Noncritical Belyi Maps

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May 2004

ABSTRACT. In the present paper, we present a slightly strengthened version of a well-known theorem of Belyi on the existence of "Belyi maps". Roughly speaking, this strengthened version asserts that there exist Belyi maps which are unramified at [cf. Theorem 2.5] — or even near [cf. Corollary 3.2] — a prescribed finite set of points.

Section 1: Introduction

Write \mathbb{C} for the complex number field; $\overline{\mathbb{Q}} \subseteq \mathbb{C}$ for the subset of algebraic numbers. Let X be a smooth, proper, connected algebraic curve over $\overline{\mathbb{Q}}$. If F is a field, then we shall denote by \mathbb{P}^1_F the projective line over F.

Definition 1.1. We shall refer to a dominant morphism [of $\overline{\mathbb{Q}}$ -schemes]

$$\phi:X\to \mathbb{P}^1_{\overline{\mathbb{O}}}$$

as a Belyi map if ϕ is unramified over the open subscheme $U_P \subseteq \mathbb{P}^1_{\overline{\mathbb{Q}}}$ given by the complement of the points "0", "1", and " ∞ " of $\mathbb{P}^1_{\overline{\mathbb{Q}}}$; in this case, we shall refer to $U_X \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} \phi^{-1}(U_P) \subseteq X$ as a Belyi open of X.

In [1], it is shown that X always admits at least one Belyi open. From this point of view, the main result (Theorem 2.5) of the present paper has as an immediate formal consequence (pointed out to the author by A. Tamagawa) the following interesting [and representative] result:

Corollary 1.2. (Belyi Opens as a Zariski Base) If $V_X \subseteq X$ is any open subscheme of X containing a closed point $x \in X$, then there exists a Belyi open $U_X \subseteq V_X \subseteq X$ such that $x \in U_X$. In particular, the Belyi opens of X form a base for the Zariski topology of X.

Acknowledgements:

The author wishes to thank A. Tamagawa for helpful discussions during November 1999 concerning the proof of Theorem 2.5 given here.

Section 2: The Main Result

We begin with some elementary lemmas:

Lemma 2.1. (Separating Properties of Belyi Maps) Let $C \in \mathbb{R}$ be such that $C \geq 2$; let

$$S \subseteq \mathbb{P}^1(\mathbb{Q})$$

be a finite set of rational points such that:

- (i) $0,1,\infty\in S$;
- (ii) there exists an $r \in S$ such that 0 < r < 1;
- (iii) every $\alpha \in S$ such that $\alpha \neq 0, r, 1, \infty$ satisfies $\alpha > 1$.

Suppose that $\beta \in \mathbb{Q}\backslash S$ satisfies the following condition:

(iv) $\beta/\alpha \geq C$, for all $\alpha \in S \setminus \{0, \infty\}$.

Write r = m/(m+n), where $m, n \ge 1$ are integers. Then the function

$$f(x) \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} x^m \cdot (x-1)^n$$

satisfies the following properties:

- (a) $f(\{0, r, 1, \infty\}) \subseteq \{0, f(r), \infty\};$
- (b) f'(x) = 0 (where $x \in \mathbb{C}$) implies $x \in \{0, r, 1, \infty\} \subseteq S$;
- (c) $f(\beta) \notin f(S)$;
- (d) $(f(\beta) + f_0)/(f(\alpha) + f_0) \ge C$ for all $\alpha \in S \setminus \{\infty\}$ such that $f(\alpha) + f_0 \ne 0$.

Here, we write $f_0 \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} -\min_{\alpha} \{f(\alpha)\}$, where α ranges over the elements of $S \setminus \{\infty\}$.

Proof. Property (a) is immediate from the definitions. Property (b) follows immediately from the fact that:

$$f'(x) = x^{m-1} \cdot (x-1)^{n-1} \cdot \{(m+n)x - m\}$$

This computation also implies that for real x>1, we have f'(x)>0, hence that f(x) is monotone increasing, for real x>1. In particular, since, by condition (iv), $\beta \geq C \cdot \alpha \geq 2 \cdot \alpha > \alpha$, for all $\alpha \in S \setminus \{0, \infty\}$, we conclude that $f(\beta) > f(\alpha)$, for all $\alpha \in S \setminus \{\infty\}$ such that $\alpha > 1$.

Next, observe that since $1 \in S \setminus \{0, \infty\}$, condition (iv) implies that $\beta \geq C \geq 2$, so $f(\beta) > 1$. Since $|f(x)| \leq 1$ for $x \in [0, 1]$, we thus conclude that $f(\beta) \notin f(S)$, i.e., that property (c) is satisfied.

Next, let us observe the following property:

(e) If
$$\alpha \in S \setminus \{\infty\}$$
 satisfies $\alpha > 1$, then $(\beta - 1)/(\alpha - 1) \ge \beta/\alpha \ge 1$; $f(\beta)/f(\alpha) \ge (\beta/\alpha)^2 \ge \beta/\alpha$.

[Indeed, as observed above, $\beta \geq \alpha$; thus, $f(\beta)/f(\alpha) = (\beta/\alpha)^m \cdot \{(\beta-1)/(\alpha-1)\}^n \geq (\beta/\alpha)^{m+n} \geq (\beta/\alpha)^2 \geq \beta/\alpha$.] Now we proceed to verify property (d) as follows:

Suppose that n is even. Then $f(\alpha) \geq 0$, for all $\alpha \in S \setminus \{\infty\}$, so f(0) = 0 implies that $f_0 = 0$. Thus, if $(S \setminus \{\infty\}) \ni \alpha > 1$, then, by condition (iv) and property (e), we have: $f(\beta)/f(\alpha) \geq \beta/\alpha \geq C$, as desired. Since f(0) = f(1) = 0, to complete the proof of property (d) for n even, it suffices to observe that $0 < f(r) \leq 1$, so $f(\beta)/f(r) \geq f(\beta) = \beta^m \cdot (\beta - 1)^n \geq \beta \geq C$ [since $\beta \geq C \geq 2$, as observed above].

Now suppose that n is odd. Then $f(x) \leq 0$ for $x \in [0,1]$, so [since f'(x) = 0 for $x \in (0,1) \iff x = r$] we conclude that:

$$f_0 = |f(r)| = \{m/(m+n)\}^m \cdot \{n/(m+n)\}^n$$

Note, moreover, that this expression for f_0 implies that $0 < f_0 \le \frac{1}{4}$. [Indeed, this is immediate in the following three cases: $m, n \ge 2$; m = n = 1; one of m, n is = 1 and the other is ≥ 3 . When one of m, n is = 1 and the other is = 2, it follows from the fact that $(\frac{1}{3}) \cdot (\frac{2}{3})^2 \le \frac{1}{4}$.] Then if $\alpha > 1$, then either $f(\alpha) \ge f_0$, in which case

$$(f(\beta) + f_0)/(f(\alpha) + f_0) \ge f(\beta)/\{2 \cdot f(\alpha)\} \ge \frac{1}{2} \cdot (\beta/\alpha)^2 \ge (\beta/\alpha) \ge C$$

[by property (e)] or $f(\alpha) \leq f_0$, in which case

$$(f(\beta) + f_0)/(f(\alpha) + f_0) \ge f(\beta)/\{2 \cdot f_0\} \ge 2 \cdot f(\beta) = 2\beta^m (\beta - 1)^n \ge \beta \ge C$$

[since $0 < f_0 \le \frac{1}{4}$, $\beta \ge C \ge 2$]. On the other hand, if $\alpha \in \{0,1\}$, then

$$(f(\beta) + f_0)/(f(\alpha) + f_0) = (f(\beta) + f_0)/f_0 \ge f(\beta) \ge \beta^m \cdot (\beta - 1)^n \ge \beta \ge C$$

[since $\beta \geq C \geq 2$, as observed above]. This completes the proof of property (d). \bigcirc

Lemma 2.2. (Belyi Maps Noncritical at Prescribed Rational Points) Let

$$S \subseteq \mathbb{P}^1(\mathbb{Q})$$

be a finite set of rational points such that:

- (i) $0, \infty \in S$:
- (ii) $\alpha \in S \setminus \{0, \infty\} \text{ implies } \alpha > 0.$

Suppose that $\beta \in \mathbb{Q} \backslash S$ satisfies the following condition:

(iii) $\beta/\alpha \geq 2$, for all $\alpha \in S \setminus \{0, \infty\}$.

Then there exists a nonconstant polynomial $f(x) \in \mathbb{Q}[x]$ which defines a morphism

$$\phi:\mathbb{P}^1_{\mathbb{Q}}\to\mathbb{P}^1_{\mathbb{Q}}$$

such that: (a) $\phi(S) \subseteq \{0,1,\infty\}$; (b) $\phi(\beta) \notin \{0,1,\infty\}$; (c) ϕ is unramified over $\mathbb{P}^1_{\mathbb{Q}} \setminus \{0,1,\infty\}$.

Proof. Indeed, we induct on the cardinality |S| of S and apply Lemma 2.1 [with, say, C=2] to the set $\lambda \cdot S \subseteq \mathbb{P}^1_{\mathbb{Q}}$, for some appropriate positive rational number λ . Then, so long as $|S| \geq 4$, the polynomial " $f(x) + f_0$ " of Lemma 2.1 determines a morphism $\mathbb{P}^1_{\mathbb{Q}} \to \mathbb{P}^1_{\mathbb{Q}}$, unramified away from the image of S, that maps β , S to some β' , S' that satisfy conditions (i), (ii), (iii) of the present Lemma 2.2, but for which the cardinalities of S', S satisfy |S'| < |S|. Thus, by applying the induction hypothesis and composing the resulting morphisms $\mathbb{P}^1_{\mathbb{Q}} \to \mathbb{P}^1_{\mathbb{Q}}$, we conclude the existence of an "f", " ϕ " as in the statement of the present Lemma 2.2. \bigcirc

Lemma 2.3. (Separation of Collections of Points) Let

$$S \subset \mathbb{P}^1(\mathbb{C})$$

be a finite set of complex points. Then for any real C > 0 and $\beta \in \mathbb{C} \setminus S \subseteq \mathbb{P}^1(\mathbb{C}) \setminus S$, there exists a $\lambda \in \mathbb{C}$ such that the rational function

$$f(x) = 1/(x - \lambda)$$

satisfies $f(\beta) \neq 0, \infty$; $f(\alpha) \neq \infty$; and $|f(\beta)| \geq C \cdot |f(\alpha)|$, for all $\alpha \in S$. Moreover, if $\beta \in \mathbb{Q}$, then one may take $\lambda \in \mathbb{Q}$.

Proof. Indeed, it suffices to take λ such $|\lambda - \beta|$ is sufficiently small. \bigcirc

Lemma 2.4. (Reduction to the Rational Case) Write $\overline{\mathbb{Q}} \subseteq \mathbb{C}$ for the subset of algebraic numbers. Let

$$S \subseteq \mathbb{P}^1(\overline{\mathbb{Q}}) \subseteq \mathbb{P}^1(\mathbb{C})$$

be a finite set of $\overline{\mathbb{Q}}$ -rational points. Suppose that $\beta \in \overline{\mathbb{Q}} \backslash S$. Then there exists a nonconstant rational function $f(x) \in \overline{\mathbb{Q}}(x)$ which defines a morphism

$$\phi: \mathbb{P}^{1}_{\overline{\mathbb{Q}}} \to \mathbb{P}^{1}_{\overline{\mathbb{Q}}}$$

such that, for some $S_{\phi} \subseteq \mathbb{P}^1(\mathbb{Q})$, we have: (a) $\phi(S) \subseteq S_{\phi}$; (b) $\phi(\beta) \in \mathbb{P}^1(\mathbb{Q}) \backslash S_{\phi}$; (c) ϕ is unramified over $\mathbb{P}^1_{\overline{\mathbb{Q}}} \backslash S_{\phi}$. Moreover, if S, β are defined over a number field F, then ϕ may be taken to be defined over F.

Proof. First of all, we observe that by applying the automorphism $x \mapsto x - \beta$, we may assume that $\beta \in \mathbb{P}^1(\mathbb{Q})$. Moreover, under the hypothesis that $\beta \in \mathbb{P}^1(\mathbb{Q})$, we shall construct a f(x) satisfying the required conditions such that $f(x) \in \mathbb{Q}(x)$. Also, we may replace S by the union of all $\operatorname{Gal}(\overline{\mathbb{Q}}/\mathbb{Q})$ -conjugates of S and assume, without loss of generality, that S is $\operatorname{Gal}(\overline{\mathbb{Q}}/\mathbb{Q})$ -stable.

If F is a finite extension of \mathbb{Q} , then let us refer to the number $[F:\mathbb{Q}]-1$ as the reduced degree of F. Write

for the maximum of the reduced degrees of the fields of definition of the various points contained in S and

for the sum of those reduced degrees of the fields of definition of the various points contained in S which are equal to m(S). Thus, d(S) = 0 if and only if m(S) = 0 if and only if $S \subseteq \mathbb{P}^1(\mathbb{Q})$.

Now we perform a "nested induction" on m(S), d(S): That is to say, we induct on m(S), and, for each fixed value of m(S), we induct on d(S). If m(S), $d(S) \neq 0$, then let $\alpha_0 \in S \backslash \mathbb{P}^1(\mathbb{Q})$ be such that $d_0 \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} [\mathbb{Q}(\alpha_0) : \mathbb{Q}]$ is equal to m(S) + 1. Then by applying an automorphism (with rational coefficients!) as in Lemma 2.3 and then multiplying by some positive rational number, we may assume that $|\alpha| \leq 1$, for all $\alpha \in S \backslash \{\infty\}$, while $|\beta| \geq C$, for some sufficiently large C, where "sufficiently large" is relative to d_0 . Let $f_0(x) \in \mathbb{Q}[x]$ be the monic minimal polynomial for α_0 over \mathbb{Q} . Then one verifies immediately that all of the coefficients of $f_0(x)$ have absolute value d_0 . In particular, it follows that the value of d_0 at every $d_0 \in S \backslash \{\infty\}$, as well as at every element of the set d_0 of roots of the derivative d_0 has absolute value bounded by some fixed expression in d_0 . Thus, for a suitable choice of d_0 , it follows that d_0 is d_0 in d_0 . Thus, for a suitable choice of d_0 in every d_0 is d_0 is d_0 in d_0 . Moreover, since d_0 is d_0 in d_0 in

$$m(S') < m(S)$$

or

$$m(S') = m(S); \quad d(S') < d(S)$$

— thus completing the induction step. In particular, replacing S by S', β by $f_0(\beta)$, applying the induction hypothesis, and composing the resulting morphisms yields a morphism ϕ as in the statement of Lemma 2.4. \bigcirc

Theorem 2.5. (Belyi Maps Noncritical at Prescribed Points) Let X be a smooth, proper, connected curve over $\overline{\mathbb{Q}}$ and

$$S, T \subseteq X(\overline{\mathbb{Q}})$$

finite sets of $\overline{\mathbb{Q}}$ -rational points such that $S \cap T = \emptyset$. Then there exists a morphism

$$\phi:X\to \mathbb{P}^1_{\overline{\mathbb{Q}}}$$

such that: (a) ϕ is unramified over $\mathbb{P}^1_{\overline{\mathbb{Q}}}\setminus\{0,1,\infty\}$; (b) $\phi(S)\subseteq\{0,1,\infty\}$; (c) we have $\phi(T)\cap\{0,1,\infty\}=\emptyset$. Moreover, if X, S, and T are defined over a number field F, then ϕ may be taken to be defined over F.

Proof. By applying the Riemann-Roch theorem to construct a rational function on X with suitable properties, one reduces immediately to the case $X = \mathbb{P}^1_{\overline{\mathbb{Q}}}$, $T = \{\beta\}$, for some $\beta \in \mathbb{P}^1(\overline{\mathbb{Q}}) \setminus \{\infty\}$. Next, by applying Lemma 2.4, one reduces to the case $X = \mathbb{P}^1_{\overline{\mathbb{Q}}}$, $S \subseteq \mathbb{P}^1(\mathbb{Q})$, $T = \{\beta\}$, for some $\beta \in \mathbb{P}^1(\mathbb{Q}) \setminus \{\infty\}$. Finally, by applying an automorphism as in Lemma 2.3 [for, say, C = 4], followed by a suitable automorphism of the form $x \mapsto \nu \cdot x + \mu$, where $\nu \in \{\pm 1\}$ and $\mu \in \mathbb{Q}$, gives rise to a situation in which the hypotheses of Lemma 2.2 are valid. Thus, Theorem 2.5 follows from Lemma 2.2. \bigcirc

Section 3: Some Generalizations

Corollary 3.1. (Belyi Maps Noncritical at Arbitrary Sets of Prescribed Cardinality) Let $n \geq 1$ be an integer; X a smooth, proper, connected curve over $\overline{\mathbb{Q}}$ and

$$S \subseteq X(\overline{\mathbb{Q}})$$

a finite set of $\overline{\mathbb{Q}}$ -rational points. Then there exists a finite collection of morphisms

$$\phi_1,\ldots,\phi_N:X\to\mathbb{P}^1_{\overline{\mathbb{Q}}}$$

such that: (a) ϕ_i is unramified over $\mathbb{P}^1_{\overline{\mathbb{Q}}}\setminus\{0,1,\infty\}$, for all $i=1,\ldots,N$; (b) $\phi_i(S)\subseteq\{0,1,\infty\}$, for all $i=1,\ldots,N$; (c) for any subset $T\subseteq X(\overline{\mathbb{Q}})$ of cardinality n for which $S\cap T=\emptyset$, there exists an $i\in\{1,\ldots,N\}$ such that $\phi_i(T)\cap\{0,1,\infty\}=\emptyset$.

Proof. Note that we may think of T as a $\overline{\mathbb{Q}}$ -valued point of the n-fold product $Y \stackrel{\mathrm{def}}{=} (X \backslash S)^n$ of $(X \backslash S)$ over $\overline{\mathbb{Q}}$. Then observe that for any $\phi : X \to \mathbb{P}^1_{\overline{\mathbb{Q}}}$ such that: (a) ϕ is unramified over $\mathbb{P}^1_{\overline{\mathbb{Q}}} \backslash \{0, 1, \infty\}$; (b) $\phi(S) \subseteq \{0, 1, \infty\}$, the subset

$$U_{\phi} \subseteq Y(\overline{\mathbb{Q}})$$

of $y \in Y(\overline{\mathbb{Q}})$ for which $\phi(y) \cap \{0, 1, \infty\} = \emptyset$ [where, by abuse of notation, we write $\phi(y)$ for the subset of $\mathbb{P}^1_{\overline{\mathbb{Q}}}(\overline{\mathbb{Q}})$ which is the image under ϕ of the subset of $X(\overline{\mathbb{Q}})$ determined by y] is nonempty and open [in the Zariski topology]. Moreover, by Theorem 2.5, the U_{ϕ} cover $Y(\overline{\mathbb{Q}})$ [i.e., as ϕ varies over those morphisms satisfying the conditions (a), (b)]. Since Y is quasi-compact, we thus conclude that there exist finitely many ϕ_1, \ldots, ϕ_N such that $Y(\overline{\mathbb{Q}})$ is covered by $U_{\phi_1}, \ldots, U_{\phi_N}$, as desired.

In the following, we shall refer to as a *locally compact field* any completion of a number field at an archimedean or nonarchimedean place.

Corollary 3.2. (Belyi Maps Noncritical Near Arbitrary Points of Prescribed Degree) Let $c, d \geq 1$ be integers; X a smooth, proper, connected curve over a number field $F \subseteq \overline{\mathbb{Q}}$; V a finite set of valuations (archimedean or nonarchimedean) of F. If $v \in V$, then we denote by F_v the completion of F at v. Then there exists a finite collection of morphisms

$$\phi_1,\ldots,\phi_N:X\to\mathbb{P}^{\underline{1}}_{\overline{\mathbb{O}}}$$

and, for each $v \in V$, a locally compact field L_v and a compact set

$$H_v \subseteq (\mathbb{P}^1 \setminus \{0, 1, \infty\})(L_v) \subseteq \mathbb{P}^1(L_v)$$

satisfying the following properties:

- (i) $F \subseteq F_v \subseteq L_v$ [i.e., L_v is a topological field extension of F_v];
- (ii) L_v contains all \mathbb{Q} -conjugates of all extensions of F of degree $\leq d$;
- (iii) every ϕ_i (where $i \in \{1, ..., N\}$) is defined over every L_v (where $v \in V$);
- (iv) ϕ_i is unramified over $\mathbb{P}^1_{\overline{\mathbb{Q}}}\setminus\{0,1,\infty\}$, for all $i=1,\ldots,N$;
- (v) for any subset $T \subseteq X(\overline{\mathbb{Q}})$ of cardinality $\leq c$ consisting of points $x \in T$ whose field of definition is of degree $\leq d$ over F, there exists an $i \in \{1, \ldots, N\}$ such that $\phi_i(x^{\sigma}) \in H_v$, for all $x \in T$, $\sigma \in \operatorname{Gal}(\overline{\mathbb{Q}}/F)$, $v \in V$.

Proof. As in the proof of Corollary 3.1, write $Y \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} X^n$ for the *n*-fold product X over F, where we set $n \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} c \cdot d$. Thus, for any $T \subseteq X(\overline{\mathbb{Q}})$ as in the statement of Corollary 3.2, (v), the *conjugates over* F of the various $x \in T$ [in any order, with possible repetition] form a point $\in Y(\overline{\mathbb{Q}})$. Let L_v be a *locally compact field* containing F_v , as well as all \mathbb{Q} -conjugates of all extensions of F of degree $\leq d$. Then observe that for any $\phi: X \to \mathbb{P}^1_{\overline{\mathbb{Q}}}$ which is defined over all of the L_v [as v ranges over the elements of V] and unramified over $\mathbb{P}^1_{\overline{\mathbb{Q}}} \setminus \{0, 1, \infty\}$, the subset

$$U_{\phi} \subseteq Y(L_V) \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} \prod_{v \in V} Y(L_v)$$

of $y \in Y(L_V)$ for which $\phi(y) \cap \{0, 1, \infty\} = \emptyset$ [by abuse of notation, as in the proof of Corollary 3.1] is nonempty and *open* relative to the product topology of the Zariski topologies on the $Y(L_v)$, hence a fortiori, relative to the product topology of the topologies on the $Y(L_v)$ determined by the L_v . Moreover, by arguing as in the proof of Corollary 3.1 using Theorem 2.5 and the Zariski topology, we may

assume that the L_v are sufficiently large that [in fact, finitely many] such U_{ϕ} cover $Y(L_V)$. Now since each U_{ϕ} is locally compact and contains a countable dense subset, it follows that each U_{ϕ} admits an exhaustive chain of open subsets

$$V_{\phi,1} \subseteq V_{\phi,2} \subseteq \ldots \subseteq U_{\phi}$$

[i.e., $\bigcup_j V_{\phi,j} = U_{\phi}$] such that the closure $\overline{V}_{\phi,j}$ in U_{ϕ} of each $V_{\phi,j}$ is compact. On the other hand, since Y is proper, it follows that $Y(L_V)$ is compact. We thus conclude that there exist finitely many ϕ_1, \ldots, ϕ_N such that $Y(L_V)$ is covered by $V_{\phi_1,j_1}; \ldots; V_{\phi_N,j_N}$, where [by abuse of notation, as in the proof of Corollary 3.1, we write]

$$\phi_i(V_{\phi_i,j_i}) \subseteq \phi_i(\overline{V}_{\phi_i,j_i}) \subseteq \phi_i(U_{\phi_i}) \subseteq \prod_{v \in V} (\mathbb{P}^1 \setminus \{0,1,\infty\})(L_v)$$

for i = 1, ..., N. Thus, we may take H_v to be the *image* in the factor $(\mathbb{P}^1 \setminus \{0, 1, \infty\})(L_v)$ of the *union* of the compact subsets $\phi_i(\overline{V}_{\phi_i, j_i})$ of the product $\prod_{v \in V} (\mathbb{P}^1 \setminus \{0, 1, \infty\})(L_v)$. \bigcirc

References

[1] G. V. Belyi, On Galois extensions of a maximal cyclotomic field, *Math. USSR-Izv.* **14** (1980), pp. 247-256.