ITERATION AT THE BOUNDARY OF THE SPACE OF RATIONAL MAPS

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Abstract. Let $\text{Rat}_d$ denote the space of holomorphic self-maps of $\mathbb{P}^1$ of degree $d \geq 2$, and $\mu_f$ the measure of maximal entropy for $f \in \text{Rat}_d$. The map of measures $f \mapsto \mu_f$ is known to be continuous on $\text{Rat}_d$, and it is shown here to extend continuously to the boundary of $\text{Rat}_d$ in $\overline{\text{Rat}_d} \simeq \mathbb{P}^{2d+1}$, except along a locus $I(d)$ of codimension $d + 1$. The set $I(d)$ is also the indeterminacy locus of the iterate map $f \mapsto f^n$ for every $n \geq 2$. The limiting measures are given explicitly, away from $I(d)$. The degenerations of rational maps are also described in terms of metrics of non-negative curvature on the Riemann sphere: the limits are polyhedral.

For each integer $d \geq 1$, let $\text{Rat}_d$ denote the space of holomorphic maps $f : \mathbb{P}^1 \to \mathbb{P}^1$ of degree $d$ with the topology of uniform convergence. Fixing a coordinate system on the projective line, each such map can be expressed as a ratio of homogeneous polynomials $f(z : w) = (P(z, w) : Q(z, w))$, where $P$ and $Q$ have no common factors and are both of degree $d$. Parameterizing the space $\text{Rat}_d$ by the coefficients of $P$ and $Q$, we have

$$\text{Rat}_d \simeq \mathbb{P}^{2d+1} - V(\text{Res}),$$

where $V(\text{Res})$ is the hypersurface of polynomial pairs $(P, Q)$ for which the resultant vanishes. In particular, $\text{Rat}_d$ is smooth and affine.

In this paper, we aim to describe the possible limiting behavior of a sequence of rational maps which diverges in $\text{Rat}_d$, for each $d \geq 2$, in terms of the measures of maximal entropy and corresponding conformal metrics on the Riemann sphere. This is the first step in describing a natural compactification of this space, or a boundary of the moduli space $\text{Rat}_d / \text{PSL}_2 \mathbb{C}$, which is well-behaved under iteration. A compactification of the moduli space has been studied by Milnor [Mi] and Epstein [Ep] in degree 2 and Silverman [Sil] in all degrees, but iteration does not extend continuously to this boundary, as first seen in [Ep]. See [De2] for more details.

We can associate to every point in $\overline{\text{Rat}_d} \simeq \mathbb{P}^{2d+1}$ a self-map of the Riemann sphere of degree $\leq d$, together with a finite set of marked points. Namely, each $f \in \overline{\text{Rat}_d}$ determines the coefficients for a pair of homogeneous polynomials, defining a map on $\mathbb{P}^1$ away from finitely many holes,
the shared roots of the pair of polynomials. Each hole comes with a multiplicity, the depth of the hole. We also define a probability measure \( \mu_f \) for each \( f \in \text{Rat}_d \). For \( f \in \text{Rat}_d \), we let \( \mu_f \) be the unique measure of maximal entropy for \( f \) so that \( \mu_f = \mu_{f^n} \) for all iterates of \( f \). See [Ly], [FLM], and [Ma1]. For each \( f \) in the complement of \( \text{Rat}_d \), the measure \( \mu_f \) will be a countable sum of delta masses, with atoms at the holes of \( f \) and along their backward orbits. See Section 1 for the definitions.

The indeterminacy locus \( I(d) \subset \text{Rat}_d \) in the boundary of \( \text{Rat}_d \) consists of degree 0 maps such that the constant value is also one of the holes. The codimension of \( I(d) \) is \( d + 1 \). For each \( f \not\in I(d) \), we will see in Section 2 that \( \mu_f = \mu_{f^n} \) for all iterates of \( f \). We prove,

**Theorem 1.** Fix \( d \geq 2 \), and suppose \( \{ f_k \} \) is a sequence in \( \text{Rat}_d \) converging in \( \text{Rat}_d \) to \( f \not\in \text{Rat}_d \).

(a) For \( f \not\in I(d) \), the measures of maximal entropy \( \mu_{f_k} \) for \( f_k \) converge weakly to \( \mu_f \).

(b) For \( f \in I(d) \), any subsequential limit \( \nu \) of the measures \( \mu_{f_k} \) must satisfy \( \nu(\{c\}) \geq d_c/(d_c + d) \), where \( c \in \mathbb{P}^1 \) is both the constant value of \( f \) and a hole of depth \( d_c \geq 1 \).

If \( f \not\in I(d) \) has a hole at \( h \in \mathbb{P}^1 \) of depth \( d_h \geq 1 \), then \( \mu_f(\{h\}) \geq d_h/d \). In Section 5 Example 1, we provide examples in \( \text{Rat}_d \) for every \( d \geq 2 \) which realize the lower bound of part (b) when \( d_c = 1 \), so that \( \nu(\{c\}) = 1/(d + 1) \).

**The iterate map.** Theorem 1 is, in part, an extension of a result of Mañé which states that the measures of maximal entropy vary continuously (in the weak topology) over \( \text{Rat}_d \) [Ma2, Thm B]. The proof of Theorem 1 relies on the study of the iterate map \( \Phi_n : \text{Rat}_d \rightarrow \text{Rat}_{d^n} \) which sends a rational map \( f \) to its \( n \)-th iterate \( f^n \). The iterate map \( \Phi_n \) extends to a rational map from \( \text{Rat}_d \) to \( \text{Rat}_{d^n} \). We obtain,

**Theorem 2.** For each \( d \geq 2 \), the following are equivalent:

(i) \( g \in \text{Rat}_d \) is in the indeterminacy locus \( I(d) \),

(ii) the iterate map \( \Phi_n \) is undefined at \( g \) for some \( n \geq 2 \),

(iii) the iterate map \( \Phi_n \) is undefined at \( g \) for all \( n \geq 2 \), and

(iv) the map \( f \mapsto \mu_f \) is discontinuous at \( g \).

In particular, the map of measures \( f \mapsto \mu_f \) extends continuously from \( \text{Rat}_d \) to a point \( g \) in the boundary if and only if the iterate map \( \Phi_n \) extends continuously to \( g \) for some \( n \geq 2 \). The understanding of the iterate map also motivated Theorem 1, and from it we obtain the following corollary.

**Corollary 3.** The iterate map \( \Phi_n : \text{Rat}_d \rightarrow \text{Rat}_{d^n} \) given by \( f \mapsto f^n \) is proper for all \( n \) and \( d \geq 2 \).

**Proof.** The measure of maximal entropy \( \mu_f \) for \( f \in \text{Rat}_d \) is always non-atomic, and the map \( f \mapsto \mu_f \) is continuous (with the topology of weak convergence on the space of probability measures on the Riemann sphere)
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on $\text{Rat}_d$. Now, suppose $\{f_k\}$ diverges in $\text{Rat}_d$. There exists a subsequence of the maximal measures $\mu_{f_k}$ which converges weakly to a measure $\nu$. By Theorem 1, $\nu$ has atoms. Recall that for $f \in \text{Rat}_d$, the measure $\mu_f$ is also the measure of maximal entropy for all the iterates of $f$. If for some $n$ the sequence of iterates $\{f_k^n\}$ converges in $\text{Rat}_{dn}$, the measures $\mu_{f_k}$ would have to converge to a non-atomic measure. □

Note that properness does not hold in degree 1, where $\text{Rat}_1 \simeq \text{PGL}_2 \mathbb{C}$, since there are unbounded families of elliptic Möbius maps of finite order. For example, the family $f_k(z) = k/z$ diverges in $\text{Rat}_1$ as $k \to \infty$, but $f_k^2(z) = z$ for all $k$. Properness of the iterate map for degrees $> 1$ should be intuitively obvious, but analyzing its behavior near $I(d)$ is somewhat delicate.

Dynamics at the boundary. In Section 3, we describe the dynamics of a map in the boundary of $\text{Rat}_d$. In particular, for $f \notin I(d)$, we can define the escape rate function $G_F$ of a homogenization $F : \mathbb{C}^2 \to \mathbb{C}^2$ of $f$, and we show that it satisfies $dd^c G_F = \pi^* \mu_f$, just as for non-degenerate rational maps (see [HP, Thm 4.1]). In analogy with results for rational maps, the measure $\mu_f$ is also the limit of pull-backs by the iterates of $f$ of any probability measure on $\mathbb{P}^1$.

Metric convergence. Every rational map determines a conformal metric on $\mathbb{P}^1$ (unique up to scale) with non-negative distributional curvature equal to the measure of maximal entropy (see Section 6). The sphere with this metric can be realized as the intrinsic metric of a convex surface in $\mathbb{R}^3$ by a theorem of Alexandrov [Al, VII §7]. Each $f \in \text{Rat}_d - \text{Rat}_d$ determines a conformal metric with singularities, defined by the measure $\mu_f$. Theorem 1 together with [Re, Thm 7.3.1] implies,

Corollary 4. Suppose $f_k$ in $\text{Rat}_d$ converges in $\overline{\text{Rat}}_d$ to $f \notin I(d)$. Then the spheres with associated metrics have a convex polyhedral limit with distributional curvature $4\pi \mu_f$.

The (countably many) cone points in the limiting metric of $f \notin I(d)$ have cone angles given by $2\pi - 4\pi \mu_f(\{p\})$ for each $p \in \mathbb{P}^1$, where a non-positive cone angle means that the point is at infinite distance from all others. The metric convergence is uniform away from the infinite ends.

The subspace of polynomials $\text{Poly}_d \subset \text{Rat}_d$ is very interesting by itself as the limiting measures (away from $I(d)$) are supported at $\leq d$ points. See Section 7. The metrics associated to such measures are polyhedral with finitely many vertices. Thus, a boundary of the moduli space of polynomials can be described in part by the geometry of convex polyhedra (as in e.g. [TR]).

Outline. In Section 1, we fix notation and define the probability measure $\mu_f$ for each $f \in \text{Rat}_d$. Section 2 is devoted to a study of the indeterminacy of the iterate map at the boundary of $\text{Rat}_d$. In Section 3, we study the
dynamics of a map in the boundary, and we show the existence of the escape rate function. Theorem 1 is proved in Section 4, and Theorem 2 is proved in Section 5. The Alexandrov geometry of rational maps and Corollary 4 are described in Section 6. We conclude with some further examples in Section 7.

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1. Definitions and notation

There is a natural map

\[ \text{Rat}_d \hookrightarrow \Gamma(d, 1) = \mathbb{P} H^0(\mathbb{P}^1 \times \mathbb{P}^1, \mathcal{O}(d, 1)), \]

of the space of rational maps into the projectivized space of global sections of the line bundle \( \mathcal{O}(d, 1) \) on \( \mathbb{P}^1 \times \mathbb{P}^1 \). The graph of \( f : \mathbb{P}^1 \to \mathbb{P}^1 \) defines the zero locus of a section. In coordinates, the rational map defined by

\[ f(z : w) = (P(z, w) : Q(z, w)) \]

is sent to the section represented by

\[ \mathbb{P}^1 \times \mathbb{P}^1 \ni ((z : w), (x : y)) \mapsto yP(z, w) - xQ(z, w). \]

Consequently, we have

\[ \overline{\text{Rat}_d} = \Gamma(d, 1) \simeq \mathbb{P}^{2d+1}. \]

Every \( f \in \overline{\text{Rat}_d} \) determines the coefficients for a pair of homogeneous polynomials, and we write

\[ f = (P : Q) = (Hp : Hq) = H\varphi_f, \]

where \( H = \gcd(P, Q) \) is a homogeneous polynomial and \( \varphi_f = (p : q) \) is a rational map of degree \( \leq d \). A zero of \( H \) in \( \mathbb{P}^1 \) is said to be a hole of \( f \), and the multiplicity of such a zero is its depth. The holes can be interpreted as punctures in the domain of definition of \( f \) as a map from \( \mathbb{P}^1 \) to itself (though as singularities, they are removable). When \( f \in \overline{\text{Rat}_d} \) has holes, it is said to be degenerate. The graph of a degenerate \( f = H\varphi_f \in \overline{\text{Rat}_d} \) is given by

\[ \Gamma_f = \{(p, \varphi_f(p)) \in \mathbb{P}^1 \times \mathbb{P}^1 \} \cup \{h \times \mathbb{P}^1 : H(h) = 0\}, \]

and has vertical components (counted with multiplicity) over the holes of \( f \). We see that \( \Gamma_f \) defines a holomorphic correspondence in \( \mathbb{P}^1 \times \mathbb{P}^1 \), and a hole can also be interpreted as a point which is mapped by \( f \) over the whole of \( \mathbb{P}^1 \).

The indeterminacy locus \( I(d) \subset \overline{\text{Rat}_d} \) is the set of degenerate maps \( f = H\varphi_f \) for which \( \varphi_f \) is constant and this constant value is one of the holes.
of $f$; that is, $f$ has the form $f(z : w) = (aH(z, w) : bH(z, w))$ for some $(a : b) \in \mathbb{P}^1$ with $P(a, b) = 0$, and therefore, $I(d)$ is given by

$$I(d) = \{ f = H\varphi_f : \deg \varphi_f = 0 \text{ and } \varphi_f^* H \equiv 0 \}.$$ 

A simple dimension count shows that $I(d)$ has codimension $d + 1$. In fact, the locus $I(d)$ is isomorphic to $\mathbb{P}^1 \times \mathbb{P}^{d-1}$ by sending $f = H\varphi_f \in I(d)$ with $\varphi_f \equiv (a : b)$ to the pair $((a : b), H(z, w)/(bz - aw))$. See Figure 1.

![Figure 1](image_url)

**Figure 1.** Graphs in $\mathbb{P}^1 \times \mathbb{P}^1$ of $f \in \overline{\text{Rat}_3}$: (a) $f \in \text{Rat}_3$, (b) $f = H\varphi_f \in \partial\text{Rat}_3$ with $\deg \varphi_f = 2$, (c) $f \in I(3)$.

**Example.** For $d = 1$, we have $\overline{\text{Rat}_1} \simeq \mathbb{P}^3$, the space of all non-zero two-by-two matrices $M$ up to scale. The indeterminacy locus is

$$I(1) = \{ M : \text{tr } M = \text{det } M = 0 \}.$$ 

Indeed, if $M \in I(1)$, by a change of coordinates, we can assume that $M$ is the constant map infinity on $\mathbb{P}^1$ with one hole at infinity. In coordinates, $M(z : w) = (w : 0)$, or rather, $M$ is a matrix with one non-zero entry off the diagonal and zeroes elsewhere. Up to conjugacy, these are precisely the matrices with vanishing trace and determinant.

**Probability measures.** We define a probability measure $\mu_f$ on $\mathbb{P}^1$ for each point $f \in \overline{\text{Rat}_d}$. For $f \in \text{Rat}_d$, a point $a \in \mathbb{P}^1$ is exceptional if its grand orbit $\bigcup_{n \in \mathbb{Z}} \{ f^n(a) \}$ is finite. By Montel’s Theorem, a rational map can have at most two exceptional points. Let $\mu_f$ be the unique measure of maximal entropy for $f$, given by the weak limit,

$$\mu_f = \lim_{n \to \infty} \frac{1}{d^n} \sum_{f^n(z) = a} \delta_z,$$

for any non-exceptional point $a \in \mathbb{P}^1$. The measure $\mu_f$ has no atoms, and its support equals the Julia set of $f$; it is also the unique measure of maximal entropy for every iterate $f^n$. 

[Ly], [FLM], [Ma1].
If \( f = H\varphi_f \) is degenerate and \( \varphi_f \) is non-constant, we define an atomic measure,

\[
\mu_f := \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} \frac{1}{d^{n+1}} \sum_i \sum_{\varphi_f^n(z) = h_i} \delta_z,
\]

where the holes \( h_i \) and all preimages by \( \varphi_f \) are counted with multiplicity. Note that if the hole \( h_i \) has depth \( d_i \), then \( \mu_f(\{h_i\}) \geq d_i/d \). Furthermore, since \( \deg \varphi_f = d - \sum_i d_i \), the total measure \( \mu_f(P^1) \) is 1. If \( \varphi_f \) is constant, then the depths of the holes sum to \( d \), and we set

\[
\mu_f = \frac{1}{d} \sum_i \delta_{h_i},
\]

where again the holes \( h_i \) are counted with multiplicity.

We will see in the following section that for every degenerate \( f \not\in I(d) \), we will have \( \mu_f = \mu_f^n \) for all iterates of \( f \).

**Example.** Suppose that \( f(z : w) = (P(z, w) : w^d) \) where \( P \neq 0 \) is a homogeneous polynomial such that \( P(1, 0) = 0 \). Then \( f \) is degenerate with a hole at \( \infty = (1 : 0) \). The map \( \varphi_f \) can be identified with a polynomial in \( \mathbb{C} \) of degree \( <d \), by choosing local coordinates \( z/w \) for \( (z : w) \in P^1 \). Since the backwards orbit of \( \infty \) under any polynomial consists only of \( \infty \) itself, we must have \( \mu_f = \delta_{\infty} \).

Generally, when computing the \( \mu_f \)-mass of a point for degenerate \( f \in \text{Rat}_d \), one needs to count the number of times the forward iterates of the point land in a hole of \( f \). The following lemma follows directly from the definition of the measure \( \mu_f \).

**Lemma 5.** Let \( f = H\varphi_f \in \text{Rat}_d \) be degenerate with \( \deg \varphi_f > 0 \). For each \( a \in P^1 \), we have,

\[
\mu_f(\{a\}) = \frac{1}{d} \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} \frac{m(\varphi^n_f(a)) d(\varphi^n_f(a))}{d^n},
\]

where \( d(\varphi^n_f(a)) \) is the depth of \( \varphi^n_f(a) \) as a hole of \( f \) and \( m(\varphi^n_f(a)) \) is the multiplicity of \( a \) as a solution of \( \varphi^n_f(z) = \varphi^n_f(a) \).

The space \( M^1(P^1) \) of probability measures on \( P^1 \) is given the weak topology. For what follows, it will be useful to recall that \( M^1(P^1) \) is metrizable because it is a compact subset of the dual space to the separable \( C(P^1) \), the continuous functions on \( P^1 \).

2. Iterating a degenerate map

The iterate map \( \Phi_n : \text{Rat}_d \to \text{Rat}_{d^n} \), which sends \( f \) to \( f^n \), is a regular morphism between smooth affine varieties. It extends to a rational map \( \text{Rat}_d \dashrightarrow \text{Rat}_{d^n} \) for all \( n \geq 1 \). In this section, we will give a formula for the
iterates of a degenerate map, where defined, and specify the indeterminacy locus of the iterate map \( \Phi_n \).

Let \((a_d, \ldots, a_0, b_d, \ldots, b_0)\) denote the homogeneous coordinates on \( \text{Rat}_d \approx \mathbb{P}^{2d+1} \), where a point \( f = (P : Q) \) has coordinates given by the coefficients of \( P \) and \( Q \). The \( 2d^n + 2 \) coordinate functions which define the iterate map \( \Phi_n : \text{Rat}_d \to \text{Rat}_d \) generate a homogeneous ideal \( I_n \) in the ring \( A = \mathbb{Z}[a_d, \ldots, b_0] \). The ideal \( I_1 = (a_d, \ldots, b_0) \), generated by all homogeneous monomials of degree 1 in \( A \), is the ideal generated by the identity map \( \Phi_1 \).

**Lemma 6.** In the ring \( A \), the ideals \( I_n \) are generated by homogeneous polynomials of degree \( (d^n - 1)/(d - 1) \) and satisfy

\[
I_n \subset I_1 \cdot I_{d^n-1}^d
\]

for all \( n \geq 2 \). In particular, they form a descending chain.

**Proof.** The affine space \( C^{2d+2} \) parameterizes, by the coefficients, all pairs \( F = (P, Q) \) of degree \( d \) homogeneous polynomials in two variables. Such a pair defines a map \( F : C^2 \to C^2 \), and the composition map

\[
C_{d,e} : C^{2d+2} \times C^{2e+2} \to C^{2de+2}
\]

sending \((F, G)\) to the coefficients of \( F \circ G \) is bihomogeneous of degree \((1, d)\) in the coefficients of \( F \) and \( G \). In particular, the second iterate \( \Phi_2 \) is (the projectivization of) the restriction of \( C_{d,d} \) to the diagonal of \( C^{2d+2} \times C^{2d+2} \), and so its coordinate functions are homogeneous of degree \( 1 + d \). Thus, the ideal \( I_2 \) in \( A \) generated by these coordinate functions of \( \Phi_2 \) is contained in \( I_1^{d+1} = I_1 \cdot I_{d}^d \).

For the general iterate, of course \( F^n = F \circ F^{n-1} \), so \( \Phi_n \) can be expressed as

\[
\Phi_n = C_{d,d^{n-1}} \circ (\text{Id, } \Phi_{n-1}) : C^{2d+2} \to C^{2d^{n}+2}.
\]

Consequently, \( \Phi_n \) is homogeneous of degree \( 1 + d \deg \Phi_{n-1} \). By induction, we have \( \deg \Phi_n = 1 + d + \cdots + d^{n-1} = (d^n - 1)/(d - 1) \). The above expression for \( \Phi_n \) and the bihomogeneity of the composition map implies that the coordinate functions of \( \Phi_n \) must lie in the ideal \( I_1 \cdot I_{d^n-1}^d \).

Recall from Section 3 that \( I(d) \subset \text{Rat}_d \) is defined as the locus of degenerate constant maps such that the constant value is equal to one of the holes.

**Lemma 7.** The indeterminacy locus for the iterate map \( \Phi_n : \text{Rat}_d \to \text{Rat}_d \) is \( I(d) \) for all \( n \geq 2 \) and all \( d \geq 1 \). If \( f = H \varphi \notin I(d) \) is degenerate, then

\[
f^n = \left( \prod_{k=0}^{n-1} (\varphi^k H)^{d^{n-k-1}} \right) \varphi^n.
\]
Proof. Suppose that \( f = (P : Q) = (Hp : Hq) = H\varphi \) is degenerate. The second iterate of \( f \) has the form,

\[
    f \circ f = (P(P, Q) : Q(P, Q)) = (H^dP(p, q) : H^dQ(p, q)) = (H^dH(p, q)p(p, q) : H^dH(p, q)q(p, q)) = H^d\varphi^*(H)\varphi \circ \varphi.
\]

Since the map \( \varphi \) is non-degenerate, we will never have \( \varphi \circ \varphi(z : w) = (0 : 0) \). However, we have \( H(p, q) \equiv 0 \) if and only if \( \varphi(z : w) = (\alpha : \beta) \in \mathbb{P}^1 \) for all \( (z : w) \in \mathbb{P}^1 \) and \( H(\alpha, \beta) = 0 \). This exactly characterizes the set \( I(d) \). Thus, the above gives the formula of the second iterate for \( f \notin I(d) \), and the second iterate is undefined for \( f \in I(d) \).

An easy inductive argument gives the general form of the iterate \( f^n \) for all \( f \notin I(d) \). Since the formula for \( f^n \) does not vanish identically for any \( f \notin I(d) \), the indeterminacy locus of \( \Phi_n \) must be contained in \( I(d) \) for each \( n \geq 3 \). However, by Lemma 6, the chain of ideals defined by the iterate maps is descending. Thus, if the coordinate functions of \( \Phi_2 \) vanish simultaneously along \( I(d) \), the coordinate functions of \( \Phi_n \) vanish simultaneously along \( I(d) \) for all \( n \geq 2 \). Therefore, the indeterminacy locus is \( I(d) \) for all \( n \).

Note that indeterminacy of the iterate map along \( I(d) \) implies that \( \Phi_n \) cannot be extended continuously from \( \text{Rat}_d \) to any point \( g \in I(d) \). See the two examples in Section 5. Observe also that Lemma 7 is a statement about the indeterminacy locus as a set. Scheme-theoretically, the indeterminacy depends on the iterate \( n \).

As holomorphic correspondences in \( \mathbb{P}^1 \times \mathbb{P}^1 \), the elements of \( I(d) \) each consist of a flat horizontal component and a collection of vertical components, one of which must intersect the horizontal graph on the diagonal. The second iterate of a point \( f \in \text{Rat}_d \) as a correspondence is given by

\[
    \Gamma_f \circ \Gamma_f = \{ (z_1, z_2) \in \mathbb{P}^1 \times \mathbb{P}^1 : z_2 = f(y) \text{ and } y = f(z_1) \text{ for some } y \in \mathbb{P}^1 \}.
\]

With this notion of iteration, it is easy to see that the indeterminacy locus \( I(d) \) satisfies

\[
    I(d) = \{ f \in \mathbb{P} \mathbb{H}^0(\mathbb{P}^1 \times \mathbb{P}^1, \mathcal{O}(d, 1)) : \Gamma_f \circ \Gamma_f = \mathbb{P}^1 \times \mathbb{P}^1 \}.
\]

For \( f \notin I(d) \), the composition \( \Gamma_f \circ \Gamma_f \) is the zero-locus of a well-defined section of the line-bundle \( \mathcal{O}(d^2, 1) \) over \( \mathbb{P}^1 \times \mathbb{P}^1 \), and Lemma 7 describes its graph and the location of the vertical components.

Note, for example, if \( f = H\varphi \) is degenerate of degree \( d \), then the holes of the third iterate of \( f \) are the holes of \( f \) at depth \( d^2 \), the preimages by \( \varphi \) of these holes at depth \( d \), and finally the preimages by \( \varphi^2 \) of the holes of \( f \). Comparing the iterate formula with the definition of the measure \( \mu_f \) given in Section 1 (and Lemma 5), we obtain the following immediate corollary.
Corollary 8. Let \( f \notin I(d) \) be degenerate. If \( d_z(f^n) \) denotes the depth of \( z \) as a hole of \( f^n \), then the \( d_z(f^n)/d^n \) forms a non-decreasing sequence in \( n \), and

\[
\mu_f(\{z\}) = \lim_{n \to \infty} \frac{d_z(f^n)}{d^n}.
\]

Furthermore, \( \mu_f = \mu_{f^n} \) for all \( n \geq 1 \).

3. The dynamics of a degenerate map

In this section we define the Julia set of a degenerate map \( f \notin I(d) \) and relate it to the support of the measure \( \mu_f \). We explain how \( \mu_f \) is the weak limit of pull-backs by \( f \) of any probability measure on the Riemann sphere. Also, it is possible to define the escape rate function in \( C^2 \) for every degenerate \( f \notin I(d) \), and we will see that it is a potential for the atomic measure \( \mu_f \).

Let \( f = H\varphi \notin I(d) \) be degenerate. As for rational maps, we define the Fatou set \( \Omega(f) \) as the largest open set on which the iterates of \( f \) form a normal family. Care must be taken in this definition since we require, first, that the iterates \( f^n \) be well-defined for each \( n \). Thus, the family \( \{f^n|U\}_n \) cannot be normal if \( h \in f^n(U) \) for some \( n \geq 1 \) and some hole \( h \) of \( f \). With this definition, we let \( J(f) \) be the complement of \( \Omega(f) \).

Let us assume for the moment that \( \deg \varphi > 0 \). By the definition of the Julia set \( J(f) \), it is clear that

\[
J(f) = J(\varphi) \cup \bigcup_{n=0}^{\infty} \bigcup_i \varphi^{-n}(h_i),
\]

where \( \{h_i\} \subset \mathbb{P}^1 \) is the set of holes of \( f \). Recall that a point \( z \in \mathbb{P}^1 \) is said to be exceptional for \( \varphi \) if its grand orbit is finite. If at least one of the holes \( h_i \) is non-exceptional for the map \( \varphi \), then \( J(\varphi) \) is contained in the closure of the union of the preimages of \( h_i \). Examining again the definition of the measure \( \mu_f \), we see that its support must be the closure of the union of all preimages of the holes of \( f \). When \( \deg \varphi = 0 \), it makes sense to set \( J(\varphi) = \emptyset \).

We have proved the following.

**Proposition 9.** Let \( f = H\varphi \notin I(d) \) be degenerate. If one of the holes of \( f \) is non-exceptional for \( \varphi \), then \( \text{supp} \mu_f = J(f) \). If each hole of \( f \) is exceptional for \( \varphi \), then \( \text{supp} \mu_f \) is contained in the exceptional set of \( \varphi \).

Note that even if \( J(\varphi) \subset \text{supp} \mu_f \), it can happen that \( \mu_f(J(\varphi)) = 0 \), as all holes of \( f \) may lie in the Fatou set of \( \varphi \).

**Pullbacks of measures by degenerate maps.** The holes of a degenerate map \( f \) are identified with the vertical components of the holomorphic correspondence of \( f \), as described in Section [I]. The degenerate \( f \) should be interpreted as sending each of its holes over the whole of \( \mathbb{P}^1 \) with appropriate multiplicity (the depth of the hole). In particular, pull-backs of measures
can be appropriately defined, at least when deg $\varphi \neq 0$, by integration over the fibers, as

$$\langle f^* \mu, \psi \rangle = \langle \varphi^* \mu, \psi \rangle + \sum_i \langle \delta_{h_i}, \psi \rangle = \int \sum_{\varphi(y)=z} \psi(y) \, d\mu(z) + \sum_i \psi(h_i),$$

where $\{h_i\} \subset P^1$ is the set of holes of $f$ and $\psi$ is any continuous function on $P^1$. All sums are counted with multiplicity. When $\deg \varphi = 0$ but $f \notin I(d)$, we can set

$$\langle f^* \mu, \psi \rangle = \sum_i \psi(h_i).$$

The following proposition implies that for each $f \in \partial \text{Rat}_d - I(d)$, there is a unique fixed point of the operator $\mu \mapsto f^* \mu/d^n$ in the space of probability measures. In particular, a degenerate map not in $I(d)$ has no exceptional points.

**Proposition 10.** For any degenerate $f = \notin I(d)$ and any probability measure $\mu$ on $P^1$, we have $f^n^* \mu/d^n \rightarrow \mu_f$ weakly as $n \rightarrow \infty$.

**Proof.** Write $f = H\varphi$. As the degree of $\varphi$ is strictly less than $d$, we have

$$\frac{1}{d^n} |\langle \varphi^n^* \mu, \psi \rangle| \rightarrow 0,$$

for all test functions $\psi$. From Corollary [S] the depths of the holes of the iterates of $f$ limit on the mass $\mu_f$. \qed

**Escape rate functions.** The escape rate function of a rational map $f \in \text{Rat}_d, d \geq 2$, is defined by

$$(1) \quad G_F(z,w) = \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \frac{1}{d^n} \log \|F^n(z,w)\|,$$

where $F : C^2 \rightarrow C^2$ is a homogeneous polynomial map such that $\pi \circ F = f \circ \pi$. Here, $\pi : C^2 - 0 \rightarrow P^1$ is the canonical projection and $\|\cdot\|$ is any norm on $C^2$. If $F_1$ and $F_2$ are two lifts of $f$ to $C^2$ (so that necessarily $F_2 = \alpha F_1$ for some $\alpha \in C^*$), then $G_{F_1} - G_{F_2}$ is constant. The escape rate function is a potential for the measure $\mu_f$ in the sense that $\pi^* \mu_f = dd^c G_F$ [IP Thm 4.1]. We use the notation $d = \partial + \bar{\partial}$ and $d^c = i(\partial - \bar{\partial})/2\pi$.

The proofs of the following proposition and Corollary [K] rely on the isomorphism between the space of probability measures on $P^1$ and (normalized) plurisubharmonic functions $U$ on $C^2$ such that $U(\alpha z) = U(z) + \log |\alpha|$ for all $\alpha \in C^*$ [FS Thm 5.9]. The isomorphism is given by $\mu = \pi_* dd^c U$, from potential functions to measures.

**Proposition 11.** For $d \geq 2$, the escape rate function $G_F$ exists for each degenerate $f \notin I(d)$ and satisfies $\pi^* \mu_f = dd^c G_F$.

We first need a lemma on M"obius transformations. Let $\sigma$ denote the spherical metric on $P^1$ and $\dist_\sigma$ the associated distance function.
Lemma 12. Let $E \subset \mathbb{P}^1$ be a finite set and $E(r) = \{ z \in \mathbb{P}^1 : \text{dist}_{\sigma}(z, E) \leq r \}$. For each Möbius transformation $M \in \text{Rat}_1$, there exists $r_0 > 0$ such that

$$\bigcup_{k \geq 0} M^k(E(r^k)) \neq \mathbb{P}^1$$

for all $r < r_0$.

Proof. By choosing coordinates on $\mathbb{P}^1 \simeq \hat{\mathbb{C}}$, we can assume that $M$ has the form $M(z) = z + 1$ or $M(z) = \lambda z$ for $\lambda \in \mathbb{D}$. In the new coordinate system, the spherical metric is comparable to the pull-back of the given metric $\sigma$ by the coordinate map.

When $|\lambda| = 1$, the statement is obvious for $r_0$ sufficiently small. When $|\lambda| < 1$, we need only consider the case when $\infty \in E$. For $r$ small, a spherical disk of radius $r$ around $\infty$ is comparable in size to the complement of the Euclidean disk of radius $1/r$ centered at 0, so we need to choose $r_0 < |\lambda|$. Finally, suppose $M(z) = z + 1$. Again, we need only consider the case when $\infty \in E$. It is clear that the point $M_k(0) = k$, for example, remains inside the Euclidean disk of radius $r - k$ for all $k$ if $r < 1$. Thus, $M_k(0)$ is outside the spherical disk of radius $r^k$ about $\infty$ for all $k$. We can therefore choose any $r_0 < 1$. □

Proof of Proposition 11. Let $f = H \varphi \notin I(d)$ be degenerate. Expressing $f$ in homogeneous coordinates defines a polynomial map $F : \mathbb{C}^2 \to \mathbb{C}^2$ of (algebraic) degree $d$ such that $\pi \circ F = f \circ \pi$ where defined. In particular, $F$ vanishes identically along the lines $\pi^{-1}(h)$ for each hole $h$ of $f$. We aim to define $G_F$ by equation (1) as for non-degenerate maps, so we need to show that the limit exists.

Write $F = (P, Q) = H\Phi$, where $H = \gcd(P, Q)$ and $\Phi = (P/H, Q/H)$ is a non-degenerate homogeneous polynomial map of degree $e < d$ (so that $\Phi^{-1}(\{0\}) = \{0\}$). In fact, $\Phi$ is the the map $\varphi$ expressed in homogeneous coordinates.

The iterate formula for $f$ in Lemma 7 holds also for $F$ so that

$$(2) \quad G_n(x) := \frac{1}{d^n} \log \|F^n(x)\| = \sum_{k=0}^{n-1} \frac{1}{d^{k+1}} \log |H(\Phi^k(x))| + \frac{1}{d^n} \log \|\Phi^n(x)\|$$

for all $x \in \mathbb{C}^2$.

Suppose first that $e = \deg \varphi = 0$, so that $F(z, w) = (aH(z, w), bH(z, w))$ and $H(a, b) \neq 0$. The above expression for $G_n$ reduces to

$$G_n(z, w) = \frac{1}{d} \log |H(z, w)| + \sum_{k=1}^{n-1} \frac{1}{d^{k+1}} \log |H(a, b)| + \frac{1}{d^n} \log ||(a, b)||,$$

which converges to

$$G_F(z, w) = \frac{1}{d} \log |H(z, w)| + \frac{1}{d(d-1)} \log |H(a, b)|$$
locally uniformly on $\mathbb{C}^2$ as $n \to \infty$. Furthermore, this function $G_f$ is clearly a potential for the atomic measure

$$\mu_f = \frac{1}{d} \sum_{z \in \mathbb{P}^1 : H(\pi^{-1}(z)) = 0} \delta_z$$

on $\mathbb{P}^1$, where the zeros of $H$ are counted with multiplicity.

Now suppose that $e = \text{deg} \varphi > 0$. Then there exists a constant $K > 1$ so that for all $x \in \mathbb{C}^2$,

$$K^{-1} \|x\|^e \leq \|\Phi(x)\| \leq K \|x\|^e$$

and therefore if $x \neq 0$,

$$|\log \|\Phi(x)\|| \leq e \log \|\Phi(x)\| + \log K.$$

Replacing $x$ with the iterate $\Phi^{n-1}(x)$ we obtain by induction on $n$,

$$|\log \|\Phi^n(x)\|| \leq e^n \|\Phi^n(x)\| + (1 + e + \cdots + e^{n-1}) \log K.$$

Dividing by $d^n$ gives

$$\frac{1}{d^n} \log \|\Phi^n(x)\| \to 0$$

locally uniformly on $\mathbb{C}^2$ as $n \to \infty$, since $e < d$. Similarly, the quantity

$$\sum_{k=0}^{n-1} \frac{1}{d^{k+1}} \log \|\Phi^k(x)\| - \sum_{k=0}^{n-1} \frac{e^k}{d^{k+1}} \log \|x\|$$

is uniformly bounded in $n$ on $\mathbb{C}^2$.

Consider the plurisubharmonic function

$$g_n(x) = \sum_{k=0}^{n-1} \frac{1}{d^{k+1}} \log |H(\Phi^k(x))|,$$

on $\mathbb{C}^2$. Notice that $g_n$ defines a potential function for the atomic measure

$$\mu_n = \sum_i \sum_{k=0}^{n-1} \frac{1}{d^{k+1}} \sum_{z : \varphi^k(z) = h_i} \delta_z,$$

where the $h_i$ are the holes of $f$, counted with multiplicity; that is, $\pi^* \mu_n = dd^c g_n$ on $\mathbb{C}^2 - 0$. Note also that the measure $\mu_n$ has total mass $1 - (e/d)^n$, and $g_n$ scales by

$$g_n(\alpha x) = g_n(x) + (1 - (e/d)^n) \log |\alpha|$$

for all $\alpha \in \mathbb{C}^*$. The measures $\mu_n$ converge weakly to $\mu_f$ in $\mathbb{P}^1$. By [2] and [3], for any $\varepsilon > 0$, we have

$$\frac{1}{G_n(x) - g_n(x)} < \varepsilon$$

for all sufficiently large $n$, locally uniformly in $\mathbb{C}^2 - 0$. We will show that the functions $g_n$ converge in $L^1_{\text{loc}}$ to the unique potential function of $\mu_f$. 

If the sequence \( g_n \) is uniformly bounded above on compact sets and does not converge to \(-\infty\) locally uniformly, then some subsequence converges in \( L^1_{\text{loc}} \) [FS, Thm 5.1]. For an upper bound, note first that (6)

\[
\sup \{ \log |H(x)| : \|x\| \leq 1 \} < \infty.
\]

If for each \( x \neq 0 \) in \( C^2 \), we set \( x^1 := x/\|x\| \), then \( H(x) = \|x\|^{d-e} H(x^1) \), and therefore,

(7) \[
g_n(x) = \sum_{k=0}^{n-1} \frac{d-e}{d^k+1} \log \|\Phi^k(x)\| + \sum_{k=0}^{n-1} \frac{1}{d^k+1} \log |H(\Phi^k(x^1))|.
\]

The bound on (6) together with (7) show that \( \{g_n\} \) is uniformly bounded above on compact sets.

To obtain a convergent subsequence of \( \{g_n\} \) in \( L^1_{\text{loc}} \), it suffices now (by [FS, Thm 5.1]) to show that \( g_n \not\to -\infty \) uniformly on compact sets. If \( g_{n_j} \) converges to \( v \) in \( L^1_{\text{loc}} \), then by [FS, Thm 5.9], \( v \) is the potential function for the measure \( \mu_f \), unique up to an additive constant. To conclude, therefore, that the full sequence \( g_n \) converges so that \( \pi^* \mu_f = dd^c G_F \), it suffices to show that there exists a single point \( x \in C^2 - 0 \) for which \( \lim_{n \to \infty} g_n(x) \) exists and is finite.

For \( e \geq 2 \), choose any point \( x \in C^2 - 0 \) which is periodic for \( \Phi \) and whose orbit does not intersect the complex lines \( \pi^{-1}(h_i) \) over the holes of \( f \). Then the orbit \( \Phi^k(x) \), \( k \geq 0 \), remains a bounded distance away from the zeroes of \( H \). Therefore, \( \log |H(\Phi^k(x))| \) is bounded above and below, so that the definition of \( g_n \) together with (5) imply that

\[
G_F(x) = \lim_{n \to \infty} g_n(x) = \lim_{n \to \infty} g_n(x)
\]
exists and is finite. Therefore, \( G_F \in L^1_{\text{loc}} \) is the potential function for \( \mu_f \).

For \( e = 1 \) a further estimate is required. The map \( \varphi \) on \( \mathbb{P}^1 \) is a Mobius transformation. Let \( E \) be the set of zeroes of \( H \) projected to \( \mathbb{P}^1 \). Let \( \sigma \) denote the spherical metric on \( \mathbb{P}^1 \), and observe that there exists \( C > 1 \) and a positive integer \( m \) such that

(8) \[
C \geq |H(x)| \geq C^{-1} \text{dist}_\sigma(\pi(x), E)^m \text{ for all } \|x\| = 1.
\]

By Lemma 12 applied to \( M = \varphi^{-1} \), the set \( A = \mathbb{P}^1 - \cup_{k \geq 0} \varphi^{-k} E(r^k) \) is non-empty for some \( r > 0 \). Fix \( z \in A \) and choose \( Z \in \pi^{-1}(z) \) with \( \|Z\| = 1 \). Using \( 5 \), our choice of \( Z \) implies that

\[
\log C \geq \log |H(\Phi^k(Z^1))| \geq mk \log r - \log C,
\]

for all \( k \geq 1 \), where \( \Phi^k(Z^1) = \Phi^k(Z)/\|\Phi^k(Z)\| \). Note that since \( \Phi \) is linear, there is a constant \( C' > 1 \) such that

\[
|\log \|\Phi^k(Z)\|| \leq k \log C'.
\]
Combining these estimates, we obtain

\[
\sum_{n} \left| d - \frac{1}{d^{k+1}} \log \| \Phi^{k}(Z) \| + \frac{1}{d^{k+1}} \log | H(\Phi^{k}(Z)^{1}) | \right| \leq C'' \sum_{n} \frac{k}{d^{k}},
\]

for some constant \( C'' \) which implies, by (7), that \( g_n(Z) \) has a finite limit as \( n \to \infty. \)

As a corollary to Theorem 1(a), we obtain

**Corollary 13.** Suppose that a sequence \( f_k \) in \( \text{Rat}_d \) converges in \( \overline{\text{Rat}}_d \) to \( f \notin I(d) \). Then for suitably normalized lifts \( F_k \) of \( f \) to \( \mathbb{C}^2 \) and \( F \) of \( f \), the escape rate functions \( G_{F_k} \) converge to \( G_F \) in \( L^1_{\text{loc}} \).

**Proof.** Again by [FS, Thm 5.9], weak convergence of measures \( \mu_{f_k} \to \mu_f \) by Theorem 1(a) implies that the potentials converge in \( L^1_{\text{loc}} \). A normalization is required to guarantee convergence; it suffices to choose the unique lifts \( F_k \) of \( f_k \) such that \( \sup \{ G_{F_k}(x) : \| x \| = 1 \} = 0. \) \( \square \)

4. PROOF OF THEOREM 1

Here we provide the statements needed for the proof of Theorem 1. The argument relies on a fundamental fact about holomorphic functions in \( \mathbb{C} \): a proper holomorphic function from a domain \( U \) to a domain \( V \) in \( \mathbb{C} \) has a well-defined degree. This together with the invariance property of the maximal measure, \( f^* \mu_f / d = \mu_f \) for all \( f \in \text{Rat}_d \), and the continuity of the iterate map away from \( I(d) \) will give Theorem 1. For simplicity, we will regularly identify the point \((z : w) \in \mathbb{P}^1\) with \( z/w \in \mathbb{C} \).

**Lemma 14.** Suppose a sequence \( f_k \in \text{Rat}_d \) converges in \( \overline{\text{Rat}}_d \) to degenerate \( f = (P : Q) \) and \( f \) has a hole at \( h \) of depth \( d_h \). If neither \( P \) nor \( Q \) are \( \equiv 0 \), then any neighborhood \( N \) of \( h \) contains at least \( d_h \) zeroes and poles of \( f_k \) (counted with multiplicity) for all sufficiently large \( k \).

**Proof.** As the coefficients of \( f_k = (P_k : Q_k) \) converge to those of \( f \), then so must the roots of the polynomials \( P_k \) and \( Q_k \) converge to those of \( P \) and \( Q \). If the degenerate map \( f \) has a hole at \( h \in \mathbb{P}^1 \) of depth \( d_h \), then at least \( d_h \) roots of \( P \) and \( d_h \) roots of \( Q \) must limit on \( h \). \( \square \)

**Lemma 15.** Suppose \( f_k \in \text{Rat}_d \) converge to \( f = H \varphi \) in \( \overline{\text{Rat}}_d \). Then as maps, \( f_k \to \varphi \) locally uniformly on \( \mathbb{P}^1 - \{ h_i \} \) where the \( h_i \) are the holes of \( f \).

**Proof.** Write \( f_k = (P_k : Q_k) \) and \( f = (P : Q) \). By changing coordinates, we may assume that neither \( P \) nor \( Q \) are \( \equiv 0 \) and also that no holes lie at the point \( \infty = (1 : 0) \). Writing \( f(z : w) = (H(z, w)p(z, w) : H(z, w)q(z, w)) \), where \( H = \gcd(P, Q) \) we may assume that \( H \) is monic as a polynomial in \( z \) of degree \( d - \epsilon \). Fix an open set \( U \subset \mathbb{P}^1 \) containing all holes of \( f \). By the previous lemma there are homogeneous factors \( A_k(z, w) \) of \( P_k \) and \( B_k(z, w) \) of \( Q_k \) of degree \( d - \epsilon \) with all roots inside \( U \). As polynomials of \( z \), we may
assume that $A_k$ and $B_k$ are monic, and thus $A_k$ and $B_k$ both tend to $H$ as $k \to \infty$. On the compact set $\mathbb{P}^1 - U$, the ratio $A_k/B_k$ must tend uniformly to 1 as $k \to \infty$, so we have $f_k = (P_k : Q_k)$ limiting on $\varphi = (p : q)$ uniformly on $\mathbb{P}^1 - U$.

For the proof of the theorem, we will need a uniform version of Lemma 14; namely, there should be preimages of almost every point (with respect to the maximal measure of $f_k$) inside a small neighborhood of the holes. As we shall see, this can be done when the limit map is not in $I(d)$. Uniformity fails in general, and this failure leads to the discontinuity of the measure in Theorem 2.

**Proposition 16.** Suppose the sequence $f_k$ in $\text{Rat}_d$ converges to degenerate $f \not\in I(d)$. If $f$ has a hole at $h$ of depth $d_h$, then any weak limit $\nu$ of the maximal measures $\mu_{f_k}$ of $f_k$ must have $\nu(\{h\}) \geq d_h/d$.

**Proposition 17.** Suppose the sequence $f_k$ in $\text{Rat}_d$ converges to $f = H \varphi \in I(d)$. If $f$ has a hole of depth $d_c$ at $c$ where $\varphi \equiv c$, then any weak limit $\nu$ of the maximal measures $\mu_{f_k}$ of $f_k$ must have $\nu(\{c\}) \geq d_c/(d_c + d)$.

The proof of Proposition 16 follows from the following two lemmas.

**Lemma 18.** Suppose under the hypotheses of Proposition 16 that $\varphi$ is non-constant. Then for any neighborhood $N$ of the hole $h$, there exists an $M > 0$ such that

$$\#\{f_k^{-1}(a) \cap N\} \geq d_h,$$

for all $a \in \mathbb{P}^1$ and all $k > M$, where the preimages are counted with multiplicity.

**Proof.** Suppose that in local coordinates at $h$ and $\varphi(h)$, we can write $\varphi(z) = cz^m + O(z^{m+1})$, $m > 0$. Choose a disk $D$ around $\varphi(h)$ small enough that

(i) $D$ does not contain both 0 and $\infty$,

(ii) the component of $\varphi^{-1}(D)$ containing $h$ is a disk inside $N$, and

(iii) the component of $\varphi^{-1}(D)$ containing $h$ maps $m$-to-1 over $D$.

Let this component of the preimage of $D$ be denoted by $E$.

By uniform convergence of $f_k$ to $\varphi$ away from the holes of $f$ (Lemma 15), for all sufficiently large $k$, $f_k$ maps a curve close to $\partial E$ $m$-to-1 over $\partial D$, and by Lemma 14 $d_h$ zeros or poles lie very close to $h$. (Note that the hypothesis of Lemma 14 is automatically satisfied when $\varphi$ is non-constant.) Let $E_k$ denote the disk containing $h$ bounded by the component of $f_k^{-1}(\partial D)$ which is very close to $\partial E$. Consider the preimage $A_k = f_k^{-1}(\mathbb{P}^1 - D) \cap E_k$. As $f_k$ is proper on $A_k$, it has a well-defined degree. Counting zeros or poles in $A_k$, we find the degree is $d_h$. The map $f_k$ then has degree $d_h$ also on the boundary of $A_k$. Now, $f_k$ is also proper on the complement of $A_k$ in $E_k$. Counting degree on its boundary, $d_h + m$, we find that $f_k$ has at least $d_h$ preimages of all points of the sphere inside $N$. \qed
Lemma 19. Suppose under the hypotheses of Proposition 16 that \( \varphi \) is constant. Then for any neighborhood \( N \) of \( h \), there exists an \( M > 0 \) so that
\[
\# \{ f_k^{-1}(a) \cap N \} \geq d_h,
\]
for all \( k > M \) and all \( a \in \text{supp}(\mu_{f_k}) \), where the preimages are counted with multiplicity.

Proof. Suppose that \( \varphi \equiv c \). By changing coordinates if necessary, we can assume that the point \( c \) is neither \( 0 = (0 : 1) \) nor \( \infty = (1 : 0) \) so that the hypothesis of Lemma 14 is satisfied. By assumption, \( c \) is not one of the holes of \( f \). Let \( D \) be a disk around \( c \) so that all holes and one of \( 0 \) or \( \infty \) lie outside \( D \). Let \( B \) be a ball around \( h \) contained in \( N \). For all large \( k \), \( f_k \) has \( d_h \) zeros and poles inside \( B \) and \( f_k \) maps the complement of \( B \) (minus a neighborhood of other holes) to \( D \).

It is clear that for these large \( k \), \( D \) does not intersect the Julia set of \( f_k \), since \( f_k(D) \) is contained in \( D \) so the iterates must form a normal family on \( D \).

Consider the preimage \( A_k = f_k^{-1}(\mathbb{P}^1 - D) \cap B \). The map \( f_k \) is proper on \( A_k \) and has a well-defined degree. Counting zeros or poles, this degree is \( d_h \). Since \( \text{supp} \mu_{f_k} \) lies in \( \mathbb{P}^1 - D \), the lemma is proved.

Proof of Proposition 16. This follows immediately from the invariance property of \( \mu_{f_k} \):
\[
f_k^* \mu_{f_k} = d \mu_{f_k}.
\]
Fix a disk \( D \) around the hole \( h \). Choose a bump function \( b \) which is 1 on a disk of half the radius and 0 outside \( D \). Then
\[
\mu_{f_k}(D) \geq \int b \, d \mu_{f_k} = \frac{1}{d} \int \sum_{f_k(x) = y} b(x) \, d \mu_{f_k}(y).
\]
By Lemmas 18 and 19, for all sufficiently large \( k \), the sum in the integrand is \( \geq d_h \) for every \( y \) in the support of \( \mu_{f_k} \). Taking limits and letting \( D \) shrink down to \( h \) gives the result.

Proof of Proposition 17. By changing coordinates if necessary, we can assume that the constant \( c \) is neither \( 0 = (0 : 1) \) nor \( \infty = (1 : 0) \) so that the hypothesis of Lemma 14 is satisfied. Let \( D \) be a disk around \( c \) which does not contain both \( 0 \) and \( \infty \). Let \( N \) be a neighborhood of the holes of \( f \) such that \( \overline{N} \cap \partial D = \emptyset \). Now choose \( M \) large enough that \( f_k(\mathbb{P}^1 - N) \subset D \) for all \( k > M \). Let \( A_k = f_k^{-1}(\mathbb{P}^1 - D) \cap D \). The map \( f_k \) is proper on \( A_k \) and has at least \( d_c \) zeroes or poles, so it is at least \( d_c \)-to-1 over the complement of \( D \).

Let \( \nu \) be any subsequential weak limit of \( \mu_{f_k} \). Let \( \nu_D = \nu(\mathbb{P}^1 - \overline{D}) \). If \( \nu_D = 0 \) and this holds for all \( D \), then \( \nu(\{c\}) = 1 \) and the proposition is proved. Generally, for any \( \varepsilon > 0 \) we have \( \mu_{f_k}(\mathbb{P}^1 - \overline{D}) \geq \nu_D - \varepsilon \) for all large \( k \). By the invariance property of \( \mu_{f_k} \) (as in the proof of the previous proposition), \( \mu_{f_k}(D) \geq (\nu_D - \varepsilon)d_c/d \). Thus \( \nu(D) \geq (\nu_D - \varepsilon)d_c/d \). Since \( \varepsilon \)
is arbitrary and since \( \nu_D \) increases (to some value \( \nu_0 \leq 1 \)) as \( D \) shrinks, we obtain
\[
\nu(\{c\}) \geq \nu_0 d_c/d.
\]
On the other hand,
\[
1 = \nu_0 + \nu(\{c\}) \geq \nu_0 + \nu_0 d_c/d = \nu_0(1 + d_c/d),
\]
and therefore \( \nu_0 \leq d/(d_c + d) \). Consequently, \( \nu(\{c\}) \geq d_c/(d_c + d) \). □

**Proof of Theorem 1.** By Lemma 7, the iterate map \( \Phi^n \) is continuous on \( \text{Rat}_d - I(d) \) for every \( n \). Thus, if \( f_k \to f \notin I(d) \), then \( f_k^n \to f^n \) where the iterate of a degenerate map is described explicitly in Lemma 7. From Corollary 8, we know that \( 1/d^n \) multiplied by the depth of a hole of \( f^n \) can only increase as \( n \to \infty \). Also, the depths limit on the mass given by \( \mu_f \).

Since the maximal measure for a rational map is the same as the measure for any iterate, Proposition 16 implies that any subsequent limit \( \nu \) of the measures has at least the correct mass on all the points in \( \text{supp} \mu_f \). On the other hand, these masses sum to 1, and the measure is a probability measure, so in fact, \( \nu = \mu_f \). This proves part (a). Part (b) is exactly the statement of Proposition 17. □

5. Examples and Proof of Theorem 2

In this section we complete the proof of Theorem 2. We begin with some examples demonstrating the discontinuity of the iterate maps and, consequently, the discontinuity of the map of measures \( f \mapsto \mu_f \) at each point in \( I(d) \). Example 1 realizes the lower bound of Theorem 1(b) when the depth \( d_c \) is 1. A point \((z : w) \in \mathbb{P}^1\) will be regularly identified with the ratio \( z/w \) in \( \mathbb{C} \).

**Example 1.** Let \( g = (wP(z, w) : 0) \in I(d) \) where \( P \) is homogeneous of degree \( d - 1 \), \( P(0, 1) \neq 0 \), \( P(1, 0) \neq 0 \), and \( P \) is monic as a polynomial in \( z \). Then \( g \) has a hole of depth 1 at \( \infty \) and no holes at 0. For each \( a \in \mathbb{C} \) and \( t \in \mathbb{D}^* \), consider
\[
g_{a,t}(z : w) := (atz^d + wP(z, w) : tz^d) \in \text{Rat}_d,
\]
so that \( g_{a,t} \to g \) in \( \text{Rat}_d \) as \( t \to 0 \). The maps \( g_{a,t} \) all have a critical point at \( z = 0 \) of multiplicity \( d - 1 \), and the other critical points are at the \( d - 1 \) solutions to \( zP'(z, 1) - dP(z, 1) = 0 \), independent of both \( a \) and \( t \). For each \( a \in \mathbb{C} \), \( g_{a,t} \) converges to the constant \( \infty \) as \( t \to 0 \), uniformly away from \( \infty \) and the roots of \( P \) (by Lemma 15). The second iterate \( \Phi_2(g_{a,t}) \) has the form
\[
(aw^dP(z, w)^d + z^d w^{d-1}P(z, w)^{d-1} + O(t^2) : w^dP(z, w)^d + O(t^2)),
\]
and taking a limit as \( t \to 0 \), we obtain
\[
\Phi_2(g_{a,t}) \to f_a := (w^{d-1}P(z, w)^{d-1}(awP(z, w) + z^d) : w^dP(z, w)^d).
\]
Thus the second iterates converge (uniformly, away from the holes of \( f_a \)) to the map \( \varphi_a \) given (in coordinates on \( C \)) by

\[
\varphi_a(z) = \frac{aP(z) + z^d}{P(z)}.
\]

Recall that we are assuming \( P(0) \neq 0 \) so that \( \varphi_a \) is a non-degenerate rational map of degree \( d \) for all \( a \in C \). As \( P \) is monic and of degree \( d - 1 \), it is clear that each \( \varphi_a \) has a parabolic fixed point at \( \infty \). We see immediately that the limit as \( t \to 0 \) of second iterates of \( g_{a,t} \) depends on the direction of approach, parameterized here by \( a \in C \). The degenerate limits \( f_a \) all have holes at \( \infty \) of depth \( d - 1 \) and holes at the roots of \( P \) each of depth \( d - 1 \).

The degenerate maps \( f_a \in \text{Rat}_{d^2} \) do not lie in \( I(d^2) \), so we are able to compute the limiting measures of \( \mu_{g_{a,t}} \) as \( t \to 0 \) from Theorem 1(a). Of course, the maximal measure for \( g_{a,t} \) coincides with that of its second iterate, so \( \mu_{g_{a,t}} \to \mu_{f_a} \) weakly for each \( a \in C \) as \( t \to 0 \).

The measures \( \mu_{f_a} \) cannot be the same for all \( a \in C \): the holes are the same for each \( a \) but the preimages of the roots of \( P \) by \( \varphi_a \) depend on \( a \), and these are atoms of \( \mu_{f_a} \). For example, suppose \( \alpha \neq 0 \) is a simple root of \( P(z) \). Then for \( a = \alpha \), the \( d \) solutions to \( \varphi_{\alpha}(z) = \alpha \) are all at \( 0 \), so that by Lemma 5,

\[
\mu_{f_{\alpha}}(\{0\}) = \frac{1}{d^2} \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{d(d-1)}{d^{2n}} = \frac{1}{d(d+1)}.
\]

On the other hand, for the generic \( a \in C \), the \( \varphi_a \)-orbit of the point 0 never intersects the roots of \( P \), so that \( \mu_{f_a}(\{0\}) = 0 \).

Lastly, since the limiting maps \( f_a \) have holes of depth \( d - 1 \) at \( \infty \) and \( \varphi_a(\infty) = \infty \) for each \( a \in C \), we can compute easily from Lemma 5 that

\[
\mu_{f_a}(\{\infty\}) = \frac{1}{d^2} \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} \frac{d-1}{d^{2n}} = \frac{1}{d+1},
\]

for all \( a \in C \). As the degeneration of \( g_{a,t} \) to \( g \) develops a hole of depth \( d_{\infty} = 1 \) at \( \infty \), we see that this family achieves the lower bound of Theorem 1(b).

**Example 2.** Let \( g = (w^kP(z,w) : 0) \in I(d) \) where \( P \) is homogeneous of degree \( d-k \), \( k > 1 \), \( P(0,1) \neq 0 \), \( P(1,0) \neq 0 \), and \( P \) is monic as a polynomial in \( z \) (or \( \equiv 1 \) if \( k = d \)). Then \( g \) has a hole of depth \( k \) at \( \infty \) and no holes at 0. Consider first the family, as in Example 1, given by

\[
h_{a,t} = (atz^d + w^kP(z,w) : tz^d) \in \text{Rat}_d,
\]

for \( a \in C \) and \( t \in D^* \). Computing second iterates and taking a limit as \( t \to 0 \) gives

\[
\Phi_2(h_{a,t}) \to h_a := (aw^{kd}P(z,w)^d : w^{kd}P(z,w)^d),
\]

and the degenerate \( h_a \) has associated lower-degree map \( \equiv a \). That is, the maps \( h_{a,t} \) converge to the constant \( \infty \) map but their second iterates converge
to the constant \( a \). Furthermore, \( h_a \in I(d^2) \) if and only if \( P(a,1) = 0 \). By Theorem 1(a), when \( P(a,1) \neq 0 \), the maximal measures of \( h_{a,t} \) converge weakly to
\[
\mu_{h_a} = \frac{k}{d} \delta_\infty + \frac{1}{d} \sum_{z : P(z) = 0} \delta_z = \mu_g.
\]

These measures do not depend on \( a \).

Let us now generalize Example 1 in the following way: for each \( a \in \mathbb{C}^* \) and \( t \in \mathbb{D}^* \), consider
\[
g_{a,t}(z : w) = (at^k z^d + w^k P(z, w) : tz^{d-k+1} w^{k-1}) \in \text{Rat}_d.
\]
As \( t \to 0 \), we have \( g_{a,t} \to g \) in \( \overline{\text{Rat}}_d \). The second iterate \( \Phi_2(g_{a,t}) \) has the form
\[
(aw^k P + t^k z^{d-k+1} w^{k(k-1)+k(d-k)} P^{d-k} + O(t^{k+1}) :
\]
\[
t^{k} z^{(d-k)(k-1)} w^{(k-1)^2+k(d-k+1)} P^{d-k+1} + O(t^{k+1}),
\]
so that in the limit as \( t \to 0 \), \( \Phi_2(g_{a,t}) \) converges to
\[
f_a := (w^{k(k-1)} P^{d-k} (aw^k P^k + z^{k(d-k+1)}) : w^{k(d-1)+1} P^{d-k+1} z^{(d-k+1)(k-1)}).
\]
Thus, the second iterates converge, away from the holes of \( f_a \), to a map of degree \( k(d-k+1) \) given in coordinates on \( \mathbb{C} \) by
\[
\varphi_a(z) = \frac{z^{k(d-k+1)} + aP(z)^k}{z^{(k-1)(d-k+1)} P(z)}.
\]
Since \( P \) is monic of degree \( d-k \), \( \varphi_a \) has a parabolic fixed point at \( \infty \) for all \( a \in \mathbb{C}^* \). The point \( \infty \) is a hole for \( f_a \) of depth \( k(d-1) \), so with Lemma 5 we compute,
\[
\mu_{f_a}(\{\infty\}) = \frac{1}{d^2} \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} \frac{k(d-1)}{d^{2n}} = \frac{k}{d+1} > \frac{k}{d+k},
\]
and we see how the mass at \( \infty \) compares with the lower bound of Theorem 1(b).

Finally, for different values of \( a \in \mathbb{C}^* \), the measures \( \mu_{f_a} \) are distinct. For \( k > 1 \), the point 0 has the same \( \mu_{f_a} \)-mass for all \( a \in \mathbb{C}^* \) because it is a preimage of the hole at \( \infty \). However, the preimages of 0 by \( \varphi_a \) vary with \( a \), so it is not hard to see that the measures must vary too.

**Question.** What is the best lower bound in the statement of Theorem 1(b) for \( d_c > 1 \)? In Example 2, the limiting mass at the constant value \( c = \infty \) is \( d_c/(d+1) \).

**Proof of Theorem 2.** The equivalence of properties (i), (ii), and (iii) was established by Lemma 7 in Section 2. For the implication (iv) implies (i), note first that within the space \( \text{Rat}_d \), the map \( f \mapsto \mu_f \) is continuous by \( \text{Ma2} \) Thm B. Also, if \( g \notin I(d) \) is degenerate, Theorem 1(a) implies that \( f \mapsto \mu_f \) extends continuously from \( \text{Rat}_d \) to \( g \). Suppose now that \( g_k \to g \) where \( g_k \notin I(d) \) is degenerate for all \( k \) and \( \mu_{g_k} \not\to \mu_g \). Then there exists an
open set \( U \) in \( M^1(\mathbb{P}^1) \), the space of probability measures on \( \mathbb{P}^1 \), such that \( U \) contains infinitely many of the measures \( \mu_{g_k} \) but \( \mu_g \notin U \). For each \( k \) with \( \mu_{g_k} \in U \), there exists \( f_k \in \text{Rat}_d \) with \( \mu_{f_k} \in U \) by Theorem 1(a). However, in this way we can construct a sequence of non-degenerate rational maps converging to \( g \) in \( \text{Rat}_d \) but such that \( \mu_{f_k} \not\to \mu_g \). Theorem 1(a) implies that \( g \in I(d) \).

Conversely, fix \( g = H \varphi \in I(d) \). By the definition of \( I(d) \), \( \varphi \) must be constant, so by a change of coordinates we can assume that \( g(z : w) = (w^k P(z, w) : 0) \), where \( P \) is homogeneous of degree \( d - k \), so that \( \varphi \) is the constant infinity map and \( \infty \) is a hole of \( g \) of depth \( k \). We can also assume that \( P(0, 1) \neq 0 \) so that \( 0 \) is not a hole of \( g \). Thus, \( g \) is exactly one of Examples 1 or 2 above, depending on the depth \( k \) at \( \infty \). In each case, the family \( g_{a, t}, a \in \mathbb{C}^* \), converges to \( g \) as \( t \to 0 \) and demonstrates the discontinuity of both the iterate map \( \Phi_2 \) and of \( f \mapsto \mu_f \) at \( g \). This completes the proof of Theorem 2.

\[ \square \]

6. Limiting metrics

In this section, we present details for Corollary 4 which reinterprets Theorem 1(a) in terms of conformal metrics on the Riemann sphere: a degenerating sequence of rational maps has a convex polyhedral limit (with countably many vertices). We apply the work of Reshetnyak on conformal metrics in planar domains [Re] and invoke the realization theorem of Alexandrov [Al, VII §7] for metrics of non-negative curvature on a sphere to put this metric convergence into context.

In Section 3 we discussed the escape rate function \( G_F : C^2 \to \mathbb{R} \cup \{-\infty\} \) of a rational map \( f \in \text{Rat}_d \). As explained in [De1, §12], a hermitian metric on the tautological bundle \( \tau \to \mathbb{P}^1 \) is defined by

\[ \|v\|_F = \exp G_F(v) \]

for all \( v \in C^2 - 0 \). A metric \( \rho_f \) is then induced on the tangent bundle \( TP^1 \simeq \tau^{-2} \), uniquely up to scale. Since \( G_F \) is a potential function for the measure of maximal entropy \( \mu_f \) of \( f \in \text{Rat}_d \), in the sense that \( dd^c G_F = \pi^* \mu_f \) in \( C^2 \), we find that the curvature form of \( \rho_f \) (in the sense of distributions) is \( 4\pi \mu_f \). In particular, the metric is Euclidean flat on the Fatou components.

**Example.** Let \( p \in \text{Rat}_d \) be a polynomial and \( P(z, w) = (p(z/w)w^d, w^d) \) a lift of \( p \) to \( C^2 \). The escape rate function of \( p \) in \( C \) defined by

\[ G_p(z) = \lim_{n \to \infty} \frac{1}{d^n} \log^+ |p^n(z)| \]

satisfies

\[ G_P(z, w) = G_p(z/w) + \log |w|, \]

where \( G_F \) is the escape rate function of \( P \) in \( C^2 \) [HP, Prop 8.1]. The associated conformal metric on \( C \) is given by

\[ \rho_p = e^{-2G_p(z)}|dz|, \]
which is isometric to the flat planar metric on the filled Julia set,

\[ K(p) = \{ z \in \mathbb{C} : G_p(z) = 0 \} = \{ z \in \mathbb{C} : p^n(z) \not\to \infty \text{ as } n \to \infty \}. \]

A theorem of Alexandrov says that any intrinsic metric of non-negative curvature on \( S^2 \) (or \( \mathbb{P}^1 \)) can be realized as the induced metric on a convex surface in \( \mathbb{R}^3 \) (or possibly a doubly-covered convex planar domain). In particular, for each \( f \in \text{Rat}_d \), the metric \( \rho_f \) on \( \mathbb{P}^1 \) can be identified with a convex shape in \( \mathbb{R}^3 \), unique up to scale and the isometries of \( \mathbb{R}^3 \). See \([Al, VII \S 7]\) or \([Po, Ch.1]\). Corollary 4 addresses the question of how these metrics degenerate in an unbounded family of rational maps.

Every probability measure \( \mu \) on the Riemann sphere determines a metric with singularities on \( \tau \to \mathbb{P}^1 \) (and therefore on the tangent bundle \( TP^1 \)), unique up to scale, with (distributional) curvature equal to \( 4\pi \mu \). Indeed, by \([FS, Thm 5.9]\) there is a logarithmic potential function \( G_\mu \) in \( C^2 \) such that \( dd^c G_\mu = \pi^* \mu \), and \( G_\mu \) is unique up to an additive constant. The metric can be defined by equation (9) with \( G_\mu \) in place of \( G_F \). That this metric induces a well-defined distance function on \( \mathbb{P}^1 \) follows from work of Reshetnyak, described in \([Re, \S 7]\).

If there exists a point \( z_0 \in \mathbb{P}^1 \) such that \( \mu(\{z_0\}) = m > 0 \), then the metric is locally represented by

\[ |z - z_0|^{-2m e^{u(z)}|dz|}, \]

where \( u \) is subharmonic near \( z_0 \). For \( m \geq 1/2 \), the point \( z_0 \) will be at infinite distance from all other points in the sphere, and \( z_0 \) will be called an infinite end of this metric. There can be at most two such points.

We will say that a metric on \( \mathbb{P}^1 \) is convex polyhedral if its curvature distribution can be expressed as a countable sum of delta masses. For example, the curvature measure of the induced metric on a convex polyhedron with finitely many vertices in \( \mathbb{R}^3 \) is a finite sum of delta masses. The degenerate maps in \( \text{Rat}_d \) have associated metrics which are convex polyhedral, by the definition of the probability measures \( \mu_f \).

Reshetnyak proved the following convergence theorem about these conformal metrics \([Re, Thm 7.3.1]\). Suppose that \( \rho_k \) and \( \rho \) are metrics on \( \mathbb{P}^1 \) with curvature distributions \( 4\pi \mu_k \) and \( 4\pi \mu \), where \( \mu_k \) and \( \mu \) are probability measures. If \( \mu_k \to \mu \) weakly, then the metrics \( \rho_k \) (as distance functions on \( \mathbb{P}^1 \times \mathbb{P}^1 \)) converge to \( \rho \), locally uniformly on the complement of any points \( z \in \mathbb{P}^1 \) with \( \mu(\{z\}) \geq 1/2 \). That is to say, the convergence is uniform away from any infinite ends of the metric \( \rho \).

Let it be noted that such a convergence theorem requires a normalization, a choice of scale for these metrics. If, for example, points 0 and \( \infty \) in \( \mathbb{P}^1 \) are not infinite ends for any of the metrics, we could fix \( \rho_k(0, \infty) = \rho(0, \infty) = 1 \) for all \( k \).

**Proof of Corollary 4** Suppose the sequence \( f_k \in \text{Rat}_d \) converges in \( \text{Rat}_d \) to \( f \notin I(d) \). The metric associated to \( f \) is convex polyhedral since
\( \mu_f \) is a countable sum of delta masses. Choose points \( a, b \in \mathbb{P}^1 \) which are not infinite ends for the metric of \( f \). Let \( \rho_k \) and \( \rho \) denote the distance functions on \( \mathbb{P}^1 \times \mathbb{P}^1 \) defined by \( \mu_{f_k} \) and \( \mu_f \) respectively, normalized so that \( \rho_k(a, b) = \rho(a, b) = 1 \) for all \( k \).

By Theorem 1(a), the measures \( \mu_{f_k} \) converge weakly to \( \mu_f \). Therefore, by [Re, Thm 7.3.1], the metrics \( \rho_k \) converge locally uniformly on the complement of the infinite ends of \( \rho \).

**Question.** Are all limiting metrics in the boundary of \( \operatorname{Rat}_d \) polyhedral? That is, if \( f_k \to f \in \mathcal{I}(d) \) such that the maximal measures \( \mu_{f_k} \) converge weakly, is the limiting distribution a countable sum of delta masses?

**Polynomial limits.** In the next section, we will see from Proposition 21 that all measures of the form

\[
\mu = \frac{1}{d} \sum_i \delta_{z_i},
\]

where \( \{z_i : i = 1, \ldots, d\} \) is any collection of \( d \) (not necessarily distinct) points in \( \mathbb{P}^1 \), arise as limits of the maximal measures for degree \( d \) polynomials. Metrically, these limits correspond to all convex polyhedra with \( d \) vertices of equal cone angle, the objects of study in [Th]. In our case, several or all vertices may coalesce. When the limit measure is \( \delta_\infty \), for example, the metric is that of the flat plane.

7. Further examples

In this final section, we study the above ideas as they apply to the boundary of the space of polynomials \( \text{Poly}_d \subset \operatorname{Rat}_d \) in \( \operatorname{Rat}_d \simeq \mathbb{P}^{2d+1} \). We also explain how Epstein’s sequences of degree 2 rational maps in [Ep] arise and achieve the lower bound of Theorem 1(b).

**The boundary of** \( \text{Poly}_d \). The space of polynomials of degree \( d \geq 2 \) satisfies \( \text{Poly}_d \simeq \mathbb{C}^* \times \mathbb{C}^d \) and \( \overline{\text{Poly}_d} \simeq \mathbb{P}^{d+1} \) in \( \text{Rat}_d \). The boundary \( \partial \text{Poly}_d \) has two irreducible components. Indeed, a point \( p \in \text{Poly}_d \) can be expressed in homogeneous coordinates by

\[
p(z : w) = \left(a_d z^d + a_{d-1} z^{d-1} w + \cdots + a_0 w^d : b_0 w^d\right),
\]

so that \( \partial \text{Poly}_d \) is defined by \( \{a_d b_0 = 0\} \). Furthermore, \( \overline{\text{Poly}_d} \cap \mathcal{I}(d) = \{a_d = b_0 = 0\} \) is the intersection of the two boundary components, and it consists of the “constant \( \infty \)” polynomials with a hole at \( \infty \). It has codimension 2 in \( \overline{\text{Poly}_d} \).

If a sequence of polynomials converges locally uniformly in \( \mathbb{C} \) to a polynomial of lower degree, then we have \( a_d = 0 \) and \( b_0 \neq 0 \) in the limit. For all points \( p \) in the locus \( \{a_d = 0 \text{ and } b_0 \neq 0\} \), the associated measure is \( \mu_p = \delta_\infty \): the only hole is at \( \infty \). By Theorem 1(a), the measures of maximal entropy will converge to \( \delta_\infty \). However, the supports of the measures, the Julia sets of the polynomials, do not necessarily go off to infinity (in the Hausdorff topology).
Example. Consider the family of cubic polynomials
\[ p_\varepsilon(z) = \varepsilon z^3 + z^2 \]
for \( \varepsilon \in \mathbb{C}^* \). As \( \varepsilon \to 0 \), we have \( p_\varepsilon \to (z^2 w : w^2) \) in \( \text{Poly}_3 \). As maps, \( p_\varepsilon \to z^2 \) locally uniformly in \( \mathbb{C} \) by Lemma [15] but by Theorem 1(a), \( \mu_{p_\varepsilon} \to \delta_\infty \) weakly. For small \( \varepsilon \), \( p_\varepsilon \) is polynomial-like of degree 2 in a neighborhood of the unit disk. The Julia set of the polynomial-like restriction of \( p_\varepsilon \) is part of the Julia set for \( p_\varepsilon \). It converges to the unit circle as \( \varepsilon \to 0 \), but carries no measure. (From the point of view of external rays, almost none land so deeply.) The components of the Julia set which carry the measure are tending to infinity as \( \varepsilon \to 0 \).

In general, we have the following corollary of Theorem 1(a).

**Corollary 20.** Let \( p_k \) be a sequence of polynomials in \( \text{Poly}_d \) such that \( p_k \to p \notin I(d) \) in \( \text{Poly}_d \). Then the measures \( \mu_{p_k} \) converge weakly to a measure \( \mu_p \) supported in at most \( d \) points.

**Proof.** For notational simplicity, let \( A = \{a_d = 0\} \) and \( B = \{b_0 = 0\} \) be the irreducible components of \( \partial \text{Poly}_d \). For each \( p = H \varphi_p \in A - I(d) \), we have \( \mu_p = \delta_\infty \), since \( \varphi_p \) is a polynomial of degree \( < d \) and the only hole is at \( \infty \). For \( p = H \varphi_p \in B - I(d) \), \( \varphi_p \) is the constant \( \infty \), the \( d \) holes are finite, and \( \mu_p \) is supported at the finite holes. By Theorem 1(a), \( \mu_{p_k} \to \mu_p \) weakly as \( k \to \infty \).

**Proposition 21.** For \( d \geq 2 \), let \( z_1, z_2, \ldots, z_d \) be (not necessarily distinct) points in \( \mathbb{P}^1 \), and let
\[
\mu = \frac{1}{d} \sum_{i=1}^{d} \delta_{z_i}
\]
be the probability measure supported equally at these points. There exists a sequence of polynomials \( p_k \in \text{Poly}_d \) such that \( \mu_{p_k} \to \mu \) weakly.

**Proof.** Suppose first that no \( z_i \) is \( \infty \). Let \( P(z, w) \) be a homogeneous polynomial of degree \( d \) with roots in \( \mathbb{P}^1 \) at the points \( z_i \). Consider the sequence
\[
p_k(z : w) = (P(z, w) : w^d / k) \in \text{Poly}_d
\]
as \( k \to \infty \). The limit \( f = (P(z, w) : 0) \) is the constant \( \infty \) map with holes at the roots of \( P \), so in particular \( f \notin I(d) \). By Theorem 1(a), the measures of maximal entropy for \( p_k \) converge weakly to \( \mu_f = \sum_{P(z, 1) = 0} \delta_z / d \).

For an arbitrary collection of \( d \) points \( \{z_i\} \), the given measure \( \mu \) can be approximated by measures of the form of \( \mu_f \) described above. Therefore, there must exist a sequence of polynomials with maximal measures limiting on \( \mu \).

**Corollary 22.** Given any probability measure \( \mu \) on \( \mathbb{P}^1 \), there is a sequence of polynomials \( p_k \), of degrees tending to infinity, such that \( \mu_{p_k} \to \mu \) weakly.
**Proof.** The finite atomic measures with rational mass at every point are dense in the space of probability measures. By Proposition 21, each such measure is a limit of measures of maximal entropy in Poly₉ for a sufficiently large degree d. □

It should be noted at this point that, while the limiting measures away from I(d) are supported in at most d points, there is no bound on the number of points in the support of a general limit at the boundary of Poly₉. For example, various normalizations of the family εz⁴ + z² as ε → 0 can give a limiting measure with 1, 2, or 2 + 2ⁿ points in its support for any desired n ≥ 1.

**Question.** What is the closure of Poly₉ in the space of probability measures?

**Epstein’s sequences in Rat₂.** In [Ep, Prop 2], Epstein gave the first example of the discontinuity of the iterate map at the boundary of the space of rational maps. He studied unbounded sequences in the moduli space of degree 2 rational maps, and in particular, examined sequences of rational maps in Rat₂ converging to a degenerate map f = Hφ ∈ Rat₂ for which φ is an elliptic Mobius transformation of order q > 1. If a sequence of rational maps approaches f from a particular direction in Rat₂ ≃ P⁵ (depending on a complex parameter T), there are certain conjugates of this sequence converging to I(2) such that their q-th iterates converge to the degree 2 map, φₜ(z) = z + T + 1/z (uniformly away from the holes at 0 and ∞).

When q = 2, his examples realize the lower bound in Theorem 1(b). Indeed, he provides a family of sequences Fₜₖ ∈ Rat₂, T ∈ C, normalized so that the critical points of Fₜₖ are at 1 and −1 for all T ∈ C and all k ≥ 1, and such that Fₜₖ → (zw : 0) ∈ I(2) as k → ∞. For all T ∈ C, this limit is the constant infinity map with holes at 0 and ∞, each of depth 1. The second iterates of Fₜₖ converge to Fₜ = (zw(z² + Tzw + w²) : z²w²) ∉ I(4) as k → ∞. By Theorem 1(a), the measures µₜₖ converge weakly to µₜ as k → ∞, and we can compute with Lemma 5 that

$$\mu_f([\infty]) = \frac{1}{4} \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} \frac{1}{4^n} = \frac{1}{3},$$

since Fₜ has a hole of depth 1 at ∞ which is fixed by φₜ. Recalling that the limit of the first iterates was in I(2) and had a hole of depth 1 at ∞, we see that the limiting measure at ∞ is exactly the lower bound in Theorem 1(b) when the degree is 2 and the depth is 1.

Epstein used these examples in his proof that certain hyperbolic components in the moduli space Rat₂/PSL₂C are bounded. It is my hope that a more systematic understanding of the iterate map and the boundary of the space of rational maps will be applicable to related questions in general degrees.
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