Alternating groups and rational functions on surfaces.

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Abstract

Let $X$ be a smooth complex projective surface and let $\mathbb{C}(X)$ denote the field of rational functions on $X$. In this paper, we prove that for any $m > M(X)$, there exists a rational dominant map $f : X \to Y$, which is generically finite of degree $m$, into a complex rational ruled surface $Y$, whose monodromy is the alternating group $A_m$. This gives a finite algebraic extension $\mathbb{C}(X) : \mathbb{C}(x_1, x_2)$ of degree $m$, whose normal closure has Galois group $A_m$.

1 Introduction.

Let $F$ be an extension field of $L$, we denote by $G(F : L)$ the Galois group of the extension $F : L$, which consists of all automorphisms of the field $F$ which fix $L$ elementwise. If $F : L$ is finite and separable, its normal closure $N : L$ is a Galois extension, see [13]. Set $M(F, L) = G(N : L)$. Let $X$ be an irreducible complex algebraic variety, we can associate to it the field $\mathbb{C}(X)$ of rational functions on $X$. This gives a one to one correspondence between birational classes of irreducible complex algebraic varieties and finitely generated extensions of $\mathbb{C}$. Let $X$ and $Y$ be irreducible complex algebraic varieties of the same dimension $n$. Let $f : X \to Y$ be a generically finite dominant morphism of degree $d$. The field $\mathbb{C}(X)$ is a finite algebraic extension of degree $d$ of the field $\mathbb{C}(Y)$, the group $M(\mathbb{C}(X), \mathbb{C}(Y))$ is called the Galois group of the morphism $f$, see [17]. There is an isomorphism between the Galois group of $f$ and the monodromy group $M(f)$, associated to the topological covering induced by $f$, see 2.1. Fix an irreducible variety $X$ of dimension $n$, $\mathbb{C}(X)$ is a finite algebraic extension of $\mathbb{C}(\mathbb{P}^n) = \mathbb{C}(x_1, x_2, ..., x_n)$, see [28]. The study of possible monodromy groups for $X$
is a classic, algebraic and geometric problem. In general, $M(f)$ is a subgroup of the symmetric group $S_d$. It is interesting to see in which cases $M(f)$ is a subgroup of the alternating group $A_d$; if this happens we say that $f$ has even monodromy.

If $n = 1$: let $X$ be a compact Riemann surface of genus $g$. Any non constant meromorphic function $f \in \mathbb{C}(X)$, of degree $d$, gives a holomorphic map $f: X \to \mathbb{P}^1$, which is a ramified covering of degree $d$. $f$ is indecomposable if and only if the group $M(f)$ is a primitive subgroup of $S_d$. There are several results on even monodromy of such maps: first of all by Riemann’s existence theorem, $\forall g \geq 0$ and $\forall d \geq 2g + 3$, there are Riemann surfaces of genus $g$ admitting maps with monodromy group $A_d$, see [11]. Actually, for a generic Riemann surface $X$ of genus $g \geq 4$, for any indecomposable map the monodromy group is either $A_d$ or the symmetric group $S_d$, see [16] and [15].

Finally, a generic compact Riemann surface of genus 1 admits meromorphic functions with monodromy group $A_d$, for $d \geq 4$, see [12]. This result has been recently generalized to any compact Riemann surface $X$ of genus $g$ for $d \geq 12g + 4$, see [2]. This implies that every extension field $F: \mathbb{C}$, with transcendence degree 1, can be realized as a finite algebraic extension of degree $d$, $F: L$, with $L \simeq \mathbb{C}(x)$ and monodromy group $M(F, L) = A_d$.

In higher dimension there are many various results concerning the monodromy of branched coverings $f: X \to Y$ of a variety $Y$ (multiple planes theory, braid groups, Chisini problem, fundamental groups of the complement of a divisor ...), see [9], [25], [14], [11], [23], etc.). On the other hand, not much seems to be known when $X$ is fixed, for instance, the existence of maps $f$ with $M(f)$ solvable is unknown also for projective surfaces of degree $d \geq 6$. It is easy to produce, by general linear projections, finite maps $X \to \mathbb{P}^n$ with monodromy the full symmetric group $S_d$, see [26]. So it is interesting to see if other primitive groups can be realized as monodromy of $X$. In this paper, we deal with surfaces and even monodromy groups. Our result is the following:

**Theorem 1** Let $F$ be an extension field of $\mathbb{C}$, with transcendence degree 2. Then there exists an integer $M(F)$ with the following property: for any $m > M(F)$, $F$ admits a subfield $L \simeq \mathbb{C}(x_1, x_2)$ such that $F: L$ is a finite algebraic extension of degree $m$ and the group $M(F, L)$ is the alternating group $A_m$.

We will deduce theorem 1 from the following geometric result:

**Theorem 2** Let $S$ be a smooth, complex, projective surface and $K_S$ denote a canonical divisor on $S$. Let $H$ be a very ample divisor on $S$, with $H^2 \geq 5$ and such that $(S, O_S(H))$ does not contain lines or conics. Set $g = p_a(2H + K_S)$. Then, for any $m > 16g + 7$, there exist a smooth complex projective surface $X$, in the birational class of $S$, and a generically finite surjective morphism $f: X \to Y$, of degree $m$, into a smooth complex rational ruled surface $Y$, such that the monodromy group $M(f)$ is the alternating group $A_m$. 

2
Let us describe briefly the method we use in proving this result. Let \( H \) be a very ample divisor on \( S \): under our assumptions, which are actually verified by almost all \( H \), we can find a Lefschetz pencil \( P \) in the linear system \(|2H + K_S|\), whose elements are all irreducible, see 4.1. By blowing up the base points of \( P \), we produce a smooth, complex, projective surface \( \hat{S} \), and a surjective morphism \( \phi: \hat{S} \to \mathbb{P}^1 \), with fibre \( F_t \), see 4.2. The pull back of \( O_S(H + K_S) \) defines a natural spin bundle \( L_t \) on each smooth fibre of \( \phi \). Following the method of [2], for each smooth fibre \( F_t \), we can introduce the variety \( \mathcal{H}(F_t, D_t) \), parametrizing a family of meromorphic functions \( f_t \) on \( F_t \) with even monodromy, related to \( L_t \), see 4.3. As \( t \) varies on \( \mathbb{P}^1 \), we have a family \( p: \mathcal{H} \to \mathbb{P}^1 \) of projective varieties. Our aim is to glue these meromorphic functions in a suitable way. This can be done by producing a section of \( p \). Since for any \( t \in \mathbb{P}^1 \) the fibre \( p^{-1}(t) \) is a normal rationally connected variety, we can apply the following result: every family of rationally connected varieties over a smooth curve admits a section. This property, conjectured by Kollár, has been recently proved by Graber, Harris, Starr, and by de Jong and Starr, (see [14] and [10]). The existence of a section allows us to produce a generically finite surjective morphism \( f: X \to Y \), where \( X \) is birationally equivalent to \( S \), \( Y \) is a smooth complex rational ruled surface, such that the restriction \( f|_{F_t} \) to a general smooth fibre has monodromy \( A_m \). To conclude our proof, we show that the monodromy of a general smooth fibre completely induces the monodromy of \( f \). For this, we use a topological result of Nori, see 5.1.

Finally, we apply our result to surfaces of general type with ample canonical divisor, see 5.3. We conjecture that theorem 1 holds for any finitely generated extension \( F \) of the complex field.

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2 Preliminaries

2.1 Monodromy

Let \( X \) and \( Y \) be irreducible complex algebraic varieties of the same dimension \( n \). Let \( f: X \to Y \) be a generically finite dominant morphism of degree \( d \). We recall the definition of monodromy group \( M(f) \) of \( f \), see [17]. Let \( G \) be the Galois group of the morphism \( f \), see sec.1, \( G \) acts faithfully on the general fibre \( f^{-1}(y) \) and so can be seen as a subgroup of \( Aut(f^{-1}(y)) \simeq S_d \). Let \( U \subset Y \) be an open dense subset such that the restriction \( f: f^{-1}(U) \to U \) is a covering of degree \( d \) in the classical topology (i.e. non ramified). For any point \( y \in U \), let \( f^{-1}(y) = \{ x_1, ..., x_d \} \), we have the monodromy
representation of the fundamental group $\pi_1(U, y)$:

$$\rho(f, y): \pi_1(U, y) \to Aut(f^{-1}(y)).$$

sending $[\alpha] \to \sigma(\alpha)$, where $\sigma(\alpha)$ is the automorphism which sends $x_i$ to the end-point of the lift of $\alpha$ at the point $x_i$. Let $M(f, y) = \rho(f, y)(\pi_1(U, y))$. It is easy to verify that $M(f, y)$ is isomorphic to the Galois group $G$ of $f$, and so does not depend on the choice of the open subset $U$. The monodromy group $M(f)$ is defined as the conjugacy class of the transitive subgroups $M(f, y)$.

### 2.2 Rational connectedness

Let $X$ be a proper complex algebraic variety of dimension $n$. We recall that $X$ is **rationally connected** if and only if for very general closed points $p, q \in X$ there is an irreducible rational curve $C \subset X$ which contains $p$ and $q$, see [21].

In the sequel we will need the following:

**Proposition 2.2.1.** Let $X \subset \mathbb{P}^N$ be a complex irreducible variety of codimension $m$ which is the complete intersection of $m$ hypersurfaces $Q_1, Q_2, \ldots, Q_m$, of degree $d_1, d_2, \ldots, d_m$. Let $h = \dim(Sing(X))$ and $h = -1$ if $X$ is smooth. If

$$\sum_{i=1}^{m} d_i + h + 1 \leq N$$

then $X$ is rationally connected. In particular, a complete intersection $X$ of $m$ quadrics with $h \leq N - 2m - 1$ is rationally connected.

**Proof.** If $X$ is smooth, then $\sum_{i=1}^{m} d_i \leq N$ implies that $X$ is a Fano variety, hence it is rationally connected, (see [21] p.240.)

So we can assume that $\dim(Sing(X)) = h \geq 0$. Let $H \subset (\mathbb{P}^N)^*$ be a general hyperplane: the hyperplane section $Y = X \cap H \subset \mathbb{P}^{N-1}$ is a complete intersection, irreducible and non degenerate, of $m$ hypersurfaces of $\mathbb{P}^{N-1}$ of degree $d_1, \ldots, d_m$. Moreover, $\dim(Sing(Y)) = h - 1$ and $Y$ satisfies inequality (1). Then it follows, by induction on $h$, that $Y$ is rationally connected. Finally, for general points $p$ and $q \in X$, there exists a rationally connected hyperplane section $Y$ containing $p$ and $q$, hence an irreducible rational curve $C \subset X$ connecting the two points. This concludes the proof.

We remark that, in the previous proof, one can intersect $X$ with a general linear space of dimension $N - h - 1$ to get a smooth Fano variety connecting two general points of $X$.

An important property of rational connectedness is given by the following result, see [14], [10], and [22]:
Theorem 2.2.2. Let \( p: X \to B \) be a proper flat morphism from a complex projective variety into a smooth complex projective curve, assume that \( p \) is smooth over an open dense subset \( U \) of \( B \). If the general fibre of \( p \) is a normal and rationally connected variety, then \( p \) has a section. Moreover, for any arbitrary finite set \( A \subset U \) and for any section \( \sigma_1: A \to p^{-1}(A) \), there exists a section \( \sigma: B \to X \) such that \( \sigma|_A = \sigma_1 \).

2.3 Notations

Let \( S \) be a smooth, complex, connected, projective surface: we denote by \( O_S \) the structure sheaf and by \( K_S \) a canonical divisor of \( S \), so that \( O_S(K_S) \) is the sheaf of the holomorphic 2-forms. Let \( q(S) = h^1(S, O_S) \) be the irregularity of \( S \), let \( p_g(S) = h^2(S, O_S) = h^0(S, O_S(K_S)) \) be the geometric genus of \( S \), finally let \( p_n(S) = h^0(S, O_S(nK_S)), n \geq 1 \), be the plurigenera of \( S \). We denote by \( k(S) \) the Kodaira dimension of \( S \). A minimal surface \( S \) is said of general type if \( k(S) = 2 \). Let \( C \subset S \) be an irreducible curve on \( S \), we denote by \( p_a(C) = h^1(C, O_C) \) the arithmetic genus of \( C \), then \( p_a(C) = 1 + \frac{1}{2}(C^2 + C \cdot K_S) \). If \( C \) is smooth, \( p_a(C) = g(C) \) is the geometric genus of \( C \), and \( O_S(K_S + C)|_C = \omega_C \) the canonical line bundle on \( C \). A \( g^r_d \) on a smooth curve \( C \) is a linear serie (not necessarily complete) on \( C \) of degree \( d \) and dimension exactly \( r \).

2.4 Very ample line bundles

Let \( L \) be a line bundle on \( S \), \( L \) is said \( k \)-spanned for \( k \geq 0 \) (i.e. it defines a \( k \)-th order embedding), if for any distinct points \( z_1, z_2, ... z_t \) on \( S \) and any positive integers \( k_1, k_2, ... k_t \) with \( \sum_{i=1}^t k_i = k + 1 \), the natural map \( H^0(S, L) \to H^0(Z, L \otimes O_Z) \) is onto, where \( (Z, O_Z) \) is a 0-dimensional subscheme such that at each point \( z_i \): \( I_{ZO_S, z_i} \) is generated by \( (x_i, y_i^{k_i}) \), with \( (x_i, y_i) \) local coordinates at \( z_i \) on \( S \). Note that \( k = 0, 1 \) means respectively \( L \) globally generated, \( L \) very ample,(see [4]). In the sequel, we will need the following:

Lemma 2.4.1. Let \( S \) be a smooth complex projective surface and \( K_S \) be a canonical divisor on it. Let \( H \) be a very ample divisor on \( S \), such that \( H^2 \geq 5 \) and \( (S, O_S(H)) \) does not contain lines and conics. Then we have the following properties:

(a) the divisor \( 2H + K_S \) is very ample too;

(b) let \( R \subset |2H + K_S| \) be the locus of reducible curves, then \( R \) is a closed subset of codimension \( \geq 2 \);

(c) a general pencil \( P \subset |2H + K_S| \) has all irreducible elements and the singular curves of \( P \) have a unique node as singularities.

5
Proof. Note that since $H$ is very ample, to prove a), it is enough that $O_S(H + K_S)$ is a line bundle globally generated on $S$. This is true for any pair $(S, O_S(H))$ which is not a scroll or $(\mathbb{P}^2, O_{\mathbb{P}^2}(i))$, $i = 1, 2$, see [27]. Let’s examine b). Let $S^* \subset |2H + K_S|$ be the locus of singular curves, then $S^*$ is an irreducible variety and $\text{codim}S^* \geq 1$, see [18], moreover $R \subset S^*$, see [19] cor III 7.9. So property b) means either $\text{codim}S^* \geq 2$ or $R$ is a proper closed subset of $S^*$. Let $p \in S$ be any point, let $\epsilon: X \to S$ be the blow up of $S$ at the point $p$ with exceptional divisor $E$: assume that there exists a smooth irreducible curve in the linear system $|\epsilon^*(2H + K_S) - 2E|$, this would give us an irreducible curve having a unique node in $p$ in the linear system $|2H + K_S|$, which implies $R \neq S^*$. For this it is enough to request that $\epsilon^*(2H + K_S) - 2E$ is ample and globally generated, which is of course true if it is very ample. This last property is achieved for every point $p$, whenever $2H + K_S$ defines a 3-rd order embedding, (i.e. it is 3 spanned), see [3], prop.3.5. In particular, if $H^2 \geq 5$, $2H + K_S$ is 3-spanned unless there exist an effective divisor $F$ on $S$ such that either $H.F=1$ and $F^2 = 0$, $-1$, $-2$ or $H.F = 2$ and $F^2 = 0$, see [4]. Since we assumed that there are no curves embedded by $H$ as lines or conics, this concludes b). Actually, we have also proved that a general element of $S^*$ is an irreducible curve with a unique node, which implies c). □

Remark: Note that on any surface $S$ we can easily find very ample line bundles satisfying the assumptions of the lemma: for any very ample $H$, it is enough to take $nH$ with $n \geq 3$.

3 Odd ramification coverings of smooth curves.

Let $X$ be a smooth, irreducible, complex projective curve of genus $g$. Let $f \in \text{C}(X)$ be a non-constant meromorphic function on $X$ of degree $d$, then it defines a holomorphic map $f: X \to \mathbb{P}^1$, which is a ramified covering with branch locus $B \subset \mathbb{P}^1$ and ramification divisor $R \subset X$. Let $M(f)$ be the monodromy group of $f$, see 2.1. We say that $f$ is an odd ramification covering if all ramification points of $f$ have odd index. Note that if $f$ is an odd ramification covering, then it has even monodromy, in fact all the generators of the group $M(f)$ can be decomposed in cycles of odd length.

3.1 Constructing map with even monodromy

We recall the method used in [2] to produce odd ramification coverings. A line bundle $L$ on $X$ is said a spin bundle if $L^2 = K_X$, where $K_X$ denotes the canonical line bundle on $X$. Fix 3 distinct points $p_1, p_2, p_3$ on $X$ and define the divisor

$$D = n_1 p_1 + n_2 p_2 + n_3 p_3 \quad n_i \in \mathbb{N} \quad n_1 > n_2 > n_3 \geq 0; \quad (2)$$
set \( d = \deg D = n_1 + n_2 + n_3 \) and denote by \([D]\) the support of \( D \), we have \( \deg[D] = k \) with \( k = 2 \) or \( 3 \). Let \( L \) be a spin bundle on \( X \); we consider the line bundle \( L(D) \). Note that if \( s \) is a global section in \( H^0(X, L(D)) \), then \( s^2 \) can be identified with a meromorphic form \( \omega \) on \( X \) having poles at the points of \([D]\). If \( \omega \) were an exact form, then there would be a non constant meromorphic function \( f \in H^0(X, O_X(2D - [D])) \) on \( X \), such that \( \omega = df \). It is easy to verify that \( f: X \to \mathbb{P}^1 \) would be a ramified covering with odd ramification index at every point. Let us define set-theoretically

\[
A(X, D) = \{ s \in H^0(X, L(D)) : \quad s^2 \text{ is exact} \}, \tag{3}
\]

\[
\mathcal{F}(X, D) = \{ f \in C(X) : \quad df = s^2, \quad s \in A(X, D) \}. \tag{4}
\]

Note that \( A(X, D) \) is actually the zero scheme of the following map:

\[
\psi: H^0(X, L(D)) \to H^1(X - [D], C) \tag{5}
\]

sending each global section \( s \) into the De Rham cohomology class \([s^2]\) of the form \( \omega = s^2 \). Actually we will consider the projectivization of \( A(X, D) \)

\[
\mathcal{H}(X, D) = \{(s) \in P(H^0(X, L(D))) : \quad s^2 \text{ is exact} \}. \tag{6}
\]

We have the following results:

**Proposition 3.1.1.** Let \( X \) be a smooth complex projective curve of genus \( g \), let \( D \) be a divisor as in (1) with degree \( d \) and support of degree \( k \). We assume that:

\( d > 8g + 3k - 4 \)

and moreover if \( k = 2 \) then \( 2n_i > 3g + 2 \) for \( i = 1, 2 \); if \( k = 3 \) then \( 2n_i > 3g + 3 \), \( i = 1, 2, 3 \). Then \( \mathcal{H}(X, D) \subset \mathbb{P}^{d-1} \) is a complex projective variety with the following properties:

(i.) \( \mathcal{H}(X, D) \) is an irreducible variety of dimension \( d - 2g - k \) and its singular locus \( \text{Sing}(\mathcal{H}(X, D)) \) has dimension \( h < 4(g - 1) + k \);

(ii.) \( \mathcal{H}(X, D) \subset \mathbb{P}^{d-1} \) is a complete intersection of \( 2g + k - 1 \) linearly independent quadrics;

(iii.) \( \mathcal{H}(X, D) \) is a normal rationally connected variety.

**Proof.** Note that \( \psi \) factors through the natural linear map

\[
\theta: \text{Sym}^2 H^0(X, L(D)) \to H^1(X - [D], C), \tag{7}
\]

defined as \( \theta(s \otimes t) = [s.t] \), the De Rham cohomology class of \( s.t \). This implies that \( \mathcal{H}(X, D) \) is the zero locus of homogeneous polynomials of degree 2. Actually, \( \mathcal{H}(X, D) \)
can be seen as the zero locus of a global section $\sigma$ of the following vector bundle of rank $2g + k - 1$ on $\mathbb{P}(H^0(X, L(D))) = \mathbb{P}^{d-1}$:

$$E = H^1(X - [D], \mathbb{C}) \otimes O_{\mathbb{P}^{d-1}}(2),$$

(8)

see [23], pr.2.1. Note that the ideal sheaf $\mathcal{I}_{\mathcal{H}(X,D)}$ is the image of the dual map $\sigma^* : E^* \to O_{\mathbb{P}^{d-1}}$, hence it is locally generated by $2g + k - 1$ elements. By studying the tangent map we can obtain that, under the above assumptions, actually $\mathcal{H}(X, D)$ is irreducible of dimension $d - 2g - k$ and moreover $\dim \text{Sing}(\mathcal{H}(X, D)) = h < 4(g - 1) + k$, see [23], pr.5.1 and cor.5.3. This also implies that $\mathcal{H}(X, D)$ is a complete intersection of $2g + k - 1$ quadrics and concludes the proofs of i) and ii). $\mathcal{H}(X, D)$ is a normal variety since from i) it is regular in codimension 1, (see [19], p.186). Finally, since $\mathcal{H}(X, D) \subset \mathbb{P}^{d-1}$ is an irreducible complete intersection of $2g + k - 1$ quadrics, by pr. 2.2.1, it is rationally connected if we have:

$$h \leq d - 4g - 2k,$$

this immediately follows from i), since we assumed $d > 8g + 3k - 4$. \hfill \Box

Let $(s) \in \mathcal{H}(X, D)$: it defines a unique linear serie $g^1_m(s)$ on $X$ as follows:

$$g^1_m(s) = \{\lambda f + \mu = 0\}_{(\lambda, \mu) \in \mathbb{P}^1},$$

where $f \in C(X)$ and $df = s^2$. We have the following result:

**Proposition 3.1.2.** Let $X$ be a smooth complex projective curve of genus $g$, let $D$ be a divisor with degree $d$ and support of degree $k$ as in [2]. Assume that: $d > 6g + 2k - 3$, if $k = 2$ then $2n_i > 3g + 3$ for $i = 1, 2$, if $k = 3$, then $2n_i > 3g + 4$ for $i = 1, 2, 3$, moreover, the triple $(2n_1 - 1, 2n_2 - 1, 2n_3 - 1)$ is given by relatively prime integers. Then for general $(s) \in \mathcal{H}(X, D)$ the linear serie $g^1_m(s)$ is base points free and defines an indecomposable finite morphism $F : X \to \mathbb{P}^1$ of degree $m = 2d - k$ with monodromy $M(F) = A_n$.

For the proof see [2], pr.3 and th.1.

## 4 Main constructions.

In this section we will introduce some basic constructions, we will need in proving our main theorem.
4.1 Lefschetz pencil.

Let $S$ be a smooth complex projective surface and let $K_S$ be a canonical divisor on $S$. Let $H$ be a very ample divisor on $S$ such that $H^2 \geq 5$ and $(S, O_S(H))$ does not contain lines or conics. Set $g = p_a(2H + K_S)$ and $N = (2H + K_S)^2 \geq H^2 \geq 5$. By lemma 2.4.1 c), we can choose a general pencil $P = \{C_t\}_{t \in \mathbb{P}^1}$ in the linear system $|2H + K_S|$, with the following properties:

(i.) every curve in $P$ is irreducible;

(ii.) the generic curve in $P$ is a smooth, irreducible, complex projective curve of genus $g$;

(iii.) there are at most finitely many singular curves in $P$ and they have a unique node as singularities;

(iv.) every pair of curves $C_t$ and $C_{t'}$ of $P$ intersect trasversally, so that $P$ has $N$ distinct base points, $p_1, \ldots, p_N$.

We will call $P$ a Lefschetz pencil of irreducible curves on $S$ of genus $g$. Starting from these data $(S, H, P)$ we will introduce the following constructions.

4.2 Construction 1

Let $\hat{S}$ be the smooth complex projective surface obtained by blowing up the base points of the pencil $P$:

$$\hat{S} = B_{p_1, p_2, \ldots, p_N}(S).$$

Let us denote by $\epsilon: \hat{S} \to S$ the blow up map, by $E_1, \ldots, E_N$ the exceptional curves, such that $E_t^2 = -1$ and $E_i \cdot E_j = 0$, for $i \neq j$, then $K_{\hat{S}} = \epsilon^* K_S + E_1 + \ldots + E_N$. Note that the strict transforms of the curves of the pencil $P$ satisfies: $\tilde{C}_t \cdot \tilde{C}_{t'} = 0$, for any $t \neq t'$. Hence the pencil $P$ induces a surjective morphism

$$\phi: \hat{S} \to \mathbb{P}^1,$$

with fibre $F_t = \tilde{C}_t$, for any $t \in \mathbb{P}^1$, $C_t \in P$. Moreover, $\phi$ is actually a flat morphism and the exceptional curves $E_1, \ldots, E_N$ in $\hat{S}$ turn out to be sections of the morphism $\phi$. We will define on $\hat{S}$ the line bundle

$$L = \epsilon^* O_S(H + K_S).$$

Note that if $F_t$ is any singular fibre of $\phi$, then its dualizing sheaf $\omega_{F_t}$ is a line bundle, since we have $\omega_{F_t} = (\omega_{\hat{S}} + F_t)|_{F_t}$, as for smooth fibres. It’s easy to verify that for any fibre $F_t$ we have

$$L_{|F_t} \simeq \omega_{F_t},$$

9
so we say that $L$ is a spin bundle relatively to $\phi$. We denote by $U \subset \mathbb{P}^1$ the open subset corresponding to smooth fibres of $\phi$, set $\hat{S}_U = \phi^{-1}(U)$, then $\phi: \hat{S}_U \to U$ is a smooth morphism. We have proved the following

**Claim 1:** The smooth complex projective surface $\hat{S}$ is endowed with a surjective morphism $\phi: \hat{S} \to \mathbb{P}^1$, with smooth fibre $F_t$ of genus $g$, and a line bundle $L$ which is a spin bundle relatively to $\phi$.

### 4.3 Construction 2

Now let us choose three distinct exceptional curves $E_1$, $E_2$, $E_3$ on the surface $\hat{S}$, and fix integers $n_1 > n_2 > n_3 \geq 0$: we will consider on $\hat{S}$ the line bundle

$$L(n_1E_1 + n_2E_2 + n_3E_3).$$

Since each $E_i$ is a section of the morphism $\phi: \hat{S} \to \mathbb{P}^1$, for any fibre $F_t$ of $\phi$ we have

$$L(n_1E_1 + n_2E_2 + n_3E_3)|_{F_t} = L_t(D_t),$$

where $D_t = n_1p_1^t + n_2p_2^t + n_3p_3^t$, with $p_i^t = E_{i|F_t}$ and $L_t = L_{|F_t}$ is a spin bundle on $F_t$. Set $d = \text{deg}(D_t) = n_1 + n_2 + n_3$ and $[D_t]$ is the support of $D_t$, with $\text{deg}[D_t] = k$, $k = 2$ or 3. We assume that: $d > 8g + 3k - 4$, if $k = 2$ then $2n_i > 3g + 3$ for $i = 1, 2$; if $k = 3$ then $2n_i > 3g + 4$ for $i = 1, 2, 3$, finally $(2n_1 - 1, 2n_2 - 1, 2n_3 - 1)$ are relatively prime integers. For such $(d, k)$, for any smooth fibre $F_t$, by pr. 3.1.1, we can introduce the irreducible projective variety:

$$\mathcal{H}(F_t, D_t) \subset \mathbb{P}(H^0(F_t, L_t(D_t))) = \mathbb{P}^{d-1}.$$  \hspace{1cm} (15)

**Claim 2:** There exists a complex projective variety $\mathcal{H}$ and a surjective morphism $p: \mathcal{H} \to \mathbb{P}^1$, with the following property: let $U \subset \mathbb{P}^1$ be the open subset corresponding to smooth fibres $F_t$ of $\phi$, for any $t \in U$, the fibre $p^{-1}(t)$ is the projective variety $\mathcal{H}(F_t, D_t)$.

Let us consider on $\hat{S}$ the line bundle $L(n_1E_1 + n_2E_2 + n_3E_3)$ and look at its restriction $L_t(D_t)$ to any fibre $F_t$. Since $F_t$ is irreducible and lies on a smooth surface, then $\text{deg}(L_t(D_t)) > 2p_a - 2$, implies $h^1(F_t, L_t(D_t)) = 0$, see [8], so we can apply Riemann Roch theorem and obtain $h^0(F_t, L_t(D_t)) = d$. Since $\phi: \hat{S} \to \mathbb{P}^1$ is a flat morphism, by Grauert’s theorem, (see [19], p.288), the sheaf

$$\mathcal{F} = \phi_*(L(n_1E_1 + n_2E_2 + n_3E_3))$$  \hspace{1cm} (16)

is a locally free sheaf of rank $d$ on $\mathbb{P}^1$. So we can introduce the associated projective space bundle $\mathbb{P}(\mathcal{F})$ and the following smooth morphism

$$\pi: \mathbb{P}(\mathcal{F}) \to \mathbb{P}^1,$$  \hspace{1cm} (17)
whose fibre at $t$ is the projective space $\mathbf{P}(H^0(F_t, L_t(D_t))) = \mathbf{P}^{d-1}_t$. Let $O_{\mathcal{F}}(1)$ be the tautological line bundle on $\mathbf{P}(\mathcal{F})$, i.e. $O_{\mathcal{F}}(1)_{|\mathcal{F}(t)} = O_{\mathbf{P}^{d-1}_t}(1)$. Let $U \subset \mathbf{P}^1$ be the open subset where $\phi$ is smooth and $\hat{S}_U = \phi^{-1}(U)$. Set $W = \hat{S}_U - \{E_1, E_2, E_3\}$, we can consider the restriction

$$\bar{\phi} = \phi|_W : W \to U,$$

with fibre $\bar{\phi}^{-1}(t) = F_t - [D_t]$, for any $t \in U$. Since for any smooth fibre $F_t$, we have $h^1(F_t - [D_t], C) = 2g + k - 1$, the sheaf $R^1\bar{\phi}_*(C)$ is actually a vector bundle on $U$ with fibre $H^1(F_t - [D_t], C)$, set

$$G_U = R^1\bar{\phi}_*(C).$$

Let $Sym^2\mathcal{F}$ be the 2 symmetric power of $\mathcal{F}$, we have the following natural maps:

$$\alpha : O_{\mathcal{F}}(-2)|_U \to Sym^2\mathcal{F}|_U$$

$$\Theta : Sym^2\mathcal{F}|_U \to G_U,$$

see the proof of 3.1.1. By composition we obtain a non zero global section $\tau$ of the vector bundle $G_U \otimes O_{\mathcal{F}(2)}|_U$. We define the projective variety

$$\mathcal{H}_U \subset \mathbf{P}(\mathcal{F})|_U,$$

as the zero locus of the section $\tau$. It admits a natural surjective morphism $p_U : \mathcal{H}_U \to U$, whose fibre at $t$ is actually the projective variety $\mathcal{H}(F_t, D_t)$. It’s easy to verify that $p_U$ turns out to be a proper flat morphism. Finally, let $\mathcal{H}$ be the scheme-theoretic closure of $\mathcal{H}_U$ into the projective variety $\mathbf{P}(\mathcal{F})$, then $\mathcal{H}$ is a complex projective variety, moreover, since $U = \mathbf{P}^1 - \{t_1, ..., t_Q\}$, then there exists a flat morphism $p : \mathcal{H} \to \mathbf{P}^1$, which extends $p_U$, (see [19], p.258).

4.4 Claim 3: $\mathcal{H}$ admits a section $\sigma$.

Look at the surjective flat morphism $p : \mathcal{H} \to \mathbf{P}^1$: for any $t \in U$, the fibre $p^{-1}(t) = \mathcal{H}(F_t, D_t)$ is a normal rationally connected variety, see pr. 3.1.1. This allows us to apply theorem 2.2.2 to $p$ and to conclude that $p$ has a section, let us denote it by $\sigma$,

$$\sigma : \mathbf{P}^1 \to \mathcal{H},$$

with the following property: for general $t \in U$, the linear serie $g^1_m(t)$, defined by $\sigma(t)$, on the smooth fibre $F_t$, is base points free of degree $2d - k$. So, by pr. 3.1.2, the associated map $F_t \to \mathbf{P}^1$ is indecomposable with monodromy group $A_{2d-k}$. Note that under the assumptions made in 4.3, $m$ is even and $m > 16g + 2$ if $k = 2$, while $m$ is odd and $m > 16g + 7$ if $k = 3$. 

11
4.5 Construction 3

There exist a smooth, complex, rational ruled surface $Y$ and a finite rational map of degree $m = 2d - k$, $\delta: \hat{S} \to Y$ with the following property: for a general smooth fibre $F_t$ the restriction $\delta_{|F_t}$ is given by the linear serie $g^1_m(t)$ on $F_t$ and the following diagram commutes:

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
\hat{S} & \delta \downarrow & Y \\
\downarrow & & \downarrow \\
P^1 & \text{id} \downarrow & P^1
\end{array}
\]

where the vertical arrows are respectively the morphism $\phi$ and the ruling $\pi$ of $Y$.

Since $\phi: \hat{S}_U \to U$ is a smooth morphism, we can consider the quasi projective variety $\hat{S}_U^{(m)}$ parametrizing the symmetric products $F_t^{(m)}$ of the smooth fibres $F_t$ of $\phi$. There is natural map induced by $\phi$, which is a smooth morphism

\[
\phi_m: \hat{S}_U^{(m)} \to U, \tag{24}
\]

with smooth fibre $F_t^{(m)}$. The existence of $\sigma$, allows us to define a quasi projective variety $\mathcal{I}$ as follows:

\[
\mathcal{I} = \{(A, t) \in \hat{S}_U^{(m)} \times U : A \in g^1_m(t)\}. \tag{25}
\]

Let $\pi_1: \mathcal{I} \to U$ the natural projection, then $\pi_1^{-1}(t) \simeq P^1$ is the linear serie $g^1_m(t)$. So $\mathcal{I}$ is a quasi-projective surface endowed with a rational ruling $\pi_1$. Then let $Y$ be a smooth rational ruled surface whose ruling

\[
\pi: Y \to P^1, \tag{26}
\]

restricts to $U$ is $\pi_1$, let $F_t^Y$ denote the fibre of $\pi$ at $t$. Finally, we define the rational map $\delta$: let $x \in \hat{S}_U$, then there exists a unique smooth fibre $F_t$ through $x$, assume that $x$ is not a base point of the serie $g^1_m(t)$, then $\delta(x)$ is the unique divisor in $g^1_m(t)$ passing through the point $x$. It is easy to see that $\delta$ is a rational map. Let $t \in U$ be a general point, then the fibre $F_t$ is smooth and the linear serie $g^1_m(t)$ is base points free of degree $m = 2d - k$, see 4.4. The restriction $\delta_{|F_t}$ is actually the morphism associated to $g^1_m(t)$:

\[
\delta_{|F_t}: F_t \to F_t^Y \simeq P^1, \tag{27}
\]

so the map induced on the $P^1$’s must be the identity. Moreover, by 4.4, for general $t \in U$, the monodromy group $M(\delta_{|F_t})$ is the alternating group $A_m$.

4.6 Construction 4

The rational map $\delta: \hat{S} \to Y$ can be resolved with a finite number of blow ups as follows. Let $V \subset \hat{S}$ be an open subset where $\delta$ is defined. Let $\Gamma_\delta \subset \hat{S} \times Y$ be the closure of the
graph of the morphism $\delta|_{V}$. $\Gamma_{\delta}$ is a projective variety, and it has two natural projections $\pi_{1}: \Gamma_{\delta} \rightarrow \hat{S}$, which is a birational morphism, and $\pi_{2}: \Gamma_{\delta} \rightarrow Y$, which is a generically finite surjective morphism of degree $m$. Then there exist a smooth surface $X$ and a birational morphism $r: X \rightarrow \Gamma_{\delta}$ which is a resolution of singularities of $\Gamma_{\delta}$, see [20]. Hence we have:

(i.) $X$ is a smooth complex projective surface in the birational class of $S$;

(ii.) there exists a surjective morphism $\eta = \phi \cdot \pi_{1} \cdot r: X \rightarrow \mathbb{P}^{1}$, whose general smooth fibre is isomorphic to a general smooth fibre $F_{t}$ of $\phi$;

(iii.) there exists a generically finite surjective morphism, $f = \pi_{2} \cdot r: X \rightarrow Y$, of degree $m$, such that the restriction $f|_{F_{t}}$ is actually $\delta|_{F_{t}}$, for a general smooth fibre $F_{t}$.

So we have proved the following

Claim 4: We have a commutative diagramm:

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
X & \xrightarrow{f} & Y \\
\downarrow & & \downarrow \\
\mathbb{P}^{1} & \xrightarrow{id} & \mathbb{P}^{1}
\end{array}
\]

where the vertical arrows are respectively the morphism $\eta$ and the ruling $\pi$ of $Y$, such that for a general smooth fibre $F_{t}$, the monodromy group $M(f|_{F_{t}})$ is the alternating group $A_{m}$.

5 The main result.

5.1 Technical lemma

We start with a basic lemma, which is an easy application of a topological result of Nori, (see [21], lemma 1.5).

Lemma 5.1.1. Let $X$ be a smooth complex projective surface endowed with a surjective morphism $\eta: X \rightarrow \mathbb{P}^{1}$ with general smooth fibre $F_{t}$. Let $Y$ be a smooth complex rational ruled surface with ruling $\pi: Y \rightarrow \mathbb{P}^{1}$, and fibre $F_{t}^{Y} \simeq \mathbb{P}^{1}$. Assume that $f: X \rightarrow Y$ is a generically finite dominant morphism of degree $m$, such that the following diagramm commutes:

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
X & \xrightarrow{f} & Y \\
\downarrow & & \downarrow \\
\mathbb{P}^{1} & \xrightarrow{id} & \mathbb{P}^{1}
\end{array}
\]

then the restriction of $f$ to general smooth fibres of $\eta$ completely induces the monodromy group $M(f)$, i.e.

\[M(f, x) \simeq M(f|_{F_{t}}, x),\]
for a general smooth fibre $F_t$ and $x \in f(F_t)$, not a branch point of $f$.

Proof. Let us consider the morphism $f: X \to Y$, let $R \subset X$ be the ramification divisor and $B \subset Y$ the branch locus of $f$. The following map

$$q = f|_{X-f^{-1}(B)}: X - f^{-1}(B) \to Y - B,$$

(28)

is a covering of degree $m$ in the classic topology. Look at the restriction to a general smooth fibre $F_t$ of $\eta$, by the above commutative diagramm, we have:

$$q|_{F_t} = f|_{F_t-(F_t \cap f^{-1}(B))}: F_t - (F_t \cap f^{-1}(B)) \to Y_t - (B \cap F_t^Y),$$

since $R \cap F_t$ is actually the ramification divisor of $f|_{F_t}$ and $B \cap F_t^Y$ is the branch losus of $f|_{F_t}$, then $q|_{F_t}$ is a covering too of degree $m$. Now let’s also restrict $\pi$ to $Y - B$:

$$\pi|_{Y-B}: Y - B \to \mathbf{P}^1,$$

(29)

by the above commutative diagramm, since the induced map on the $\mathbf{P}^1$’s is the identity, $B$ cannot contain a complete fibre. This allows us to conclude that the restriction $\pi|_{Y-B}$ is surjective too. Moreover, note that since $\pi$ is a ruling of a rational ruled surface, it admits a section: so it cannot have multiple fibres, that is every fibre must have a reduced component. So by lemma (1.5), c) of [24], we have the following exact sequence between the fundamental groups:

$$\pi_1(F_t^Y - (B \cap F_t^Y)) \to \pi_1(Y - B) \to \pi_1(\mathbf{P}^1),$$

(30)

for a general smooth fibre $F_t^Y$. Since $\pi_1(\mathbf{P}^1) = 0$, this gives us a surjective map $s_t$:

$$s_t: \pi_1(F_t^Y - (B \cap F_t^Y)) \to \pi_1(Y - B).$$

(31)

Let $x \in Y - B$ be a point such that $x \in F_t^Y = f(F_t)$, for a general smooth fibre $F_t$. We recall that the monodromy representation is the group homomorphism

$$\rho(f, x): \pi_1(Y - B) \to Aut(f^{-1}(x)),$$

(32)

whose image is $M(f, x)$. The surjectivity of $s_t$ immediately implies

$$M(f, x) = M(f|_{F_t}, x),$$

(33)

for a general smooth fibre $F_t$ and for any $x \in f(F_t), x \notin B$. This concludes the proof. 

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14
5.2 Proof of Theorem 2.

Let \( m > 16g + 7 \) be any integer, we can find a pair of integers \((d, k)\) satisfying the following properties:

\[
 k = 2 \text{ or } 3, \quad d > 8g + 3k - 4, \quad 2d - k = m.
\]

Since \( H^2 \geq 5 \) and the pair \((S, O_S(H))\) does not contain lines and conics, see 4.1, we can choose a Lefschetz pencil \( P \) of irreducible curves of genus \( g \), in the linear system \([2H + K_S]\). We can apply all constructions of sec. 4 to the data \((S, H, P)\), where \((d, k)\) are given as above. So we produce the following situation: \( X \) is a smooth complex projective surface, birationally equivalent to \( S \), endowed with a surjective morphism \( \eta: X \to \mathbb{P}^1 \), with smooth fibre \( F_t \) of genus \( g \), \( Y \) is a smooth complex rational ruled surface, with ruling \( \pi: Y \to \mathbb{P}^1 \), \( f: X \to Y \) is a generically finite morphism of degree \( m = 2d - k \); finally the following diagramm commutes:

\[
 \begin{array}{ccc}
 X & \xrightarrow{f} & Y \\
 \downarrow & & \downarrow \\
 \mathbb{P}^1 & \xrightarrow{id} & \mathbb{P}^1 \\
 \end{array}
\]

where the vertical maps are respectively \( \eta \) and \( \pi \). Moreover, for a general smooth fibre \( F_t \) of \( \eta \), the monodromy group \( M(f|_{F_t}) \) is the alternating group \( A_m \). Note that all the assumptions of lemma 5.1.1 are verified, hence we have:

\[
 M(f, x) = M(f|_{F_t}, x), \tag{34}
\]

for a general smooth fibre \( F_t \) and a point \( x \in f(F_t) \), which is not a branch point. Since \( M(f|_{F_t}) = A_m \), for a general smooth fibre \( F_t \), we can finally conclude that the monodromy group \( M(f) \) is actually the alternating group \( A_m \).

**Remark:** Note that the above theorem works under the following more general hypothesis: let \( H \) be an ample divisor, such that \( 2H + K_S \) is very ample and \( 2H + K_S \) defines a 3-th order embedding, see lemma 2.4.1.

5.3 Surfaces of general type.

We would like to apply the above result to surfaces of general type. Let \( S \) be a minimal, smooth complex projective surface of general type with ample canonical divisor \( K_S \). As it is well known, for some \( n > 0 \) the pluricanonical map \( \phi_{nK_S} \) is an embedding; in order to apply theorem 2, we will be interested in the smallest \( n \) such that \( \phi_{nK_S} \) is actually a 3-th order embedding. In fact, in this situation, if \( n = 2t + 1 \geq 3 \), we can find a Lefschetz pencil \( P \), of irreducible curves in the linear system \([nK_S]\), see 4.1, and apply our constructions of section 4 to the data \((S, O_S(tK_S), P)\). At this hand, we will use the following result:
Lemma 5.3.1. Let $S$ be a minimal surface of general type with ample cannonical divisor $K_S$.

i) If $n \geq 5$, the divisor $nK_S$ is very ample, if $p_g \geq 3$ and $K_S^2 \geq 3$ then $3K_S$ is very ample too;

ii) if $n \geq 5$ and $K_S^2 \geq 3$, then $nK_S$ defines a 3-th order embedding, moreover if $K_S^2 > 5$ then $3K_S$ defines a 3-th order embedding unless there exists an effective divisor $F$ on $S$ such that $K_S.F = 2$ with $F^2 = 0$.

For the proofs see [6] for i) and [4] for ii).

As an immediate consequence of our result, we have the following:

Theorem 5.3.2. Let $S$ be a minimal, smooth, complex, connected, projective surface of general type with ample canonical divisor $K_S$, with $K_S^2 > 3$. Then for any $m > 16(1 + 15K_S^2) + 7$, there exist a smooth complex projective surface $X$, in the birational class of $S$, and a generically finite surjective morphism, of degree $m$:

$$f: X \to Y,$$

into a smooth complex rational ruled surface $Y$ such that the monodromy group $M(f)$ is the alternating group $A_m$.

Moreover, if $p_g \geq 3$ and $K_S^2 > 5$, and $S$ does not contain any effective divisor $F$ described in lemma 5.3.1, then $m > 16(1 + 6K_S^2) + 7$.

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