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Hierarchy of Surface Models and Irreducible Triangulation

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Abstract

Given a triangulated closed surface, the problem of constructing a hierarchy of surface models of decreasing level of detail has attracted much attention in computer graphics. A hierarchy provides view-dependent refinement and facilitates the computation of parameterization. For a triangulated closed surface of n vertices and genus g, we prove that there is a constant $c > 0$ such that if $n > c \cdot g$, then a greedy strategy can identify $\Theta(n)$ topology-preserving edge contractions that do not interfere with each other. Further, they affect only a constant number of triangles. Repeatedly identifying and contracting such edges produces a topology-preserving hierarchy of $O(n + g^2)$ size and $O(\log n + g)$ depth. The genus g is very small when compared with n for large models in practice. The identification of edges can be enhanced by selecting edges based on the error of their contractions as measured by some known heuristics. This will keep the geometric approximation small in practice. Although several implementations exist for constructing hierarchies, our work is the first to show that a greedy algorithm can efficiently compute a provably good hierarchy. When no contractible edge exists, the triangulation is irreducible. The best known upper bound on the number of vertices of an irreducible triangulation of an orientable 2-manifold is $342g - 72$ by Nakamoto and Ota. Using our proof techniques we obtain a new bound of $240g$.

Keywords: level of detail, 2-manifold, abstract simplicial complex, homology, edge contraction, irreducible triangulation.

1 Introduction

Surface simplification has been a popular research topic in computer graphics [2, 4, 10, 12, 13, 18, 19]. Most practical surface simplification methods apply to triangulated surface models and are based on local updates including vertex decimation and edge contraction. Garland's survey [9] gives a good review of the literature. Vertex decimation removes a vertex together with its incident edges and triangles and then retriangulates the hole left on the surface. Edge contraction collapses an edge to a single vertex (often a new vertex),

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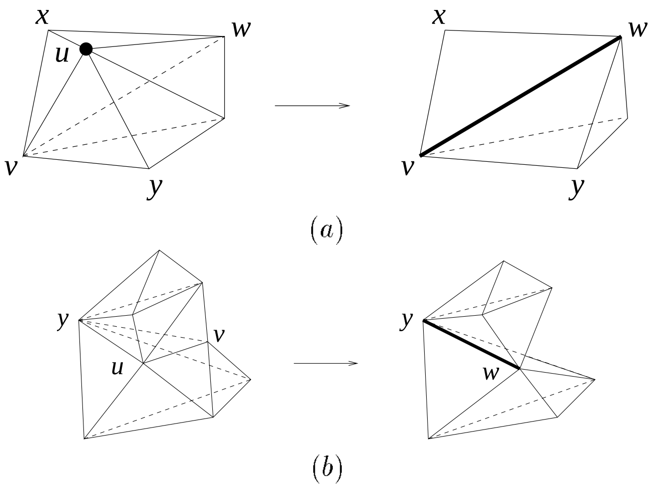

Figure 1: In figure (a), the decimation of u and a retriangulation produce a pinching at the edge vw which could be avoided if xy instead of vw is used in the retriangulation. In figure (b), the contraction of uv to w produces a pinching at the edge wy.

removing the two incident triangles of the contracted edge and deforming the other triangles touching the contracted edge. If the topology of the surface is not explicitly preserved when applying local updates, the resulting surface might be pinched at a vertex or at an edge. That is, the surface ceases to be a 2-manifold, see Figure 1. Arbitrary topology changes could easily produce noticeable bad visual effects (for example, imagine that a rod is squeezed in the middle by an edge contraction). Also, some applications require that the topology be preserved. Repeated topology preserving vertex decimation or edge contraction can produce a hierarchy of models of decreasing level of details that is useful in many applications. For example, Lee et al. [15] compute a parameterization of the triangulated surface model using such a hierarchy, which further can be used for remeshing, texture mapping and morphing. In dynamic virtual environment the hierarchy finds application in rendering scenes adaptively. The hierarchy allows objects to be adaptively refined in a view-dependent manner [4, 13, 18, 19]. Basically, undoing a local update increases the local resolution and redoing a local update reduces the local resolution.

These applications require that the local updates are independent, that is, they do not share a triangle. A hierarchy can be conceptually viewed as a directed acyclic graph. The nodes at the topmost level are the triangles in the original surface. When applying a local update, nodes are created for the new triangles and arcs are directed from each old triangle affected to the new triangles created. A new level of detail is obtained by applying a set of independent local updates simultaneously. Each local update should affect a small number of triangles as the time complexity of undoing/redoing the local update is proportional to it [4, 19]. Further, the depth of the hierarchy should be small as it bounds the maximum time to obtain a single triangle in the original surface from the model of the lowest level of detail. Given a triangulated surface of n vertices, any hierarchy constructed by repeated applications of independent topology-preserving vertex decimations or edge contractions has depth $\Omega(\log n)$.

For planar subdivisions with straight edges and triangular finite faces, Kirkpatrick [14] and de Berg and Dobrindt [3] showed how to perform independent vertex decimations to construct a hierarchy of $O(\log n)$ depth and $O(n)$ size. Each model in the hierarchy also has straight edges and triangular finite faces. Recently, Duncan et al. [8] showed how to apply planarity-preserving edge contractions to compute a hierarchy of $O(\log n)$ depth for maximal planar graphs. This takes care of triangulated closed surfaces of genus zero as well. In this paper, we resolve the corresponding question for triangulated closed surface of arbitrary genus g, which complements the experimental effectivenss of several existing implementations [4, 15, 19].

The problem of computing the hierarchy of surface triangulations is related to a mathematical question that has been studied before. An edge is *contractible* if its contraction does not change the surface topology. A triangulation of a 2-manifold is called irreducible if no edge is contractible. Is there an upper bound on the number of vertices of an irreducible triangulation in terms of the genus g? Barnette and Edelson [1] first proved that a finite upper bound exists. Later, Nakamoto and Ota [16] proved a bound of $270 - 171\chi$, where χ is the Euler's characteristic. This yields a bound of $342g - 72$ for orientable 2-manifolds. This immediately implies that a contractible edge exists when $n > 342g - 72$. Since non-contractible edges remain so after a topology-preserving edge contraction [17], one can further conclude that there are at least $\lceil (n - 342g + 72)/2 \rceil$ contractible edges. However, in order to construct a hierarchy of low depth, we require the contractible edges to be independent and we need many of them. It is tempting to adapt the analysis of the Dobkin-Kirkpatrick hierarchy [6] to argue that there are linearly many independent edges, but this argument alone is insufficient since we need to guarantee that those independent edges are contractible as well.

In this paper, we prove a new upper bound of $240g$ on the number of vertices of an irreducible triangulation. Our proof techniques are different from that of Nakamoto and Ota. By using our techniques and by considering a maximal matching of contractible edges, we prove that for any constant $d > 380$, if $n > \frac{(6008+1310d)g-888-30d}{d-380}$, then a greedy strategy can identify at least $\frac{n-1310g+30}{64(d+1)}$ independent topology-preserving edge contractions. Each edge contraction affects at most d triangles. The edge contraction can also be implemented as a special vertex decimation if we collapse the edge to one of its endpoints. Our greedy strategy examines the edges in an arbitrary order to find the edge contractions. This provides a topology-preserving hierarchy of $O(n + g^2)$ size and $O(\log n + g)$ depth (Theorem 8). These results follow from two topological results about triangulations (Theorem 5 and Theorem 7). Since our topological results are applicable to triangulations with curved edges and curved triangles, we do not assume a piecewise linear embedding of triangulations for our topological results. We may sometime use a piecewise linear embedding as a tool in the proofs and we state this explicitly. In practice, when constructing a hierarchy, the surface models are linearly embedded[1] and the edge contractions are selected to keep the geometric approximation error small. There are known heuristics in the computer graphics literature for measuring the error of an edge contraction. For example, our greedy strategy can be

[1]The surface may intersect itself during repeated edge contractions. Nevertheless, in computer graphics literature self-intersection has not been reported as a nuisance unless the complexity of the simplified surface is very tiny compared to the complexity of the original surface.

modified to select edges in increasing order of quadric error [10].[2]

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 provides the basic definitions. Section 3 introduces a family of crossing cycle pairs which is the main tool for obtaining our results. We prove the new upper bound on the number of vertices of an irreducible triangulation in Section 4. Section 5 presents our topological and algorithmic results on constructing a hierarchy.

2 Preliminaries

Triangulated 2-manifolds (without boundaries) are popular representations of object boundaries in solid modeling and computer graphics. The combinatorial structure of a triangulated 2-manifold can be represented using an *abstract simplicial complex* $\mathsf{K} = (V, S)$, where V is a set of vertices and S is a set of subsets of V. Each element $\sigma \in S$ has size $k + 1$, $0 \leq k \leq 2$, and σ is called a *k-simplex*. S is required to satisfy the following two conditions:

- For each $v \in V$, $\{v\} \in S$.
- For each $\tau \in S$ and $\sigma \subset \tau$, $\sigma \in S$.

Each proper subset of σ is called a *face* of σ. Two simplices are *incident* if one is a face of the other. For simplicity, we write a 1-simplex $\{u, v\}$ as uv, and a 2-simplex $\{u, v, w\}$ as uvw. We also call the 1-simplices *edges*. The collection of simplices $\{\tau : \sigma \subset \tau\}$ is the *star* of σ. For every simplex τ in the star of σ, if we collect the faces of τ that is neither σ nor incident to σ, then we obtain the *link* of σ.

We use M_K to denote the underlying space of K, which is a *2-manifold* if the link of each vertex is a simple cycle. The circular ordering of vertices and edges on the link of a vertex v induces a circular ordering of edges and 2-simplices in the star of v. A 2-simplex is *oriented* if directions are assigned to its edges so that they form a directed cycle. The space M_K is an *orientable 2-manifold* if the 2-simplices of K can be oriented such that each edge is assigned two opposite directions. There are two ways to orient a 2-simplex, so there are two ways to orient K. Orientable 2-manifolds are a popular class of surfaces.

The *contraction* of an edge uv is a local transformation of K. A new vertex w is introduced to replace uv and the star of uv is replaced by a local triangulation consisting of 2-simplices formed by w with every edge in the link of uv. This yields a new abstract simplicial complex. An arbitrary edge contraction may result in an abstract simplicial complex whose underlying space is not a 2-manifold. For example, see Figure 1(b). We call a cycle in K *critical* if it consists of three edges and it does not bound a 2-simplex in K. For example, the cycle through u, v and y in Figure 1(b) is a critical cycle. If K is combinatorially equivalent to a tetrahedron, no edge can be contracted without changing the topology type of M_K. If K is not combinatorially equivalent to a tetrahedron, then the contraction of an edge e is topology-preserving if and only if e does not lie on a critical cycle. Dey et al. [5] discussed a more general definition of topology-preserving edge contraction that works for non-manifolds.

[2]There is no worst-case guarantee on the geometric approximation error if a surface is simplified using quadric error based edge contraction. Nevertheless, the experimental results are often good [10].

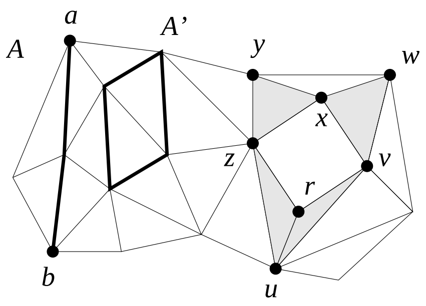

Figure 2: There are two 1-chains A and A' shown as bold line segments. A 2-chain Σ is shown as shaded triangles. $\partial A = a + b$. $\partial A' = 0$. $\partial\Sigma = uv + vw + wx + xy + yz + zu + rv + vx + xz + zr$.

3 Family of cycle pairs

We introduce a special family of crossing cycle pairs and prove several properties of these cycle pairs. They are the main tool in obtaining our results in Sections 4 and 5.

3.1 Chain and cycle

We reexamine cycles using the concepts from algebraic topology $0 \leq k \leq 2$, a k-*chain* is a formal sum of a set of k-simplices with coefficients 0 or 1. The addition is commutative. Terms involving the same k-simplex can be added together by adding their coefficients using modulo 2 arithmetic. The modulo 2 arithmetic implies that a k-simplex appears in the final sum when it appears an odd number of times. The *boundary of a k-simplex* σ is a $(k-1)$-chain and it is the sum of $(k-1)$-simplices that are faces of σ. The *boundary of a k-chain* is the sum of the boundaries of its k-simplices. We use ∂ to denote the boundary operator. Figure 2 shows some examples.

A k-chain is a k-*cycle* if its boundary is empty. The boundary of a 2-chain is always a 1-cycle. For simplicity, we abbreviate 1-cycle as cycle. The *length* of a cycle is the number of edges in it. We call a cycle *simple* if it is simple in the graph-theoretic sense. For example, A' is a simple cycle but $\partial\Sigma$ is not. Recall that a cycle is *critical* if it consists of three edges and it does not bound a 2-simplex. So a critical cycle is always simple.

Two cycles B_1 and B_2 are *homologous* if there exists a 2-chain Σ such that $B_1 = B_2 + \partial\Sigma$. For example, in Figure 2, $rv + vx + xz + zr$ and $uv + vw + wx + xy + yz + zu$ are homologous.

3.2 Crossing

Let B_1 and B_2 be two simple cycles in K. Suppose that B_1 and B_2 share a vertex v such that the edges of B_1 and B_2 incident to v are distinct. If the edges of B_1 alternate with the edges of B_2 in the star of v (recall that there is a circular ordering of edges and 2-simplices in the star of v), we say that B_1 and B_2 *cross at* v. We call v a *crossing of B_1 and B_2*. Figure 3 shows an example. The above definition of crossing might not be applicable when two cycles share edges. So we will perturb cycle edges in order to proceed further. We

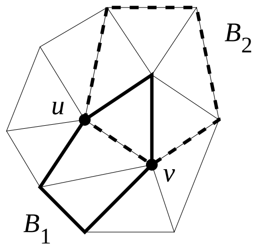

Figure 3: There are two cycles B_1 and B_2 shown in bold solid and dashed line segments respectively. B_1 and B_2 cross at the vertices u and v.

remark that the crossing of cycles, as discussed here, is related to the concept of *intersection number* in algebraic topology [7]. However, the definition of intersection number does not cater to edge sharing.

Since perturbation is a geometric operation, we need to work with a geometrical realization of K which is a simplicial complex $\widehat{\mathsf{K}}$ (embedded in a space of sufficiently high dimension [11]). $\widehat{\mathsf{K}}$ is a triangulation of a piecewise linear surface: each 1-simplex appears as a line segment and each 2-simplex appears as a triangle. Since K and $\widehat{\mathsf{K}}$ have identical combinatorial structure, we do not distinguish corresponding cycles in K and $\widehat{\mathsf{K}}$. We would like to emphasize that $\widehat{\mathsf{K}}$ is only a tool. Our results are topological and independent of the geometric realization.

Let ξ_1 and ξ_2 be two simple curves (open or closed) on the underlying piecewise linear surface of $\widehat{\mathsf{K}}$. We say ξ_1 and ξ_2 *cross at a point* p if there is a small neighborhood $N(p)$ around p such that $\xi_1 \cap \xi_2 \cap N(p) = \{p\}$ and $\xi_1 \cap N(p)$ contains points on both sides of $\xi_2 \cap N(p)$ locally. We also call p a *crossing of* ξ_1 *and* ξ_2.

Let B_1 and B_2 be two simple cycles in K. We treat B_1 and B_2 as two simple closed curves on the underlying surface of $\widehat{\mathsf{K}}$. We perturb B_1 to another simple closed curve ξ_1 on $\widehat{\mathsf{K}}$ as follows. Fix the vertices of B_1. For each edge e of B_1, perturb e to a closed curved segment γ such that $\mathrm{int}(\gamma)$ lies in the interior of a triangle of $\widehat{\mathsf{K}}$ incident to e, $\gamma \cap e$ consists of the endpoints of e, and $\mathrm{int}(\gamma)$ does not intersect any curved segment obtained by perturbing other edges of B_1. Consequently, ξ_1 and B_2 intersect only at the vertices of B_1, so the definition of crossings of two simple closed curves is applicable. Figure 4 shows an example. We use $B_1 \circ B_2$ to denote the *parity of the number of crossings of* ξ_1 *and* B_2. We can generalize the definition to the case where B_2 is a sum of simple cycles. Let $B_2 = \sum_{j=1}^{q} B_{2j}$, where B_{2j} are simple cycles. Then we define

$$B_1 \circ B_2 = (\sum_{j=1}^{q} B_1 \circ B_{2j}) \bmod 2.$$

The following lemma shows that $B_1 \circ B_2$ is well defined and its proof can be found in Appendix I.[3]

[3]The generalization can be taken further. Let $B_1 = \sum_{i=1}^{p} B_{1i}$ and let $B_2 = \sum_{j=1}^{q} B_{2j}$, where B_{1i} and B_{2j} are simple cycles. Then $B_1 \circ B_2$ can be defined to be $(\sum_{i=1}^{p} \sum_{j=1}^{q} B_{1i} \circ B_{2j}) \bmod 2$. However, this generalization is not needed for obtaining our results.

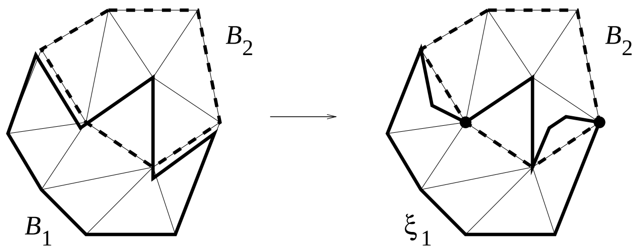

Figure 4: There are two cycles B_1 and B_2 shown in bold solid and dashed line segments respectively. B_1 and B_2 share two edges, but we draw them slightly apart for clarity. After the perturbation, ξ_1 and B_2 cross at the black dots. For simplicity, we only perturb the two edges that B_1 and B_2 share.

LEMMA 1 *Given a simple cycle B_1 and a sum B_2 of simple cycles in K, $B_1 \circ B_2$ is independent of the sum expression of B_2 and the perturbation of B_1.*

Lemma 1 leads to the following lemma concerning the crossing between a simple cycle and two homologous simple cycles.

LEMMA 2 *Let B_1, B_2 and A be three simple cycles in K. If B_1 and B_2 are homologous, then $A \circ B_1 = A \circ B_2$.*

Proof. By definition, $B_1 = B_2 + \partial\Sigma$ for some 2-chain Σ. So $A \circ B_1 = (A \circ B_2 + D \circ \partial\Sigma) \bmod 2$. Clearly, $A \circ \partial\tau = 0$ for any 2-simplex τ. Thus, $A \circ \partial\Sigma = 0$ which implies that $A \circ B_1 = A \circ B_2$. ◻

3.3 Crossing cycle pairs

Let $\ell \geq 3$ be a parameter. Let $\mathcal{F}_\ell$ denote a family of cycle pairs $\{(C_i, D_i) : 1 \leq i \leq |\mathcal{F}_\ell|\}$ that satisfy four conditions:

1. Each C_i is a critical cycle.
2. Each D_i is a simple cycle of length at most ℓ.
3. For any i, C_i and D_i cross at a vertex called the *anchor* of C_i and C_i does not share any other vertex with D_i.
4. For $i \neq j$, the anchors of C_i and C_j are different.

Note that for $i \neq j$, C_i or D_i may share vertices and edges with C_j and D_j.

We want to prove that $|\mathcal{F}_\ell|$ is upper bounded by a linear function of g. In particular, $|\mathcal{F}_3|$ will be shown to be an upper bound on the number of vertices of an irreducible triangulation and $|\mathcal{F}_4|$ will be useful in proving our results on constructing a hierarchy. Our starting point is the observation that if M_K has genus g, then K contains at most $2g$ cycles that are mutually non-homologous [11]. This allows us to bound $|\mathcal{F}'_\ell|$ for any $\mathcal{F}'_\ell \subseteq \mathcal{F}_\ell$ such that for any two distinct C_i and C_j in $\mathcal{F}'_\ell$, C_i and C_j are mutually non-homologous. The remaining difficulty is to show that $|\mathcal{F}'_\ell|$ is at least some constant factor times $|\mathcal{F}_\ell|$. We state the results here which are mainly based on Lemma 2. Since we do not want the details to obscure our main results, we leave the proofs in Appendix II.

COROLLARY 3 *$|\mathcal{F}_3| \leq 240g$ and for $\ell \geq 3$, $|\mathcal{F}_\ell| \leq 20\ell^3 \cdot g$.*

4 Irreducible triangulation

In this section, we prove that an irreducible triangulation of an orientable 2-manifold of positive genus g has at most $240g$ vertices. We need the following lemma about a vertex.

LEMMA 4 *Assume that M_K has positive genus. Let v be a vertex of K. If there is a critical cycle A passing through v and some vertices x and y, then one of the following holds.*

(i) There are two contractible edges uv and vw that alternate with vx and vy in the star of v.

(ii) A pair of critical cycles cross at v.

Proof. Let L be the list of vertices in the link of v in order starting at x (recall that the link is a simple cycle, so it is circularly ordered). If there is a vertex u before y and a vertex w after y in L such that uv and vw are contractible, then (i) is true. Assume that all edges uv, where u precedes y in L, are non-contractible. (We can symmetrically handle the case where all edges vw such that w follows y in L are non-contractible.) Take one such edge uv. Since uv is non-contractible and the genus of M_K is positive, uv lies on a critical cycle B that passes through u, v and some vertex w'. If A and B cross at v, then (ii) is true. Otherwise, either $w' = y$ or w' precedes y in L. We repeat the above argument with x and y replaced by u and w'. We must eventually obtain a pair of critical cycles that cross at v. ◻

THEOREM 5 *An irreducible triangulation of a compact orientable 2-manifold of genus g has at most $\max\{240g, 4\}$ vertices.*

Proof. The theorem is clearly true when $g = 0$. Let K be an irreducible triangulation. Assume that the genus g of M_K is positive. We construct a family $\mathcal{F}_3$ of crossing cycle pairs. Each vertex v is incident on a non-contractible edge and so v lies on a critical cycle. Since no edge of K is contractible, Lemma 4(ii) implies that two critical cycles cross at v and we add this cycle pair to $\mathcal{F}_3$. Thus, the number of vertices of K is $|\mathcal{F}_3|$ which is at most $240g$ by Corollary 3. ◻

5 Hierarchy of surfaces

In this section, we prove that there are linearly many independent topology-preserving edge contractions. Moreover, a simple greedy strategy can be used to find them. Let u_1v_1 and

u_2v_2 be two edges of K. We say that u_1v_1 and u_2v_2 are *independent* if their stars have an empty intersection. That is, $\{\tau : \{u_1, v_1\} \subset \tau\} \cap \{\tau : \{u_2, v_2\} \subset \tau\} = \emptyset$. Although the links of u_1v_1 and u_2v_2 might share vertices and edges, the contractions of u_1v_1 and u_2v_2 do not affect the same triangle.

Our proof proceeds in two steps. First, we focus on the contractible edges of K by considering a subgraph G_{K} that contains all vertices and only the contractible edges of K. We prove that a maximal matching of G_{K} has linear size. Second, we prove that any maximal matching of G_{K} contains an independent subset of edges of linear size. Moreover, they can be found using a greedy strategy.

LEMMA 6 *Let n be the number of vertices in K and let g be the genus of M_{K}. Assume that $g > 0$. Any maximal matching of G_{K} matches at least $(n - 1310g + 30)/16$ vertices.*

Proof. Our proof uses some geometric operations, so we again work with a geometric realization $\widehat{\mathsf{K}}$ of K. We use S to denote the underlying surface of $\widehat{\mathsf{K}}$, i.e., S is the set of points on $\widehat{\mathsf{K}}$ without the triangulation structure. We obtain an embedding of G_{K} on S by first drawing all vertices and edges of $\widehat{\mathsf{K}}$ on S and then erasing all the non-contractible edges. G_{K} induces a subdivision of S which we denote by $G_{\mathsf{K}}(\mathsf{S})$.

Pick a maximal matching of G_{K}. Let H_{K} be the subgraph of G_{K} (embedded on S) consisting of matched vertices and the edges of G_{K} between them. So H_{K} contains all matching edges but some edges of H_{K} may not be matching edges. As our argument proceeds, we will create some segments on S, called *purple segments*, that connect matched vertices. The purple segments can be straight or curved. The purple segments will be used later to form a new graph with H_{K}.

We bound the number of unmatched vertices by charging them to edges in H_{K} and the purple segments as well as by forming a family $\mathcal{F}_4$ of crossing cycle pairs. We charge for the unmatched vertices one by one in an arbitrary order. Let v be an unmatched vertex. If the degree of v in G_{K} is at most 1, then Lemma 4(ii) applies and a pair of critical cycles cross at v. We charge for v by adding this cycle pair to $\mathcal{F}_4$.

Suppose that the degree of v in G_{K} is larger than 1. Since v is unmatched, all neighbors of v in G_{K} are matched. Let u and w be two consecutive neighbors of v in G_{K}. Let R be a region in $G_{\mathsf{K}}(\mathsf{S})$ such that uv and vw lie consecutively on the boundary of R. R covers some triangles in the star of v in $\widehat{K}$, see Figure 5. We pick a subset of triangles in the star of v covered by R such that the closure of the union of these triangles is bounded by uv and vw. Let R_{uvw} denote the closure of the union of the triangles picked. Note that any incident edge of v in $\widehat{\mathsf{K}}$ that lies inside R_{uvw} is non-contractible. There are three different ways to charge for v.

Case 1: v is not incident to any edge in $\widehat{\mathsf{K}}$ that lies inside R_{uvw}. It follows that R_{uvw} is a triangle in $\widehat{\mathsf{K}}$ and $R_{uvw} = uvw$. So uw is an edge in $\widehat{\mathsf{K}}$. Since $R_{uvw} \subseteq R$, either uw lies inside R or uw lies on the boundary of R.

Case 1.1: uw is an edge in G_{K}. It follows that R is the region bounded by uv, vw and uw. Since u and w are matched vertices, uw belongs to H_{K} too. We charge for v by putting a red pebble at uw. Since uw bounds at most two regions in $G_{\mathsf{K}}(\mathsf{S})$, case 1.1 can be applied at most twice to uw producing at most two red pebbles on uw. Thus, each edge of H_{K} receives at most two red pebbles.

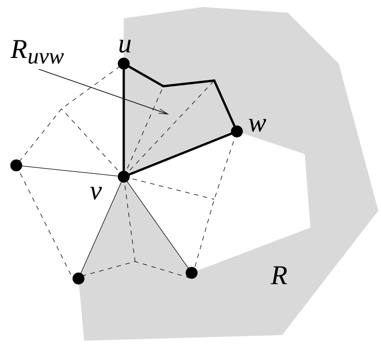

Figure 5: The solid line segments are incident edges of v in G_{K}. The dashed line segments are the edges in the link and star of v in $\widehat{\mathsf{K}}$. The shaded region is R. The region bounded by bold line segments is R_{uvw}.

Case 1.2: uw is not an edge in G_{K}. So uw is non-contractible. If we have created a purple segment γ_{uw} connecting u and w before, we put a green pebble at γ_{uw} to charge for v. Otherwise, we create the straight purple segment $\gamma_{uw} = uw$ and put a green pebble at γ_{uw} to charge for v.

We claim that the purple segment γ_{uw} receives at most two green pebbles overall. If γ_{uw} receives a second green pebble, the boundary of R is a closed polygonal line connecting four vertices. The four vertices are u, v, w, and an unmatched vertex v' such that v', u and w satisfy the conditions of case 1 and case 1.2 (with v replaced by v'). That is, $\gamma_{uw} = uw$ and two green pebbles are put at γ_{uw} to charge for v and v'. Since R does not have any unmatched vertex on its boundary other than v and v', γ_{uw} cannot receive a third green pebble. In all, each purple segment receives at most two green pebbles.

Case 2: Some edge xv in $\widehat{\mathsf{K}}$ lies inside R_{uvw}. Recall that any incident edge of v that lies inside R_{uvw} is non-contractible. So xv is non-contractible and xv lies on a critical cycle A. Let vy and xy be the other two edges in A. If vy also lies inside R_{uvw}, then Lemma 4(ii) applies (recall that all incident edges of v in $\widehat{\mathsf{K}}$ that lie inside R_{uvw} are non-contractible). So there is a pair of critical cycles crossing at v. We charge for v by adding this cycle pair to $\mathcal{F}_4$.

Suppose that vy does not lie inside R_{uvw}. If we have not created a purple segment γ_{uw} connecting u and w before, we create γ_{uw} as follows. If uw is an edge in $\widehat{\mathsf{K}}$, we set $\gamma_{uw} = uw$. Otherwise, we draw γ_{uw} as a segment, curved if necessary, inside R_{uvw}. Clearly, γ_{uw} does not cross any edge of H_{K}. Moreover, by our drawing strategy, γ_{uw} does not cross any other purple segments created before.

After creating γ_{uw} if necessary, we check the number of blue pebbles at γ_{uw}. If γ_{uw} contains less than three blue pebbles, we add a blue pebble to γ_{uw} to charge for v. If γ_{uw} already contains three blue pebbles, these blue pebbles were introduced to charge for three unmatched vertices v_i, $1 \leq i \leq 3$, other than v adjacent to u and w. We pick v_k not equal to x or y (recall that x and y are vertices of the critical cycle A passing through v). Let B be the cycle consisting of the edges uv, vw, wv_k, and $v_k u$.

Since xv lies inside R_{uvw} and vy does not lie inside R_{uvw}, A and B cross at v. We add the cycle pair (A, B) to $\mathcal{F}_4$ to charge for v.

By Corollary 3, $|\mathcal{F}_4| \leq 1280g$. It remains to bound the total number of pebbles on the edges of H_{K} and the purple segments. Recall that there is no crossing among the edges of H_{K} and the purple segments. We pick a minimal connected graph H^* embedded on S that contains H_{K} and the purple segments. By minimality, H^* has the same vertex set as H_{K} which is the set of matched vertices. Let N and E be the number of vertices and edges in H^*. (So N denotes the number of matched vertices.) By Euler's relation, $E \leq 3N - 6 + 6g$. Since each edge of H_{K} carries at most two red pebbles and each purple segment carries at most two green pebbles and at most three blue pebbles, the total number of pebbles in H^* is at most $5E \leq 15N - 30 + 30g$.

It follows that the number of unmatched vertices is bounded by $1280g + 5E \leq 15N - 30 + 1310g$. Hence, $n \leq N + 15N - 30 + 1310g$ which implies that $N \geq (n - 1310g + 30)/16$. ◻

THEOREM 7 *Let n be the number of vertices of K and let g be the genus of M_{K}. Assume that $g > 0$. For any constant $d > 380$, if $n \geq \frac{(6008+1310d)g-888-30d}{d-380}$, then there are at least $\frac{n-1310g+30}{64(d+1)}$ independent contractible edges such that the link of each such edges has at most d vertices.*

Proof. Let M be some maximal matching of contractible edges. We use $|M|$ to denote the number of matching edges in M. By Lemma 6, $|M| \geq (n - 1310g + 30)/32$. Given a matching edge uv, we call the number of vertices in the link of uv the size of the link. Note that the size of the link of uv is $\mathrm{degree}(u) + \mathrm{degree}(v) - 4$. Take any constant $d > 380$. We claim that there are at least $|M|/2$ matching edges such that the sizes of their links are at most d. Suppose not. Then the sum of the sizes of the links of matching edges is greater than $d \cdot |M|/2$. This implies that the sum of the degrees of the endpoints of matching edges is greater than $(d+4)|M|/2 \geq (d+4)(n-1310g+30)/64$ which is at least $6n-12+12g$ by our setting of d and n. This is a contradiction since by Euler's relation, the sum of the degrees of vertices of K is at most $6n - 12 + 12g$. We pick the independent contractible edges as follows. First, we mark all matching edges in M. We pick a marked matching edge e whose link has size at most d, unmark e as well as all other matching edges that are not disjoint from the link of e. We repeat the above until no more matching edge can be picked. Since at most $d + 1$ matching edges can be unmarked in each iteration, at least $|M|/(2(d + 1))$ matching edges must be picked. ◻

Although the proof of Theorem 7 uses a maximal matching M of contractible edges, it is not necessary to compute M first. We initialize an empty output set of edges EDGE_SET. Then we examine the edges of K in an arbitrary order and grow EDGE_SET. For each edge e, we determine whether e is contractible, the link of e has size at most d, and e and the edges in EDGE_SET are independent. If these three conditions are satisfied, we add e to EDGE_SET. Observe that the final EDGE_SET is a subset of a maximal matching of contractible edges. The correctness of this method thus follows from the fact that any maximal matching of contractible edges allows the proof of Theorem 7 to go through.

If we contract an edge to one of its endpoints, we obtain a special vertex decimation. One can also use such special vertex decimations to build a hierarchy of logarithmic depth. The advantage is that such special vertex decimation affects fewer triangles than the edge contraction. Thus, one can potentially pick more independent vertex decimations. This should improve the depth of the hierarchy and hence the time to construct the hierarchy in practice. The disadvantage of the special vertex decimation is that one does not have the flexibility to position the new vertex to optimize the geometric approximation error.

In all, we have the following theorem.

THEOREM 8 *Given a triangulated closed surface of n vertices and genus $g > 0$, a topology-preserving hierarchy of models of decreasing level of detail can be constructed by repeated contractions of independent contractible edges. Each edge contraction affects $O(1)$ triangles. The hierarchy has $O(\log n + g)$ depth and $O(n + g^2)$ size.*

The algorithm as described above takes $O(n + g^2)$ time. In practice, the edge contractions should be selected to keep the geometric approximation error small. Our greedy strategy resembles existing methods employed by some computer graphics researchers to construct hierarchies [4, 15, 19]. They develop heuristic functions to measure the geometric error of local updates (vertex decimations or edge contractions). The local updates are sorted in increasing order of geometric error using such a heuristic function. Then the sorted list is examined in order to pick an independent subset. The sorting takes $O(m \log m)$ time, where m is the size of the current model. There is no worst-case guarantee on the geometric approximation error of the simplified surface. However, experimental results are often good.

We can apply the same preprocessing to sort the edges. We suggest using the quadric error proposed by Garland and Heckbert [10] for edge contractions.[4] Evaluating the quadric error of the contraction of an edge e is done in $O(1)$ time by solving a system of three linear equations involving three variables. The solution also tells the location of the new vertex that e should be contracted to. After sorting the edges, we scan the sorted list using our greedy strategy to select independent contractible edges whose links have $O(1)$ size. We can simplify the surface until the triangulation is irreducible or we can stop earlier depending on the quality of the simplified surface. Due to sorting, the time complexity of the algorithm increases to $O(n \log n + g^2 \log g)$.

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Appendix I

First, we prove that $B_1 \circ B_2$ is well defined when both B_1 and B_2 are simple cycles.

[4]Garland and Heckbert studied surface simplification and did not consider the computation of a hierarchy in their paper [10].

LEMMA 9 *Given two simple cycles B_1 and B_2 in K, $B_1 \circ B_2$ is independent of the perturbation of B_1.*

Proof. Let ξ_1 and ξ_1' be two simple closed curves on $\widehat{\mathsf{K}}$ obtained by different perturbations of B_1. Let e be an edge of B_1. Let γ and γ' be the two perturbed versions of e in ξ_1 and ξ_1' respectively. We modify ξ_1 by replacing γ with γ' and examine the parity of crossings between the new closed curve and B_2. If B_2 does not contain e, it is clear that the crossing status at the endpoints of e remain unchanged after the replacement (i.e., an endpoint is a crossing after the replacement iff it was a crossing). Consider the case where B_2 contains e. If γ and γ' lie inside the same triangle of $\widehat{\mathsf{K}}$ incident to e, the crossing status at each endpoint of e remains unchanged after the replacement. If γ and γ' lie inside different triangles of $\widehat{\mathsf{K}}$ incident to e, the crossing status at each endpoint of e is switched after the replacement (i.e., an endpoint is a crossing after the replacement iff it was not a crossing). Thus, the parity remains unchanged. ◻

We are ready to prove that $B_1 \circ B_2$ is well defined when B_2 is a sum of simple cycles.

LEMMA 10 *Given a simple cycle B_1 and a sum B_2 of simple cycles in K, $B_1 \circ B_2$ is independent of the sum expression of B_2 and the perturbation of B_1.*

Proof. Let v be a shared vertex between B_1 and B_2. Let ξ_1 be the simple closed curve on $\widehat{\mathsf{K}}$ obtained by a perturbation of B_1. ξ_1 divides a small neighborhood of v into two topological disks N_1 and N_2. Since B_2 is a sum of simple cycles, the number of edges of B_2 incident to v is even. It follows that the numbers of edges of B_2 in N_1 and N_2 have the same parity. The parity of the crossings of ξ_1 and B_2 at v is completely determined by whether N_i contains an odd or even number of edges of B_2. If N_i contains an odd number of edges, the parity of crossings of ξ_1 and B_2 at v is odd. Otherwise, the parity is even. So the sum expression of B_2 is unimportant. We can also argue, as in the proof of Lemma 9, that the choice of ξ_1 is unimportant. ◻

Appendix II

We bound $|\mathcal{F}_\ell|$ in two steps. First, we select a subset $\mathcal{S}_\ell \subseteq \mathcal{F}_\ell$ that enjoys some special properties. The special properties of $\mathcal{S}_\ell$ then allow us to pick a subset $\mathcal{F}_\ell' \subseteq \mathcal{S}_\ell$ such that $|\mathcal{F}_\ell'|$ is at least some constant factor of $|\mathcal{F}_\ell|$ and any two distinct C_i and C_j in $\mathcal{F}_\ell'$ are non-homologous. The fact that K has at most $2g$ non-homologous cycles implies an upper bound on $|\mathcal{F}_\ell'|$. Hence, we obtain an upper bound on $|\mathcal{F}_\ell|$.

The following result proves the properties of $\mathcal{S}_\ell$ required.

LEMMA 11 *There is a subset $\mathcal{S}_\ell \subseteq \mathcal{F}_\ell$ of cardinality at least $|\mathcal{F}_\ell|/20$ such that for any two distinct C_i and C_j in $\mathcal{S}_\ell$, C_i does not contain the anchor of C_j.*

Proof. Let G be the graph formed by the union of C_i's in $\mathcal{F}_\ell$. Each C_i has three edges, so the degree sum of vertices in G is at most $6 \cdot |\mathcal{F}_\ell|$. We claim that there are at least $|\mathcal{F}_\ell|/2$ anchors in G of degree nine or less. Otherwise, the degree sum of anchors in G is at least

$10x+2(|\mathcal{F}_\ell|-x) = 8x+2|\mathcal{F}_\ell|$, where $x > |\mathcal{F}_\ell|/2$ is the number of anchors in G of degree ten or more. So the degree sum is greater than $6 \cdot |\mathcal{F}_\ell|$ which is a contradiction. We pick a maximal independent subset of anchors in G whose degrees are at most nine. Then we set $\mathcal{S}_\ell = \{(C_i, D_i) : \text{the anchor of } C_i \text{ is picked}\}$. Clearly, $|\mathcal{S}_\ell| \geq |\mathcal{F}_\ell|/20$ and for any $C_i \neq C_j$ in $\mathcal{S}_\ell$, C_i does not contain the anchor of C_j. ⊔⊓

Next, we pick the subset $\mathcal{F}'_\ell \subseteq \mathcal{S}_\ell$ as follows. We partition the set of C_i's in $\mathcal{S}_\ell$ into the collection $\{\mathcal{H}_r\}$ where each $\mathcal{H}_r$ is a maximum subset of mutually homologous cycles. Our strategy is to pick one C_i from each $\mathcal{H}_r$ and set $\mathcal{F}'_\ell = \{(C_i, D_i) : C_i \text{ picked}\}$. Then by showing that $|\mathcal{H}_r| = O(1)$, we obtain $|\mathcal{F}'_\ell| = \Theta(|\mathcal{S}_\ell|) = \Theta(|\mathcal{F}_\ell|)$. For $|\mathcal{F}_3|$, we show in Lemma 13 that $|\mathcal{H}_r| \leq 6$. For $\ell \geq 3$, we give a cruder analysis in Lemma 15 to show that $|\mathcal{H}_r| \leq \ell^3/2$. First, we need some definitions and a lemma that will be used repeatedly.

Define a *whisk* to be a collection of mutually homologous C_i's in $\mathcal{F}_\ell$ such that the C_i's share a common edge xy and neither x nor y is the anchor of any C_i in the collection. We call xy the *axis* of the whisk. Given a whisk W, we use W^* to denote the set of vertices and edges in W, i.e., the graph formed by the union of the cycles in W. We also call W^* a whisk for convenience.

LEMMA 12 *Let W be a whisk. Let xy be the axis of W. Let $\mathcal{Z}$ be a set of whisks such that*

(i) any two cycles in $W \cup \bigcup_{V \in \mathcal{Z}} V$ are homologous,

(ii) $W \cap V = \emptyset$ for any $V \in \mathcal{Z}$,

(iii) $U^* \cap V^* \subseteq \{x, y\}$ for any two distinct whisks $U, V \in \mathcal{Z}$.

Then $|\mathcal{Z}| \leq \ell - |W|$ and $|W| \leq \ell$.

Proof. Let C_i be a cycle in W. Let D_i be the cycle that pairs up with C_i in $\mathcal{F}_\ell$. By definition, $D_i \circ C_i = 1$. Since C_i and C_j are homologous for any cycle C_j in any whisk in $\mathcal{Z}$, $D_i \circ C_j = D_i \circ C_i = 1$ by Lemma 2. It follows that D_i contains a vertex w of C_j. The vertex w cannot be x or y as D_i does not share an edge with C_i. Since $U^* \cap V^* \subseteq \{x, y\}$ for any two distinct whisks $U, V \in \mathcal{Z}$, it follows that each whisk in $\mathcal{Z}$ contributes at least one distinct vertex in D_i. By the same reasoning, D_i must contain the anchors of all cycles in W. Since D_i has length at most ℓ, we conclude that $|\mathcal{Z}| \leq \ell - |W|$. As $|\mathcal{Z}| \geq 0$, rearranging terms yields $|W| \leq \ell$. ⊔⊓

The following lemma gives the lower bound on $|\mathcal{F}'_3|$.

LEMMA 13 *There is a subset $\mathcal{F}'_3 \subseteq \mathcal{F}_3$ of cardinality at least $|\mathcal{F}_3|/120$ such that for two distinct C_i and C_j in $\mathcal{F}'_3$, C_i and C_j are non-homologous.*

Proof. Let $\mathcal{S}_3 \subseteq \mathcal{F}_3$ be the set satisfying Lemma 11. Let $\mathcal{H}$ be a maximum subset of mutually homologous C_i's in $\mathcal{S}_3$. Our goal is to bound $|\mathcal{H}|$. We pick maximal whisks $W_r \subseteq \mathcal{H}$, $1 \leq r \leq m$, in a greedy fashion such that $W_r^* \cap W_s^* = \emptyset$ for $1 \leq r \neq s \leq m$. By greediness, $\{W_1, \cdots, W_m\}$ is maximal. We partition $\mathcal{H} - \bigcup_{r=1}^m W_r$ into a collection $\mathcal{Y}$ of maximal whisks. For any whisk $V \in \mathcal{Y}$, observe that:

- Since $\{W_1, \cdots, W_m\}$ is maximal, $V^* \cap W_r^* \neq \emptyset$ for some $1 \leq r \leq m$.

- If $V^* \cap W_r^* \neq \emptyset$, then $V^* \cap W_r^* = \{x\}$ for some endpoint x of the axis of W_r and x is not the anchor of any cycle in V by property of $\mathcal{S}_3$.
- For any two distinct $U, V \in \mathcal{Y}$, U^* does not contain the anchor of any cycle in V by property of $\mathcal{S}_3$.

By Lemma 12 ($W = W_r$ and $\mathcal{Z} = \{W_1, \cdots, W_m\} - \{W_r\}$) , we have $m - 1 \leq 3 - |W_r|$ and $|W_r| \leq 3$. Since $|W_r| \geq 1$, we have $m \leq 3$. We conduct a case analysis to show that $|\mathcal{H}| \leq 6$.

Case 1: $m = 1$. Let x_1x_2 be the axis of W_1. We partition $\mathcal{Y}$ into $\mathcal{Y}_1 \cup \mathcal{Y}_2$, where

$$\mathcal{Y}_j = \{V \in \mathcal{Y} : V^* \cap W_1^* = \{x_j\}\}.$$

If $|W_1| = 3$, then by Lemma 12 ($W = W_1$ and $\mathcal{Z} = \mathcal{Y}_j$), $|\mathcal{Y}_j| \leq 3 - |W_1| = 0$. So $|\mathcal{H}| = |W_1| + |\mathcal{Y}_1| + |\mathcal{Y}_2| = |W_1| = 3$. Consider the case where $1 \leq |W_1| \leq 2$. For any whisk $V \in \mathcal{Y}_j$, by Lemma 12 ($W = V$ and $\mathcal{Z} = \{W_1\} \cup (\mathcal{Y}_j - \{V\})$), we have $(|\mathcal{Y}_j| - 1) + 1 \leq 3 - |V|$. It follows that $|\mathcal{Y}_j| \leq 3 - |V|$. Thus, if $|V| = 2$, then $|\mathcal{Y}_j| = 1$; if $|V| = 1$, then $|\mathcal{Y}_j| \leq 2$. This implies that there are at most four cycles in $\mathcal{H} - W_1$. So $|\mathcal{H}| \leq |W_1| + 4 \leq 6$.

Case 2: $m = 2$. For $1 \leq r \leq 2$, let $x_{r1}x_{r2}$ be the axis of W_r. We partition $\mathcal{Y}$ into $\mathcal{Y}_{11} \cup \mathcal{Y}_{12} \cup \mathcal{Y}_{21} \cup \mathcal{Y}_{22} \cup \mathcal{X}$, where

$$\begin{aligned} \mathcal{Y}_{rj} &= \{V \in \mathcal{Y} : V^* \cap W_r^* = \{x_{rj}\}, V^* \cap W_{3-r}^* = \emptyset\} \\ \mathcal{X} &= \{V \in \mathcal{Y} : V^* \cap W_1^* \neq \emptyset, V^* \cap W_2^* \neq \emptyset\}. \end{aligned}$$

By Lemma 12 ($W = W_r$ and $\mathcal{Z} = \{W_{3-r}\} \cup \mathcal{Y}_{rj}$), we have $|\mathcal{Y}_{rj}| + 1 \leq 3 - |W_r|$ which implies that

$$|\mathcal{Y}_{rj}| \leq 2 - |W_r|. \tag{1}$$

Also, observe that $0 \leq |\mathcal{X}| \leq 4$.

If $|\mathcal{X}| = 0$, then $|\mathcal{H}| = \sum_{r=1}^{2}(|W_r| + |\mathcal{Y}_{r1}| + |\mathcal{Y}_{r2}|)$. By (1), we have $|\mathcal{H}| \leq 8 - |W_1| - |W_2| \leq 6$.

Suppose that $1 \leq |\mathcal{X}| \leq 2$. Let V be any whisk in $\mathcal{X}$. For $1 \leq r \leq 2$, by Lemma 12 ($W = V$ and $\mathcal{Z} = \{W_1, W_2\} \cup \mathcal{Y}_{rj}$ for some choice of r and j such that $V^* \cap W_r^* = \{x_{rj}\}$), we have $|\mathcal{Y}_{r1}| + 2 \leq 3 - |V|$ or $|\mathcal{Y}_{r2}| + 2 \leq 3 - |V|$. So $|\mathcal{Y}_{r1}| = 0$ or $|\mathcal{Y}_{r2}| = 0$, say $|\mathcal{Y}_{r1}| = 0$. Thus, $|\mathcal{H}| = |\mathcal{X}| + \sum_{r=1}^{2}(|W_r| + |\mathcal{Y}_{r2}|)$. By (1), $|\mathcal{H}| \leq |\mathcal{X}| + 4 \leq 6$.

Suppose that $3 \leq |\mathcal{X}| \leq 4$. For $1 \leq r \leq 2$, there exists an endpoint x of the axis of W_r where there are at least two distinct whisks $U_r, V_r \in \mathcal{X}$ such that $U_r^* \cap W_r^* = V_r^* \cap W_r^* = \{x\}$. For $1 \leq j \leq 2$, by Lemma 12 ($W = W_r$ and $\mathcal{Z} = \{U_r, V_r\} \cup \mathcal{Y}_{rj}$), we obtain $|\mathcal{Y}_{rj}| + 2 \leq 3 - |W_r|$ which implies that $|\mathcal{Y}_{rj}| = 0$. By Lemma 12 ($W = W_r$ and $\mathcal{Z} = \{U_r, V_r\}$), we have $2 \leq 3 - |W_r|$ which implies that $|W_r| = 1$. Thus, $|\mathcal{H}| = |\mathcal{X}| + |W_1| + |W_2| \leq 6$.

Case 3: $m = 3$. By Lemma 12 ($W = W_r$ and $\mathcal{Z} = \{W_1, W_2, W_3\} - \{W_r\}$), $2 \leq 3 - |W_r|$ which implies that $|W_r| = 1$. We claim that $\mathcal{H} - \bigcup_{r=1}^{m} W_r$ is empty. Suppose not.

Let C_j be a cycle in $\mathcal{H} - \bigcup_{r=1}^m W_r$ and let D_j be the cycle that pairs up with C_j in $\mathcal{F}_3$. By Lemma 2, D_j shares a vertex with W_r^* for $1 \leq r \leq 3$. For $1 \leq r \leq 3$, W_r^* does not contain the anchor $C_j \cap D_j$ by property of $\mathcal{S}_3$. So D_j must contain at least four vertices, a contradiction. Thus, $|\mathcal{H}| = \sum_{r=1}^3 |W_r| = 3$.

This completes the proof that $|\mathcal{H}| \leq 6$ for any maximum subset of mutually homologous C_i's in $\mathcal{S}_3$. We pick one C_i from each maximum subset $\mathcal{H}$ of mutually homologous C_i's in $\mathcal{S}_3$. Let $\mathcal{F}'_3 = \{(C_i, D_i) : C_i \text{ picked}\}$. Since $|\mathcal{S}_3| \geq |\mathcal{F}_3|/20$ and $|\mathcal{H}| \leq 6$, $|\mathcal{F}'_3| \geq |\mathcal{F}_3|/120$. ◻

COROLLARY 14 $|\mathcal{F}_3| \leq 240g$.

Proof. If $\mathsf{M_K}$ has genus g, then K contains at most $2g$ cycles that are mutually non-homologous. Thus, $|\mathcal{F}'_3| \leq 2g$. Then Lemma 13 implies that $|\mathcal{F}_3| \leq 240g$. ◻

The following lemma gives a cruder lower bound on $|\mathcal{F}'_\ell|$ for $\ell \geq 3$.

LEMMA 15 *There is a subset $\mathcal{F}'_\ell \subseteq \mathcal{F}_\ell$ of cardinality at least $|\mathcal{F}_\ell|/(10\ell^3)$ such that for any two distinct C_i and C_j in $\mathcal{F}'_\ell$, C_i and C_j are non-homologous.*

Proof. Let $\mathcal{S}_\ell \subseteq \mathcal{F}_\ell$ be a subset satisfying Lemma 11. Let $\mathcal{H}$ be a maximum subset of mutually homologous C_i's in $\mathcal{S}_\ell$. We first bound $|\mathcal{H}|$. We pick maximal whisks $W_r \subseteq \mathcal{H}$, $1 \leq r \leq m$, in a greedy fashion such that $W_r^* \cap W_s^* = \emptyset$ for $1 \leq r \neq s \leq m$. By greediness, $\{W_1, \cdots, W_m\}$ is maximal. By Lemma 12 ($W = W_r$ and $\mathcal{Z} = \{W_1, \cdots, W_m\} - \{W_r\}$), $m - 1 \leq \ell - |W_r|$ which implies that $m \leq \ell$ and

$$|W_r| \leq \ell + 1 - m. \tag{2}$$

We partition $\mathcal{H} - \bigcup_{r=1}^m W_r$ into a collection $\mathcal{Y}$ of maximal whisks. Take any whisk $V \in \mathcal{Y}$. By Lemma 12 ($W = V$ and $\mathcal{Z} = \{W_1, \cdots, W_m\}$), we have $m \leq \ell - |V|$ which implies that

$$|V| \leq \ell - m, \text{for any } V \in \mathcal{Y}. \tag{3}$$

Let $x_{r1}x_{r2}$ be the axis of W_r. Let s_{rj}, $1 \leq j \leq 2$, be the number of whisks V in $\mathcal{Y}$ such that $V^* \cap W_r^* = \{x_{rj}\}$. By Lemma 12 ($W = W_r$ and $\mathcal{Z}$ = the set of whisks in $\mathcal{Y}$ that share x_{rj} with W_r^*), we have

$$s_{rj} \leq \ell - |W_r|. \tag{4}$$

Thus,

$$\begin{aligned}
|\mathcal{H}| &\overset{(3)}{\leq} \sum_{r=1}^m (|W_r| + (s_{r1} + s_{r2}) \cdot (\ell - m)) \\
&\overset{(4)}{\leq} \sum_{r=1}^m (|W_r| + 2(\ell - |W_r|)(\ell - m)) \\
&= \sum_{r=1}^m (2\ell(\ell - m) - (2\ell - 2m - 1)|W_r|).
\end{aligned}$$

If $m = \ell$, then $|\mathcal{H}| \le \sum_{r=1}^{m} |W_r| \le \ell$ by (2). If $m < \ell$, then $|\mathcal{H}| < \sum_{r=1}^{m} 2\ell(\ell - m) = 2m\ell(\ell - m)$. This bound is maximized when $m = \ell/2$. So $|\mathcal{H}| < \ell^3/2$.

We pick one C_i from each maximal subset $\mathcal{H}$ of mutually homologous C_i's in $\mathcal{S}_\ell$. Let $\mathcal{F}'_\ell = \{(C_i, D_i) : C_i \text{ picked}\}$. Since $|\mathcal{S}_\ell| \ge |\mathcal{F}_\ell|/20$, $|\mathcal{F}'_\ell| \ge \frac{2}{\ell^3} \cdot \frac{1}{20} \cdot |\mathcal{F}_\ell| = |\mathcal{F}_\ell|/(10\ell^3)$. ◻

COROLLARY 16 *For* $\ell \ge 3$, $|\mathcal{F}_\ell| \le 20\ell^3 \cdot g$.

Proof. If M_K has genus g, then K contains at most $2g$ cycles that are mutually non-homologous. Thus, $|\mathcal{F}'_\ell| \le 2g$. The result then follows from Lemma 15. ◻

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