EQUIVARIANT DERIVED EQUIVALENCE AND RATIONAL POINTS ON K3 SURFACES

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Abstract. We study arithmetic properties of derived equivalent K3 surfaces over the field of Laurent power series, using the equivariant geometry of K3 surfaces with cyclic groups actions.

1. Introduction

Let $X$ and $Y$ be smooth K3 surfaces over a nonclosed field $K$. Suppose $X$ and $Y$ are derived equivalent over $K$, i.e., there is an equivalence of bounded derived categories of coherent sheaves

$$\Phi : D^b(X) \to D^b(Y),$$

as triangulated categories, defined over $K$. Such a derived equivalence respects (see [HT17, Section 1]):

- the Galois action on geometric Picard groups,
- the Brauer groups,
- the index, i.e., the gcd of degrees of field extensions $K'/K$ such that $X(K') \neq \emptyset$.

We are interested in understanding which other arithmetic properties are preserved under $\Phi$. Specifically, in [HT17] we asked whether or not

$$X(K) \neq \emptyset \iff Y(K) \neq \emptyset.$$

This is known when

- $K = \mathbb{F}_q$ is finite, char$(K) > 2$, [LO15], [Huy16a, 16.4.3],
- $K$ is real [HT17, Prop. 25],
- $K = \mathbb{C}((t))$ [HT17, Cor. 30], assuming that local monodromy has trace $\neq -2$, in which case both $X(K), Y(K) \neq \emptyset$,
- $K$ is $p$-adic, under strong assumptions on the reduction and for $p \geq 7$ [HT17, Prop. 36].

We propose to study this in a very special case – isotrivial families of K3 surfaces over the punctured disc. Let $G = C_N$ be a finite cyclic
group of order \( N \). Fix projective K3 surfaces \( X \) and \( Y \) over \( \mathbb{C} \) with \( G \)-actions and consider the associated isotrivial families

\[ \mathcal{X}, \mathcal{Y} \to \Delta_1 := \text{Spec}(\mathbb{C}((t))), \]

with generic fibers \( \mathcal{X}_t \) and \( \mathcal{Y}_t \) over \( K = \mathbb{C}((t)) \), as defined in Section 3.2.

**Theorem 1.** Suppose that \( \mathcal{X}_t \) and \( \mathcal{Y}_t \) admit a derived equivalence

\[ \Phi : D^b(\mathcal{X}_t) \cong D^b(\mathcal{Y}_t), \]

over \( K \). If \( \mathcal{X}_t(K) \neq \emptyset \) then \( \mathcal{Y}_t(K) \neq \emptyset \).

Related questions were considered by [AAHF21] (hyperkähler fourfolds) and twisted K3 surfaces [ADPZ17]; here the existence of rational points is *not* compatible with derived equivalence. The case of torsors for abelian varieties is addressed in [AKW17].

Our approach is based on the analogy between equivariant geometry and descent for nonclosed fields. Section 2 presents foundations for derived equivalence in the presence of group actions, with a view toward equivariant approaches to the Mukai lattice. We link isotrivial families over fields of Laurent series to equivariant geometry in Section 3. Section 4 presents the proof of Theorem 1 through analysis of fixed points; we close with a discussion of connections with the Burnside formalism and open questions.

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## 2. Generalities

### 2.1. Equivariant derived equivalence

We follow [Plo07] and refer the reader to [KS15] for a more general approach.

Let \( k \) be an algebraically closed field of characteristic zero and \( X \) a smooth projective variety over \( k \) equipped with the action of a finite group \( G \). We consider the bounded derived category \( D^b(X, G) \) of \( G \)-equivariant complexes of coherent sheaves on \( X \), i.e., objects are
pairs $\mathcal{P} = (P, \rho)$ consisting of complexes $P$ of coherent sheaves and $G$-linearizations $\rho$ compatible with differentials [Plo07]. This is compatible with intrinsic formulations of $G$-actions on triangulated categories [Ela11, §9], under our assumptions.

Suppose that $X$ and $Y$ are smooth projective varieties with $G$-actions. Given an element

$$\mathcal{P} = (P, \rho) \in \mathcal{D}^b(X \times Y, G \times G)$$

there is an equivariant Fourier-Mukai transform

$$\text{FM}_\mathcal{P}(-, G) : \mathcal{D}^b(X, G) \to \mathcal{D}^b(Y, G),$$

obtained by pulling back via projection to $X$, tensoring by $P$, and pushing forward via projection to $Y$ [Plo07, § 1.2]. This operation makes sense [Plo07, Lemma 5] provided $P$ is equivariant for the diagonal $G_\Delta \subset G \times G$ only, and the equivariant Fourier-Mukai transform is compatible with the ordinary Fourier-Mukai transform associated with $P$. (In other words, we can forget the $G$-actions.) Furthermore, if $P$ induces an equivalence of ordinary derived categories then $P$ induces an equivalence of the equivariant derived categories.

We assume that $G$ acts faithfully on $X$ and $Y$. Conversely, suppose that $P \in \mathcal{D}^b(X \times Y)$ induces an equivalence. When can it be lifted to an equivariant derived equivalence? By [Plo07, Lem. 4], each kernel $P$ inducing an equivalence must be simple, i.e., every automorphism of $P$ as an element of the derived category may be represented as rescaling of a representative complex. In particular, if $P$ is $G$-invariant as an element of the derived category -- $(g, g)^*P$ is quasi-isomorphic to $P$ for each $g \in G$ -- then the underlying complex of sheaves is $G$-invariant. Using the identification $\text{Aut}(P) = \mathbb{G}_m$, for our desired lifting it is necessary that the resulting cocycle $\alpha \in H^2(G, \mathbb{G}_m)$ [Plo07, Lem. 1] vanish. When $G$ is cyclic, $H^2(G, \mathbb{G}_m) = 0$ and $\alpha$ vanishes automatically.

If $P$ does lift to an equivariant complex $\mathcal{P} = (P, \rho)$ then this typically is not unique. We can tensor $\rho$ freely with any character of $G$.

2.2. Specialization to K3 surfaces. We retain the notation of Section 2.1 and assume that $X$ and $Y$ are K3 surfaces with Mukai lattices $\tilde{H}(X, \mathbb{Z})$ and $\tilde{H}(Y, \mathbb{Z})$. Suppose that $X$ and $Y$ are derived equivalent, with the equivalence realized by an isomorphism

$$i : Y \cong M_v(X),$$

where

$$v = (r, D, S) \in H^0(X, \mathbb{Z}) \oplus H^2(X, \mathbb{Z}) \oplus H^4(X, \mathbb{Z})$$
is the Mukai vector of a moduli space of vector bundles. See [Huy06, Prop. 10.10] for more details; in particular, since $v$ induces a derived equivalence, $r$ and $s$ are relatively prime and we may assume $r > 0$. The kernel $P \in D^b(X \times Y)$ inducing the equivalence may be interpreted as a universal sheaf over $X \times M_v(X)$. We have suppressed the polarization from the notation because it is irrelevant for our analysis; under our assumptions, any ample line bundle will yield a fine moduli space parametrizing stable sheaves [Huy06, Prop. 10.20].

Suppose now that $X$ and $Y$ come with faithful actions by a finite group $G$, where $v$ is $G$-invariant so that $M_v(X)$ admits a $G$-action. Here, we are implicitly using a $G$-invariant polarization so stability is compatible with the $G$ action.

Fix an equivariant isomorphism $i : Y \sim \rightarrow M_v(X)$ as above. This is not sufficient to produce an equivariant derived equivalence between $X$ and $Y$. The issue is the existence of an equivariant universal sheaf $E \rightarrow X \times M_v(X)$. Given an arbitrary universal sheaf $E$, simplicity of the sheaves parametrized by $M_v(X)$ yields
\[ g^*E \simeq E \otimes p_2^*L_g, \quad g \in G, \]
where $L_g$ is a line bundle on $M_v(X)$. The data $(L_g)_{g \in G}$ defines an element in $H^1(G, \text{Pic}(M_v(X)))$. Assuming this vanishes, we can produce an invariant kernel $P$ on $X \times Y$. As we have seen, the obstruction to lifting $P$ to an equivariant complex $\mathcal{P}$ then lies in $H^2(G, \mathbb{G}_m)$.

Both these obstructions are encoded by
\[ \ker \left( Br(M_v(X), G) \rightarrow Br(M_v(X)) \right) \]
in the equivariant Brauer group, computed by a spectral sequence with $E_2$-terms [HT22, § 2.3]
\[ H^2(G, \mathbb{G}_m) \quad \text{and} \quad H^1(G, \text{Pic}(M_v(X))). \]
Ploog’s cocycle $\alpha$ lies in the kernel of the natural arrow
\[ H^2(G, \mathbb{G}_m) \rightarrow Br(M_v(X), G) \]
induced by the structure map of $M_v(X)$. This vanishes when $M_v(X)$ admits a fixed point.

Mukai [Muk87] and Orlov [Orl97, Th. 3.3] have shown that K3 surfaces $X$ and $Y$ are derived equivalent if and only if there is an isomorphism of transcendental lattices
\[ T(X) \simeq T(Y), \]
as Hodge structures. This does not suffice in the equivariant case:
Proposition 2. Let $X$ and $Y$ be complex projective K3 surfaces with faithful actions by a finite group $G$. Then we have a sequence of implications:

(1) there is a $G$-equivariant derived equivalence $D^b(X) \simeq D^b(Y)$;
(2) there is an isomorphism of Mukai lattices

$$\tilde{H}^*(X,\mathbb{Z}) \simeq \tilde{H}^*(Y,\mathbb{Z})$$

respecting the Hodge structures and the $G$-actions;
(3) there is a $G$-equivariant isomorphism

$$T(X) \simeq T(Y)$$

of transcendental lattices, compatible with Hodge structures.

Proof. Suppose that $X$ and $Y$ are equivariantly derived equivalent. Then there is an isomorphism $i : Y \simeq M_v(X)$ such that the universal sheaf

$$E \to X \times M_v(X)$$

admits a $G$-linearization $\rho$ such that $FM_{(E,\rho)}$ is an equivalence. The cohomological Fourier-Mukai transform and $i$ induce an isomorphism

$$i^* \circ FM_E : \tilde{H}^*(X,\mathbb{Z}) \to \tilde{H}^*(Y,\mathbb{Z})$$

taking $v$ to $(0,0,1)$. The homomorphism $i^* \circ FM_E$ induces the desired isomorphism of transcendental cohomology groups.

Reversing the first implication in Proposition 2 is not possible precisely when the obstruction $\alpha \in H^2(G,\mathbb{G}_m)$ is nonzero. Since the obstruction $\alpha$ vanishes in the cyclic case we have:

Corollary 3. Suppose that $X$ and $Y$ are complex projective K3 surfaces with faithful actions by a cyclic group $G$. Then there is a $G$-equivariant derived equivalence between them iff there is an isomorphism of their Mukai lattices respecting the Hodge structures and the $G$-actions.

Remark 4. The second implication in Proposition 2 also fails to be an equivalence in general. To extend an isomorphism $T(X) \simeq T(Y)$ to an isomorphism of Mukai lattices, we require a $G$-equivariant isomorphism of lattices

$$\text{Pic}(X) \xrightarrow{\sim} \text{Pic}(Y)$$

compatible (on discriminant groups) with the given isomorphism of transcendental lattices. By definition, $T(X)$ is the orthogonal complement to $\text{Pic}(X)$ in $H^2(X,\mathbb{Z})$. Example 5 shows such a homomorphism might not exist.
Example 5. Given a polarized K3 surface of degree two \((X, f), f^2 = 2\), the linear series \(|f|\) induces a double cover \(X \to \mathbb{P}^2\) [SD74, Th. 3.1 and Prop. 8.1], branched over a smooth plane curve of degree six. The covering involution \(\iota\) acts on \(f^\perp \subset H^2(X, \mathbb{Z})\) by multiplication by \(-1\).

Let \(X\) be a K3 surface with \(\text{Pic}(X) = \begin{pmatrix} f_1 & f_2 \\ f_1 & 2 \\ f_2 & 5 \\ 5 & 2 \end{pmatrix}\), with involutions \(\iota_1\) and \(\iota_2\) associated with the double covers \(X \to \mathbb{P}^2\) induced by \(f_1\) and \(f_2\). Each involution acts on the primitive cohomology — hence the transcendental cohomology \(T(X)\) — by \(-1\). However, we shall show there is no automorphism of the Mukai lattice

\[ a : \tilde{H}(X, \mathbb{Z}) \to \tilde{H}(X, \mathbb{Z}) \]

compatible with Hodge structures and conjugating these involutions. In particular (3) does not imply (2) in Proposition 2.

We argue by contradiction; assume such an \(a\) existed. We have

\[ \iota_1(2f_2 - 5f_1) = -(2f_2 - 5f_1) \quad \iota_2(2f_1 - 5f_2) = -(2f_1 - 5f_2), \]

the unique (up to sign) elements of the Mukai lattice that are algebraic with eigenvalue \(-1\). Thus we must have

\[ a(2f_2 - 5f_1) = \pm(2f_1 - 5f_2). \]

The discriminant group \(d\text{(Pic}(X)) = \text{Hom(Pic}(X), \mathbb{Z})/\text{Pic}(X)\) is

\[ \mathbb{Z}/21\mathbb{Z} \cong \mathbb{Z}/3\mathbb{Z} \times \mathbb{Z}/7\mathbb{Z}, \]

with generators \(d_1 = \frac{f_1-f_2}{3}\) and \(d_2 = \frac{f_1+f_2}{7}\). Our distinguished elements give generators

\[ \frac{2f_2 - 5f_1}{21} = -d_1 + 3d_2 \quad \frac{2f_1 - 5f_2}{21} = d_1 - 4d_2. \]

Note that these are not equal, even up to sign. We conclude that any automorphism of the algebraic classes

\[ \text{Pic}(X) \oplus H^0(X, \mathbb{Z}) \oplus H^4(X, \mathbb{Z}) \subset \tilde{H}(X, \mathbb{Z}) \]

conjugating \(\iota_1\) and \(\iota_2\) acts on the discriminant group by an element \(\neq \pm 1\). In particular, this applies to

\[ a|_{\text{Pic}(X) \oplus H^0(X, \mathbb{Z}) \oplus H^4(X, \mathbb{Z})} \]

The only automorphisms of the transcendental cohomology \(T(X)\) — assuming \(X\) is general with the stipulated Picard group — are multiplications by \(\pm 1\). These are the only elements commuting with the
action of the Hodge group of a general such $X$, which is the identity component of the orthogonal group associated with the intersection form. Thus

$$a|_{T(X)} = \pm 1$$

and the same holds true on the discriminant group. This gives a contradiction: Nikulin’s theory gives an isomorphism

$$d(T(X)) \simeq d(\text{Pic}(X))$$

and any automorphism of the full cohomology (compatible with the Hodge decomposition) must respect this isomorphism.

Remark 4 is reminiscent of [HS05, Exam. 4.11]: Isomorphisms of transcendental cohomology groups of twisted K3 surfaces need not lift to twisted derived equivalences.

We close with examples of intriguing derived equivalences relating K3 surfaces with involution:

**Example 6.** Recall that the derived category of any smooth projective variety $X$ has an involution

$$i_X : D^b(X) \to D^b(X)$$

$$\mathcal{E} \mapsto (\mathcal{E}[1])^\vee,$$

i.e., the composition of “shift-by-one” and “taking duals”. When $X$ is a K3 surface, $i_X$ acts on $\tilde{H}(X, \mathbb{Z})$ by the identity on $H^2$ and multiplication by $-1$ on $H^0$ and $H^4$. Note that $i_X$ is not an autoequivalence – indeed it fails to be orientation-preserving, a necessary condition for autoequivalences [HMS09, §4].

We seek degree two K3 surfaces $(X, f)$ and $(Y, g)$ (cf. Example 5) with associated involutions

$$\iota : X \to X, \quad \kappa : Y \to Y,$$

such that $(D^b(X), i_X \circ \iota)$ and $(D^b(Y), i_Y \circ \kappa)$ are $C_2$-equivariantly derived equivalent but $(X, f)$ and $(Y, g)$ are not isomorphic. Analogous to Corollary 3, we would like equivariant isomorphisms of Mukai lattices (with Hodge structures)

$$a : \tilde{H}(X, \mathbb{Z}) \simeq \tilde{H}(Y, \mathbb{Z})$$

where there is no equivariant isomorphism

$$H^2(X, \mathbb{Z}) \not\simeq H^2(Y, \mathbb{Z}).$$
These may be produced using the theory of binary quadratic forms [Bue89]. Consider even, negative definite, rank-two lattices represented by symmetric integer matrices $A$ and $B$. We say that they are in the same genus if they are $p$-adically equivalent for all primes $p$; this is equivalent [Nik79b, Cor. 1.13.4] to stable equivalence

$$A \oplus U \simeq B \oplus U, \quad U = \begin{pmatrix} 0 & 1 \\ 1 & 0 \end{pmatrix}.$$ 

There are criteria, expressed via class groups, for the existence of non-isomorphic lattices in the same genus; see [Bue89, App. 1] for tables.

We seek examples of such lattices $A$ and $B$, subject to the condition that $A$ and $B$ do not represent $-2$. This last assumption ensures that the divisors $f$ and $g$ are ample. For instance, consider even positive definite binary forms of discriminant $-47$; the reduced forms are:

$$\begin{pmatrix} 2 & 1 \\ 1 & 24 \end{pmatrix}, \begin{pmatrix} 4 & 1 \\ 1 & 12 \end{pmatrix}, \begin{pmatrix} 4 & -1 \\ -1 & 12 \end{pmatrix}, \begin{pmatrix} 6 & 1 \\ 1 & 8 \end{pmatrix}, \begin{pmatrix} 6 & -1 \\ -1 & 8 \end{pmatrix}.$$

Only the first of these represents 2 so we could take

$$A = -\begin{pmatrix} 4 & 1 \\ 1 & 12 \end{pmatrix}, \quad B = -\begin{pmatrix} 6 & 1 \\ 1 & 8 \end{pmatrix}.$$

We construct the desired K3 surfaces using surjectivity of the Torelli map. Choose a K3 surface $X$ with

$$\text{Pic}(X) = \mathbb{Z}f \oplus A$$

with involution $\iota$ fixing $f$ and acting on $A$ and $T(X)$ via $-1$. There exists a second K3 surface $Y$ with

$$\text{Pic}(Y) = \mathbb{Z}g \oplus B$$

and $T(X) \simeq T(Y)$. This admits an involution $\kappa$ acting on $B$ and $T(Y)$ via $-1$. There is no isomorphism $\text{Pic}(X) \simeq \text{Pic}(Y)$ compatible with the involutions. However the stable equivalence of $A$ and $B$ induces

$$\tilde{H}(X, \mathbb{Z}) \simeq U \oplus H^2(X, \mathbb{Z}) \simeq U \oplus H^2(Y, \mathbb{Z}) \simeq \tilde{H}(X, \mathbb{Z}),$$

compatible with $\iota$ and $\kappa$. The involutions act on the $U$ summands via multiplication by $-1$.

We will explore this further in [HT23].
3. Isotrivial families

3.1. Construction. Let $X$ be a projective K3 surface and $G = C_N \subseteq \text{Aut}(X)$ a finite cyclic subgroup of the automorphism group of $X$. Let $\Delta_2 = \text{Spec}(\mathbb{C}[[\tau]])$ be a formal disc on which $G$ acts via $\tau \mapsto \zeta \tau$, $\zeta = \exp(2\pi i/N)$.

The $G$-equivariant projection $X \times \Delta_2 \to \Delta_2$ induces an isotrivial family

$$\pi : \mathcal{X} := (X \times \Delta_2)/G \to \Delta_1 := \Delta_2/G.$$ 

Let $K = \mathbb{C}((t))$ and $L = \mathbb{C}((\tau))$ denote the fields associated with $\Delta_1$ and $\Delta_2$. We regard $\mathcal{X}_t$ as a K3 surface over $K$; a $K$-rational point of $\mathcal{X}_t$ is equivalent to a section of $\pi$.

Proposition 7. Suppose that $X$ and $Y$ are complex K3 surfaces with faithful actions of $G = C_N$; assume they are $G$-equivariantly derived equivalent. Then $\mathcal{X}_t$ and $\mathcal{Y}_t$ are derived equivalent over $K$.

Actually, our proof will give more: It suffices to assume that there exists a $G$-invariant complex $P$ inducing the equivalence between $X$ and $Y$ (see Section 2).

Proof. Realize $i : Y \sim \to M_v(X)$ for some Mukai vector $v$ for $X$, fixed under the $G$-action. This isomorphism may be chosen to be equivariant under the $G$-action. Letting $\tau = \sqrt[1]{t}$, we basechange to an isomorphism $\mathcal{Y}_\tau \simeq M_v(\mathcal{X}_\tau)$.

This descends to an isomorphism $\mathcal{Y}_t \simeq M_v(\mathcal{X}_t)$, where the latter is the coarse moduli space. To complete the proof, we need that $M_v(\mathcal{X}_t) \times \mathcal{X}_t$ admits a universal sheaf. Since the underlying sheaves are simple, this universal sheaf is unique up to tensoring by line bundles on $M_v(\mathcal{X}_t)$ -- a trivial line bundle given our assumption that $P$ is $G$-invariant. Thus the obstruction to descending the data associated with $P$ to a sheaf defined over $K$ lives in the Brauer group of $K$. The triviality of $\text{Br}(\mathbb{C}((t)))$ shows this obstruction vanishes. \qed
3.2. Rational points and fixed points.

**Proposition 8.** The morphism

$$\pi : \mathcal{X} \rightarrow \Delta_1$$

admits a section if and only if the action of $G$ on $X$ admits a fixed point.

**Proof.** If $\pi$ admits a section $\sigma_1 : \Delta_1 \rightarrow \mathcal{X}$ then the induced section $\sigma_2 : \Delta_2 \rightarrow \mathcal{X} \times_{\Delta_1} \Delta_2$ is $G$-invariant, whence $\sigma_2(0)$ is fixed.

Suppose $X$ has a fixed point. Then the resulting constant section of $X \times \Delta_2 \rightarrow \Delta_2$ is invariant under the action of $G$ and thus descends to a section of $(X \times \Delta_2)/G \rightarrow \Delta_2/G$. □

4. Fixed point analysis

Let $X$ be a K3 surface over an algebraically closed field of characteristic zero and $\sigma \in \text{Aut}(X)$ an automorphism of order $N$. In the following sections, we analyze the structure of the fixed point locus

$$X^\sigma := \{x \in X \mid \sigma(x) = x\},$$

with the goal of identifying $\sigma$ such that $X^\sigma = \emptyset$.

4.1. Cyclic automorphisms. We review basic properties of finite automorphisms due to Nikulin [Nik79a]. Suppose that $G = \langle \sigma \rangle = C_N$ acts on a K3 surface $X$. We have an exact sequence

$$(4.1) \quad 0 \rightarrow C_n \rightarrow G \rightarrow \mu_m \rightarrow 0, \quad nm = N,$$

where $C_n$ is the kernel of the representation of $G$ on the symplectic form. Elements in $C_n$ are called symplectic; when $C_n = 1$, the action is called purely nonsymplectic. We write $N = n \cdot m$, to emphasize the symplectic versus nonsymplectic actions.

**Proposition 9.** Let $X_1$ and $X_2$ derived equivalent K3 surfaces. Assume that both carry a faithful action of $G = C_N$ and that the derived equivalence is compatible with $G$. Then the factorizations

$$N = n_1m_1 = n_2m_2,$$

encoding the symplectic elements, are equal, i.e.,

$$n_1 = n_2 \quad \text{and} \quad m_1 = m_2.$$

**Proof.** We can read off the symplectic automorphisms from the action on the Mukai lattice, as the symplectic form is distinguished in its complexification. □
4.2. Fixed point formulas. Let $G = \langle \sigma \rangle$ be a cyclic group acting on a $K3$ surface $X$. Let

$$\sigma^* : \tilde{H}(X, \mathbb{Z}) \to \tilde{H}(X, \mathbb{Z})$$

be the induced action on the Mukai lattice, and

$$\chi(\sigma) := \text{Tr}(\sigma^*)$$

the corresponding trace.

The topological fixed point formula takes the form:

$$\chi(X^\sigma) = \chi(\sigma),$$

(4.2)

Since $\chi(\sigma)$ may be read off from the action on the Mukai lattice, $\chi(X^\sigma)$ is an invariant of $G$-equivariant derived equivalence.

Lemma 10. Let $N = n \cdot m$ with $n \geq 2$. Then $X^\sigma$ is empty or a finite set of isolated points, and

$$\chi(X^\sigma) = \# X^\sigma.$$

Proof. By [Nik79a], symplectic automorphisms do not contain curves in their fixed locus (a detailed description of possible $X^\sigma$ is in Section 4.3). \(\square\)

The complex Lefschetz fixed point formula involves sums

$$\sum_p a(p) + \sum_C b(C),$$

(4.3)

of contributions from fixed points and fixed curves; here $\zeta = \zeta_N$ (see, [AS68, p. 567]). The corresponding contributions are given by

$$a(p) = \frac{1}{(1 - \zeta^i)(1 - \zeta^j)},$$

for fixed points $p$ with weights $\beta_p = (i, j)$ in the tangent bundle at $p$, and

$$b(C) = \frac{1 - g(C)}{1 - \zeta^{-r(C)}} - \frac{\zeta^{-r(C)}}{(1 - \zeta^{-r(C)})^2} C^2,$$

where $g(C)$ is the genus of $C$, and $r(C)$ is the weight in the normal bundle to $C$. For $K3$ surfaces we obtain

$$1 + \zeta^{-m} = \sum_{i,j} \frac{a_{ij}}{(1 - \zeta^i)(1 - \zeta^j)} + \sum_{C \subseteq X^\sigma} (1 - g(C)) \frac{1 + \zeta^n}{(1 - \zeta^n)^2},$$

(4.4)

where
• $a_{ij}$ is the number of $\sigma$-fixed points $p$ with weights $\beta_p = (i, j)$ in the tangent bundle at $p$,
  \[ i + j \equiv n \pmod{N}, \quad i, j \neq 0, \]

• $C \subseteq X^\sigma$ are (smooth irreducible) curves,

(see [Nik79a] or [ACV20, Lemma 1.1]).

Formula (4.4) immediately implies:

**Lemma 11.** Let $N = n \cdot m$ with $m \neq 2$. Then

\[ X^\sigma \neq \emptyset. \]

**Proof.** Consider equation (4.4). If $m \neq 2$ then the left-hand side is nonzero. It follows that the sums on the right-hand side are nonempty. Since these are indexed by fixed points or curves, we conclude that $X^\sigma \neq \emptyset$. \(\square\)

Lemma 11 shows that we always have fixed points in the symplectic case. In the purely nonsymplectic case, where $N = m$, or equivalently, $n = 1$, Lemma 11 guarantees fixed points, except where $m = N = 2$. In this case, the only fixed-point free action is the Enriques involution. Such an involution is characterized by the sublattice of its fixed classes (see, e.g., [Nik87], [AS15, Th. 1.1], [AST11, Th. 3.1]):

\[ \text{Pic}(X)^\sigma \simeq U(2) \oplus E_8(2). \]

We turn to the mixed case where $m, n > 1$. Lemma 10 guarantees that the existence of $\sigma$-fixed points is governed by the trace of $\sigma$ on $\tilde{H}$, i.e., is a derived invariant. This completes the proof of Theorem 1.

**4.3. Role of classification in the proof.** Despite initial expectations, the proof of Theorem 1 does not hinge on classification. At the same time, the comprehensive enumeration in [BH21] does raise interesting questions.

Can we explicitly describe all types of cyclic automorphisms with $X^\sigma = \emptyset$? Deeper arithmetic problems – extensions to more complicated isotrivial families or the $p$-adics – would require understanding of all finite groups of automorphisms.

We present indicative examples of actions with $X^\sigma = \emptyset$.

Nikulin [Nik79a] classified symplectic automorphisms of a K3 surface $X$ of order $n$ (in the notation above, $N = n$ and $m = 1$): We necessarily have $n \leq 8$ and $X^\sigma \neq \emptyset$. Moreover, $X^\sigma$ is a finite set of isolated points, whose structure is given by
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• $n = 2$ : 8 fixed points
• $n = 3$ : 6 fixed points
• $n = 4$ : 4 fixed points (and 4 points with order two stabilizer)
• $n = 5$ : 4 fixed points
• $n = 6$ : 2 fixed points (and 4 points with order three stabilizer, and 6 points with order two stabilizer)
• $n = 7$ : 3 fixed points
• $n = 8$ : 2 fixed points (and 2 points with order four stabilizer, 4 points with order two stabilizer).

Mukai [Muk88] gave a classification of all finite groups acting symplectically.

Detailed results are also available for purely nonsymplectic automorphisms of order $m$. The cases of prime order have been considered in [AST11], and various other special cases in, e.g., [ACV20], [AS15], [Dil12], [SyT21], [Tak10]. A complete classification, including an analysis of possible fixed point configurations, is presented in [BH21, Appendix B]: Let $\sigma$ be a purely nonsymplectic automorphism of a K3 surface $X$ of order $m$. Then

$$m \in \{2, \ldots, 28\} \setminus \{23\},$$

or

$$m \in \{30, 32, 33, 34, 36, 40, 44, 48, 50, 54, 66\}.$$

We return to our general situation where $C_N, N = nm$, acts on a K3 surface, via $m$th roots of unity on the symplectic form. Lemma 11 allows us to restrict to $m = 2$.

By [Keu16, Lem. 4.8], $m = 2$ implies that $n \neq 8$. For $n = 7$, the number of fixed points of the subgroup $C_7 = \langle \sigma^2 \rangle \subset G$ is three, thus we are guaranteed $\sigma$-fixed points. For $n \leq 6$ there exist fixed-point free actions. We record:

• $N = 2 \cdot 2$: Then $X^\sigma$ is either empty, or it consists of 2, 4, 6, or 8 points [AS15, Prop. 2]; when $X^\sigma = \emptyset$, the $\sigma^*$-action on $H^2(X, \mathbb{Q})$ has eigenvalues 1 and $-1$ with multiplicities 6 and 8, this characterizes such actions [AS15, Prop. 2]. K3 surfaces with $N = 2 \cdot 2$ have $\text{rk Pic}(X) \geq 14$ [AS15, Rema. 1.3]. Examples of such actions can be found in [AS15, Exam. 1.2].
• $N = 3 \cdot 2$: Then $X^\sigma$ is either empty, or it consists of 2, 4, or 6 points [SyT21, Prop. 3.4].
• $N = 4 \cdot 2$: Here the enumeration of cases is more complicated. The classification in [BH21] of symplectic actions on K3 surfaces lists only maximal actions: If $G$ acts symplectically on a
K3 surface $X$, consider its saturation, i.e., the largest subgroup $G' \subset \text{Aut}(X)$ such that $H^2(X, \mathbb{Z})^{G'} = H^2(X, \mathbb{Z})^G$ — a finite group acting symplectically on $X$. Thus the enumeration requires checking many subgroups for the presence of an element of the prescribed order.

Consider, for instance, the group with GAP id $(8,1)$ from the second column of Table 3 in [BH21], which lists three types. The possibilities for $\chi(\sigma^r)$, for $r = 1, 2, 4$, are

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>$\sigma$</th>
<th>$\sigma^2$</th>
<th>$\sigma^4$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- $N = 5 \cdot 2$: Note that $C_n$, $n = 5, 6, 7$ does not appear as the saturation of a mixed action with $m = 2$ [BH21, Table 3]. However, there are larger groups admitting cyclic subgroups of order ten acting on the symplectic form via $\pm 1$.

For example, suppose that $G$ is an extension

$$1 \to A_6 \to G \to \mu_2 \to 1,$$

where the alternating group is the maximal symplectic subgroup. Assume that $G$ has GAP id $(720,764)$, which admits elements of order ten. (Of course, $A_6$ has no such elements!) There are six different occurrences of this group in the classification. The one with K3 id $(79.2.1.3)$ has distinguished generator (in the nomenclature of the data sets supporting [BH21]) $\sigma$ of order ten with $\chi(\sigma) = 0$.

### 4.4. Relations to Burnside invariants.

Brandhorst and Hofmann [BH21] explore cases where the data from the fixed-point formulas are insufficient to characterize the automorphism. These are called ambiguous cases, at least in the purely nonsymplectic context [BH21, §7].

It would be interesting to consider these from the perspective of the Burnside group: Given the action of a finite cyclic group $G$ on a K3 surface, there is a combinatorial object consisting of subgroups $G_i \subset G$ indexed by strata $Z_i \subset X$ with nontrivial stabilizer $G_i$, labeled by the induced action on $Z_i$, and the representation type of the action of $G_i$ on the normal bundle; data of such type are building blocks of equivariant Burnside groups introduced in [KT22b]. The tables in [BH21, Appendix B] list possible configurations of fixed points and curves, for
purely nonsymplectic actions. How much of the Burnside data can be extracted from the representation of $G$ on the Mukai lattice?

The paper [KT22a] explores such a connection for actions of finite groups on del Pezzo surfaces.

Another interesting problem is to identify which actions classified in [BH21] are derived equivalent and even to classify finite groups of autoequivalences of K3 surfaces [Huy16b]. For example, Ouchi [Ouc21, §8] has found symplectic autoequivalences of orders 9 and 11 via cubic fourfolds; these cannot be realized as symplectic actions on K3 surfaces.

References


