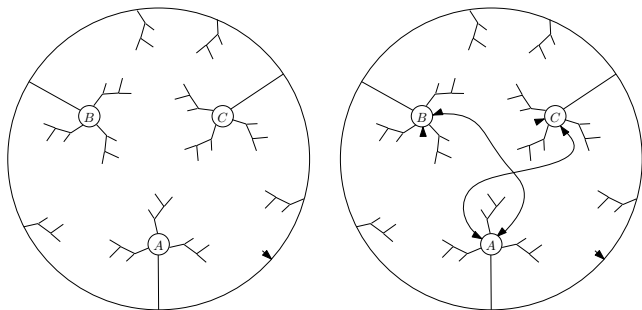
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There are two possibilities: one gives a unicellular map, one does not.

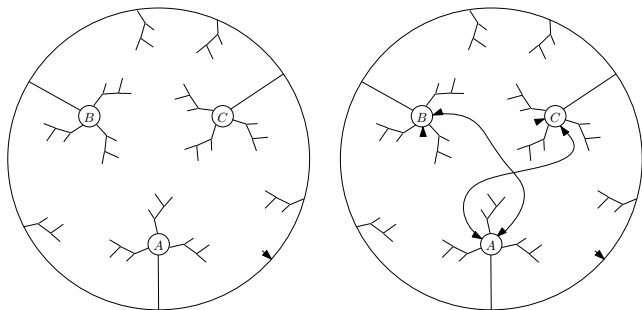
→ exactly one of  $\bar{F}_1$  and  $\bar{F}_2$  is a factorization of a long cycle.

## Back to permutations



- Adding two edges  $\{A; B\}$  and  $\{A, C\}$  with labels  $v$  and  $w$  in the map corresponds in adding the transposition  $(ab)$  and  $(ac)$  at positions  $v$  and  $w$ ;

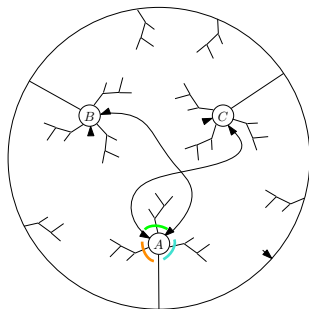
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- The contour order of the face is changing. Hence, the vertex labels are changing, which explain the conjugation in our asymptotic bijection on factorizations.

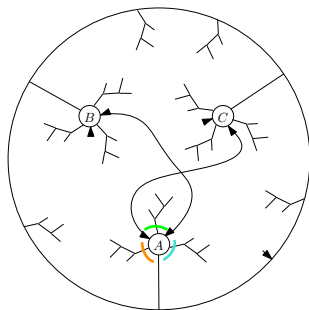
## How to invert the construction? (1/2)

Step 1: identify  $A$ . When turning around the unique face of the map, **the corners of  $A$  are not visited in counterclockwise order** (in our picture, they are visited in the blue-red-green order). Such a vertex is called a **trisection** (Chapuy, '09).



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When  $A$  is identified, it is typically easy to know which edges have been added (edges adjacent to  $A$  that belong to the 2-core, but not the first visited one).



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Lemma (Chapuy, '09)

*The number of trisections<sup>a</sup> in a unicellular map is  $2g$ .*

---

<sup>a</sup>Counted with multiplicities but, typically there is no multiplicities.

→ this explains why the map  $\Lambda$  is typically a  $2g$ -to-1 correspondance.

## First application: sampling

Let  $F$  be a (random) factorization in  $\mathcal{F}_n^{g-1}$ . We set

$$\Lambda(F) = \Lambda(F, \mathbf{v}, \mathbf{w}, \mathbf{a}, \mathbf{b}, \mathbf{c}),$$

where  $\mathbf{v}, \mathbf{w}, \mathbf{a}, \mathbf{b}, \mathbf{c}$  are taken **uniformly at random**.

**Proposition** (F.–Louf–Thévenin, '21)

Let  $\mathbf{F}_n^0$  and  $\mathbf{F}_n^g$  be uniform random factorizations of  $(1, \dots, n)$  of genera 0 and  $g$ , respectively. Then

$$\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} d_{TV}(\Lambda^g(\mathbf{F}_n^0), \mathbf{F}_n^g) = 0.$$

**Reminder:** total variation distance between random variables taking values in a discrete set  $S$

$$d_{TV}(X, Y) = \frac{1}{2} \sum_{k \in S} |\mathbb{P}[X = k] - \mathbb{P}[Y = k]|.$$

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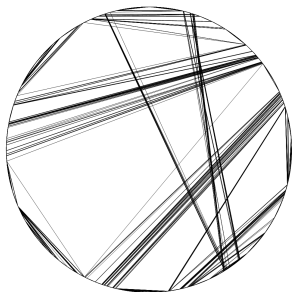
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$\mathbf{F}_n^0$  is easy to sample in linear time. The proposition gives an algorithm to **sample a asymptotically uniform genus  $g$  factorization in linear time**.

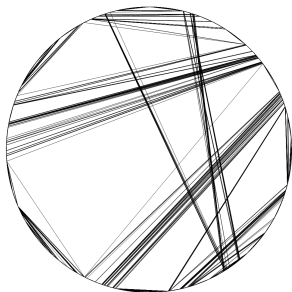


A random factorization of size  $n = 1000$   
and genus  $g = 1$  generated by our algorithm.

Here a transposition  $(a, b)$  is encoded by a chord

$$[\exp(-2\pi i a/n), \exp(-2\pi i b/n)].$$

# Simulation



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## Question

What is the **scaling limit** of (the set of chords corresponding to)  $\mathbf{F}_n^g$  ?

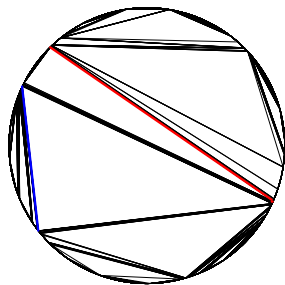
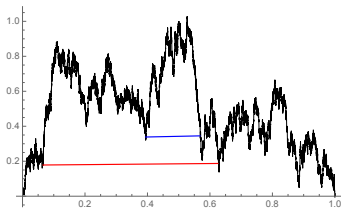
## Scaling limit in the case $g = 0$

Theorem (F., Kortchemski, '18, Thévenin, '21)

The set of chords associated to  $\mathbf{F}_n^0$  converges in distribution to *Aldous' Brownian triangulation* (for the Hausdorff distance on compact subsets of the disk).

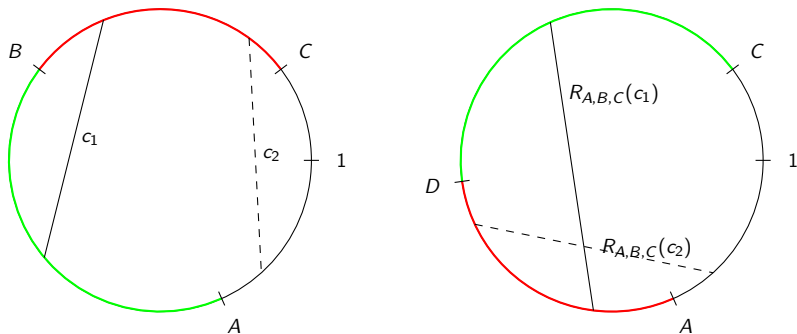
What is *Aldous' Brownian triangulation*?

Start from a Brownian excursion  $\mathbb{X}_\infty$  and draw a **chord**  $[e^{-2\pi i s}, e^{-2\pi i t}]$  for each **tunnel**  $(s, t)$  in  $\mathbb{X}_\infty$ .



## Scaling limit in higher genus $g > 0$ (1/2)

We introduce a rotation operation on (set of) chords. Informally, given three points  $A, B, C$  on the circle,  $R_{A,B,C}$  “swaps” the arcs of circles  $AB$  and  $BC$ .

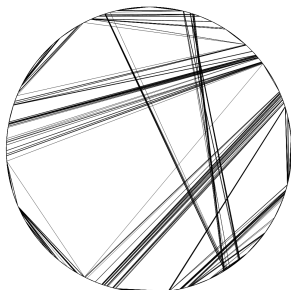
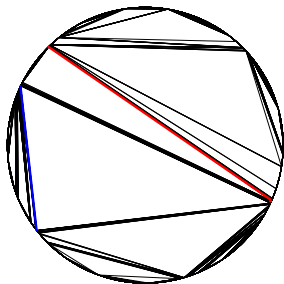


Taking  $A$ ,  $B$  and  $C$  uniformly at random, we denote  $R$  the corresponding rotation.

## Scaling limit in higher genus $g > 0$ (2/2)

Theorem (F., Louf, Thévenin, '21)

*The set of chords associated with  $\mathbf{F}_n^g$  converges in distribution to  $\overline{\mathbf{R}^g(\mathbb{L}_\infty)}$ , where  $\mathbb{L}_\infty$  is Aldous' Brownian triangulation.*



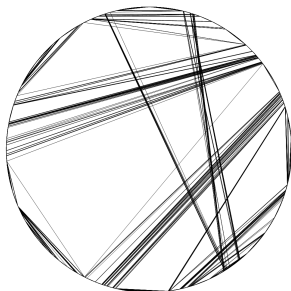
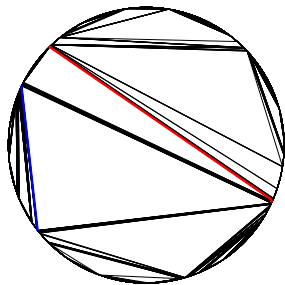
(Left) Brownian triangulation; (Right) a realization of  $\mathbf{F}_{1000}^1$ .



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Note: we have a “[process version](#)” of the result of – where chords are added one at the time, in the order in which they appear in the factorization.

## Proof strategy

- 1 We can replace  $F_n^g$  by  $\Lambda^g(F_n^0)$ ; since  $F_n^0$  converges to the Brownian triangulation, we need to understand the “effect” of  $\Lambda$ .

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- 2 Recall that  $\Lambda$  is defined in two steps:
  - i) adding transpositions  $(a, b)$  and  $(a, c)$  to the transposition;
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Lemma (see next slide for a heuristics)

Define

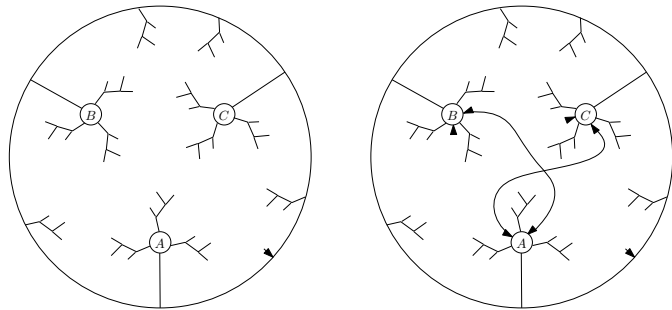
$$\tilde{\sigma}(j) = \begin{cases} j & \text{if } j \leq a \text{ or } j > c; \\ j + c - b & \text{if } a < j \leq b; \\ j - b + a & \text{if } b < j \leq c. \end{cases}$$

Then  $\sigma(j) = \tilde{\sigma}(j) + \mathcal{O}_P(1)$ , except for  $j$  in a set of size  $\mathcal{O}_P(1)$ .

⇒ Conjugating a transposition by  $\sigma$  acts as  $R_{A,B,C}$  on the associated chord.

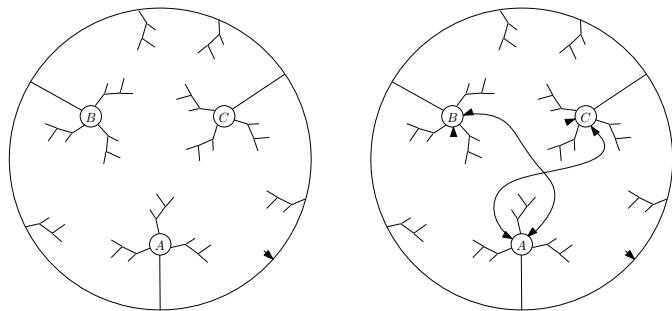
## The relabeling permutation $\sigma$

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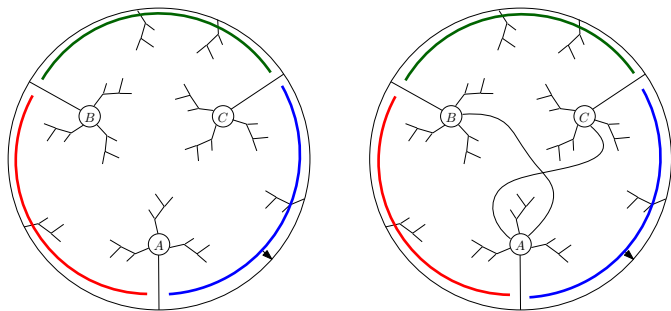
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To go from Hurwitz maps to permutation factorizations, we need to label vertices following the unique face of the map.

*Key observation.* the contour order of the face changes: blue–red–green on the left and blue–green–red on the right (one can prove that pending trees are of size  $\mathcal{O}_P(1)$ ).  $\Rightarrow \sigma$  is close to  $\tilde{\sigma}$ .

Thank you for your attention!