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Authors
Tlelo-Cuautle, E.
Sánchez-López, C.
Martínez-Romero, E.
et al.

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Symbolic analysis of analog circuits containing voltage mirrors and current mirrors

E. Tlelo-Cuautle · C. Sánchez-López ·
E. Martínez-Romero · Sheldon X.-D. Tan

Abstract The pathological elements voltage mirror (VM) and current mirror (CM) have shown advantages in analog behavioral modeling and circuit synthesis, where many nullor-mirror equivalences have been explored to design and to transform voltage-mode circuits to current-mode ones and vice versa. However, both the VM and CM have not equivalents to perform automatic symbolic circuit analysis. In this manner, we introduce nullor-equivalents for these pathological elements allowing to include parasitics and to perform only symbolic nodal analysis. The nullor-equivalent of the CM is extended to provide multiple-outputs (MO-CM). Finally, two active filters containing VMs, CMs and MO-CMs are analysed to show the usefulness of the models.

Keywords Nullor · Voltage mirror · Current mirror · Symbolic analysis · Nodal analysis · Active filter

1 Introduction

The nullator and norator elements are quite useful in analog design automation (ADA). For instance, the ideal behavior of the voltage follower (VF) can be modeled using nullators, with the aim to synthesize different VF topologies. Further, the VF can be evolved to synthesize the voltage mirror (VM) [35]. The norator is useful to model the behavior of the current follower (CF), and it can be superimposed with the VF to design more complex devices, e.g., current conveyors [38].

The VF, VM, CF and the current mirror (CM) form the four unity-gain cells (UGCs) [34]. Among them, the CM could be the most useful cell covering a wide range of applications [9, 13, 31, 33, 43], and also it can provide multiple-outputs (MO-CM). The four UGCs can be combined to model the behavior of already known and new active devices [3]. For example, the inverting properties of the VM and CM leads us to design inverting and positive-type current conveyors [1, 25, 26, 27], which properties can improve the ones provided by the four terminal floating nullor (FTFN) [12].

In symbolic analysis of analog and VLSI circuits, several methods are described in [7, 17]. In particular, the nullator and the norator are quite useful to perform symbolic analysis by only applying nodal analysis (NA) [11, 22, 39]. Besides, the symbolic NA method requires that all active devices be modeled using nullors [14, 22, 39].

The modeling of active devices possessing inverting characteristics can be done by using the VM and CM, as pathological elements [2, 20, 30, 42]. An important thing is that an analog circuit containing VMs and CMs also allows to transform circuit topologies or voltage-mode to current-mode circuits and vice-versa [5, 8, 10, 15, 28, 29, 41]. However, both the VM and CM can not be used in
symbolic NA because their inverting characteristics impose addition/subtraction limitations in the formulation process, i.e. there is not way to perform addition or deletion of columns or rows to preserve the inverting characteristics of either or both the VM and CM, as it is done in a nullor network [37]. In this manner, we are introducing nullor-equivalents for the VM, CM and MO-CM to take advantage of the symbolic NA of nullor networks [7, 37, 39].

2 Symbolic NA method

As already shown in [22, 37, 39], the main advantage of transforming an analog circuit to a nullor network is to apply only NA in the formulation process, and to obtain a reduced system of equations for operational amplifier based circuits [7, 37], and in general for circuits containing non-NA compatible elements.

The first step of the NA formulation consists to model all circuit elements, such as: active devices, controlled sources and independent voltage sources using nullors [5, 14, 39]. The modeling process must include grounded admittances as much as possible, because they have only one entry in the NA formulation [37], while floating ones may have up to four entries requiring more computational work. The symbolic NA formulation method \( i = Yv \) can be summarized as follows:

1. Step 1: Describe the interconnection relationships of norators \( P_j \), nullators \( O_j \), and admittances by generating tables including names and nodes \((m, n)\).
2. Step 2: Calculate the indexes associated to set row and set column, and group grounded and floating admittances:
   (a) ROW: Contains all nodes ordered by applying the norator property which nodes \((m, n)\) are virtually short-circuited. These indexes are used to fill vector \(i\) and the admittance matrix \(Y\).
   (b) COL: Contains all nodes ordered by applying the nullator property which nodes \((m, n)\) are virtually short-circuited. These indexes are used to fill vector \(v\) and the admittance matrix \(Y\).
   (c) Admittances: They are grouped into two tables: Table A includes all nodes (ordered), and in each node is the sum of all admittances connected to it. Table B includes all floating admittances and its nodes \((m, n)\).
3. Step 3: Use sets ROW and COL to fill vectors \(i\) and \(v\), respectively. To fill \(Y\): if in Table A a node is included in ROW and COL, introduce that admittance(s) in \(Y\) at position (ROW index, COL index). For each admittance in Table B, search node \(m\) in ROW and \(n\) in COL (do the same but search \(n\) in ROW and \(m\) in COL), if both nodes exist the admittance is introduced in \(Y\) at position (ROW index, COL index), and it is negative.

The solution of the formulation can be obtained by boolean logic operations [32], or by determinant decision diagrams [23, 40]. Elsewhere, we can formulate a much reduced system of equations in a nullor network, because it also allows us to apply circuit reduction methods [6, 16, 21, 24].

3 VM and CM nullor-equivalents

The pathological elements VM and CM are shown in Fig. 1 [2]. These representations are useful in circuit modeling [2, 20, 30, 42], circuit transformation [28, 29, 41], and circuit synthesis [18, 19]. However, these representations do not allow to include parasitics and they cannot be used within the symbolic NA method, because their inverting characteristics do not allow to perform operations as it is done for networks containing nullators and norators [7, 22, 37, 39]. In this manner, we introduce nullor-equivalents for the VM, CM and MO-CM to solve these problems.

3.1 Nullor-equivalent of the VM

Among all the possible combinations to generate the nullor-equivalent of the VM, we propose to use the one shown in Fig. 2. In this description \(Z_{in}\) and \(Z_{out}\) are connected in parallel to the input-port and in series to the output-port, respectively, and they model the input and output parasitics. The resistor of value \(1/A_v\) is very useful in the NA formulation because the admittance becomes \(A_v\), and it models the gain or tracking error of the VM. In the ideal case, \(Z_{in} = \infty\), \(Z_{out} = 0\), and \(A_v = \text{unity}\).

From Fig. 2, \(v_1 = v_{in}\), and since the voltage across a nullator is zero, \(v_2 = v_1 = v_{in}\). Because the current through a nullator is zero, \(v_2\) generates a loop-current through nodes 2, 3 and ground. That way, \(i_a = \frac{v_3}{Z_{in}} = A_vv_{in}\) and \(i_b = i_a = A_vv_{in}\). Now \(v_3 = -1 \times i_b\) and \(v_4 = v_3 = \)
Finally, we obtain (1). In an ideal VM
\[ v_{out} = -v_{in}. \]
\[ v_{out}\big|_{\text{open-circuit}} = -A_v v_{in} \]

### 3.2 Nullor-equivalent of the CM

Among all the possible combinations to generate the nullor-equivalent of the CM, we propose to use the one shown in Fig. 3. Indeed, by applying the adjoint network theorem to transform a voltage-mode circuit to a current-mode one [5, 8, 10, 15, 28, 29, 41], this topology is really the adjoint of the VM shown in Fig. 2. In this representation \( Z_{in} \) and \( Z_{out} \) are connected in series to the input-port and in parallel to the output-port, respectively, and they model the input and output parastics. Again, the resistor of value \( 1/A_i \) is very useful in the NA formulation because the admittance becomes \( A_i \) and it models the gain or tracking error of the CM. In the ideal case, \( Z_{in} = 0 \), \( Z_{out} = \infty \), and \( A_i = \text{unity} \).

From Fig. 3, the nullator connected at node 2 does not allow current to flow, so that a loop-current is formed through nodes 1, 2, 3 and ground. In this manner \( i_{a} = i_{in} \), and \( v_{3} = 1 \times i_{a} = i_{in} \). The voltage across the nullator is zero so that \( v_{4} = v_{3} = i_{in} \), this generates \( i_{b} = \frac{1}{1/A_v} = A_v i_{in} \). By applying Kirchoff’s current law: \( i_{out} = -(i_{b} + i_{zout}) \). Finally, we obtain (2).

\[ i_{out}\big|_{\text{short-circuit}} = -A_v i_{in} \]

### 3.3 Nullor-equivalent of the MO-CM

An extension of Fig. 3, leads us to generate the nullor-equivalent of the MO-CM, as shown in Fig. 4. In this representation we are allowed to include independent gain and output impedance for each output \( n \).

### 4 Symbolic analysis of analog circuits containing VMs, CMs and/or MO-CMs

The nullor-equivalents of the VM, CM and MO-CMs can be used directly in symbolic NA of analog circuits, where the output of the VM is not connected to the input of the CM or MO-CM. Furthermore, when the circuit to be analysed contains a VM which output is connected to a norator or the input of a CM or MO-CM, we need to apply the superimposing method given in [38], to generate a nullor network containing the same number of nullators and norators, in order to apply the symbolic NA formulation.

Let’s us consider the non-inverting and inverting low-pass filter using an inverting positive-type second generation current conveyor (ICCIID++) [27]: Its representation using the VM and CM is shown in Fig. 5. As one sees, the output of the VM is connected to the input of the CM. By applying the superimposing method from [38], we obtain the nullor-equivalent network shown in Fig. 6. Basically, the impedance, nullator and norator connected at node 4 in Fig. 2, are superimposed with the impedance, nullator and norator connected at node 2 in Fig. 3. Other nullor-equivalents of inverting and non-inverting current conveyors can be found in [39], which also include parasitic impedances.
Were we applying the modified nodal analysis (MNA) formulation to Fig. 6, the system of equations becomes order 6, because we need to introduce two stamps: one for the VM with a voltage-controlled voltage source and other for the independent voltage source. On the other hand, by applying the symbolic NA formulation, the order is reduced to 5, because the independent voltage source has been transformed to a current source [37], and the order becomes to be the number of nodes minus the number of nullator-norator pairs [7]. As a result, for large networks, the symbolic NA formulation is better than by applying the MNA method. For instance, by performing the NA formulation from Fig. 6, the following sets are obtained:

\[
\text{ROW} = \{(1), (3, 4), (5, 6), (7, 8), (9)\}
\]

\[
\text{COL} = \{(1, 2), (3, 7), (4, 5), (6), (8, 9)\}
\]

The summation of the admittances at each node is presented in Table 1, while the floating admittances are given in Table 2. The NA formulation is given by (3).

\[
\begin{bmatrix}
0 \\
0 \\
0 \\
0 \\
\end{bmatrix}
\begin{bmatrix}
v_{in} \\
\end{bmatrix}
= 
\begin{bmatrix}
1 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\
0 & -G_j & G_j & 0 & 0 & 0 \\
0 & 0 & A_i & G_2 + sC_2 & -G_2 & 0 \\
0 & 0 & 1 & 0 & 0 & A_v \\
0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & -G_2 & G_2 + sC_1 \\
\end{bmatrix}
\begin{bmatrix}
v_{1,2} \\
v_{3,7} \\
v_{4,5} \\
v_6 \\
v_{8,9} \\
\end{bmatrix}
\]

(3)

Table 2 Floating admittances

| Nodes | Admittance |
|-------|------------|
| (2,3) | G1         |
| (9,6) | G2         |

The solution of this system taken node 9 as the inverting-output is given by (4). However, in the ideal case \(A_v = 1\), and then (4) is reduced to the symbolic transfer function already provided in (5) [27].

\[
v_9 = -\frac{A_1 v_{in}}{A_v A_i + sR_1 C_1 + sR_1 C_2 + s^2 R_1 C_1 R_2 C_2}
\]

(4)

\[
H(s) = -\frac{1}{1 + sR_1 (C_1 + C_2) + s^2 R_1 C_1 R_2 C_2}
\]

(5)

From this example, we can conclude on the usefulness of the proposed nullor-equivalents to perform symbolic NA which can be very suitable to enhance the synthesis procedures already introduced in [4, 18, 19, 34, 36].

A second example is provided herein by analyzing a universal biquadratic filter using only dual-output CMs and grounded capacitors, it is taken from [33]. Its nullor-equivalent is shown in Fig. 7. More complex active filters based on CM arrays can be found in [31].

From the integrated circuit (IC) design point of view, a CM can provide multiple-outputs (MO-CM), but all of them with the same sign. Besides, when an output with an opposite sign is needed, another CM must be connected, as it is done in this example.

In this manner, the representation in Fig. 7 shows two dual-output CMs (DO-CM) labeled by letters \(a\) and \(c\), they include the input resistance \(R_{ina}\) and \(R_{inc}\), their gains \(A_{a1}\), \(A_{a2}\) and \(A_{c1}\), \(A_{c2}\), and their output resistances \(R_{oa1}\), \(R_{oa2}\) and \(R_{oc1}\), \(R_{oc2}\).

To invert the sign in one output of the DO-CMs, two CMs are also included labeled by letters \(b\) and \(d\), they include the input resistance \(R_{inb}\) and \(R_{ind}\), their gains \(A_b\), \(A_d\), and their output resistances \(R_{ob}\), \(R_{od}\).

By applying the symbolic NA method, the formulation generates a system of order 9 (19 nodes minus 10 nullors) [7, 22, 37]. The sets for the rows and cols become:

\[
\text{ROW} = \{(1, 11, 19), (2, 14), (3, 6), (4, 5), (7, 8), (9, 10), (12, 13), (15, 16), (17, 18)\}
\]

\[
\text{COL} = \{(1), (2), (3), (5, 6, 7), (8), (10, 11), (13, 14, 15), (16), (18, 19)\}
\]

The four floating resistances are associated to the input-resistance of the CMs, there are six gains and six output-resistances.

The exact symbolic expression has many symbolic product-of-terms. However, when the output-resistances equal to \(\infty\), the reduced symbolic expression is given by
As one sees, only the input resistances $R_{ina}$ and $R_{inc}$ are included in the reduced symbolic expression, as already shown in [33]. When the gains are set to unity, (6) becomes (7).

$$I_{out} = I_3 + \frac{-sA_{a1} I_2 C_1 R_{inc} - A_{a1}I_2 + A_{a1}I_2 A_{a2}A_{d} + A_{c1}A_{a1}I_1}{s^2 R_{inc} C_1 C_2 R_{ina} + s(C_1 R_{inc} + C_2 R_{ina} - A_{c2}A_{d}C_2 R_{ina}) + A_{c1}A_{b}A_{d2} - A_{c2}A_{d} + 1}$$

(6)

$$I_{out} = I_3 + \frac{I_1 - sI_2 C_1 R_{inc}}{s^2 C_1 C_2 R_{ina} R_{inc} + sC_1 R_{inc} + 1}$$

(7)

5 Conclusion

We introduced new nullor-equivalents to represent the pathological elements possessing inverting characteristics, they were the VM and CM, and we introduced also the nullor-equivalent for the MO-CM. These nullor-equivalents were used in the symbolic NA formulation of two active filters. From the results, it can be appreciated that our proposed nullor-equivalents are quite useful to perform symbolic NA which can be used within an ADA environment to enhance circuit modeling and synthesis methods, and to validate circuit-equivalents in the transformation of circuit topologies.

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E. Tlelo-Cuautle received the B.Sc. degree from the Instituto Tecnológico de Puebla (ITP), Mexico, in 1993, and the M.Sc. and Ph.D. degrees from the Instituto Nacional de Astrofísica, Optica y Electrónica (INAOE), Mexico, in 1995 and 2000, respectively. In 1995 he joined the ITP and since 2001 he has been a full researcher at INAOE. He has coauthored two books, six book chapters and more than 120 papers on scientific journals and conference proceedings. He is IEEE senior member and IEICE member. He serves in the editorial board of the Journal of Applied Sciences, and is reviewer in 16 journals, among them: IEEE Trans on Computer-Aided Design; IEEE Trans on Circuits and Systems; IET Circuits, Devices & Systems; Int Journal of Electronics; Rev Mexicana de Fisica; IET Electronics Letters; Circuits, Systems and Signal Processing; IEEE Latin-America Transactions. He has been a member of the Program Committee in MDES 2009-2010; IEEE ICECS 2009; WCECS 2007-2009; IEEE and ACM CSTST 2008; and IASTED Circuits, Signals and Systems 2003-2005. He has been reviewer in 15 international conferences, among them: IEEE CERMA, IEEE APCAS, IEEE ISCAS, IEEE ECCTD and IEEE ANDESCON. His research interests include modeling and simulation of linear and nonlinear circuits and systems, symbolic analysis, circuit synthesis, and analog/RF and mixed-signal CAD tools.

C. Sánchez-López received the B.Sc. degree in electronics engineering from the Benemérita Universidad Autonoma de Puebla (BUAP), Mexico, in 1999, and the M.Sc. and Ph.D. degrees from the Instituto Nacional de Astrofísica, Optica y Electrónica (INAOE), Mexico, in 2002 and 2006, respectively. In 2006 he joined Universidad Autonoma de Tlaxcala (UAT), Mexico as full professor and researcher. From June 2009 he is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Instituto de Microelectronica de Sevilla (IMSE-CSIC), Spain. He is the author of more than 50 research journal papers and international proceedings published in the fields of modeling and simulation of linear and nonlinear circuits and systems, symbolic analysis, mixed-signal circuits, RF-circuits and computer-aided circuit design.

E. Martinez-Romero received the B.Sc. degree from the Autonomous University of Puebla (BUAP), Mexico, in 2006. He is currently M.Sc. student at National Institute of Astrophysics, Optics and Electronics (INAOE), Mexico. His research interests include Model Order Reduction, symbolic analysis techniques and analog circuit design.

Sheldon X.-D. Tan received his B.Sc. and M.Sc. degrees in electrical engineering from Fudan University, Shanghai, China in 1992 and 1995, respectively and the Ph.D. degree in electrical and computer engineering from the University of Iowa, Iowa City, in 1999. He is an Associate Professor in the Department of Electrical Engineering, University of California, Riverside. He was a faculty member in the Electrical Engineering Department of Fudan University from 1995 to 1996. His research interests include modeling and simulation of analog/RF/mixed-signal and interconnect circuits, analysis and optimization of high performance power and clock distribution networks, architecture level thermal, power, modeling and simulation for multicore microprocessors and embedded system designs based on FPGA platforms. He also co-authored books “Symbolic Analysis and Reduction of VLSI Circuits” by Springer/Kluwer 2005 and “Advanced Model Order Reduction Techniques for VLSI Designs”, by Cambridge University Press 2007. Dr. Tan now is serving as an Associate Editor for three journals: ACM Transaction on Design Automation of Electronic Systems (TODAE), Integration, The VLSI Journal, and Journal of VLSI Design. He received Outstanding Overseas Investigator Collaboration Award from the National Natural Science Foundation of China (NSFC) in 2008. He received NSF CAREER Award in 2004. Dr. Tan received the Best Paper Award from 2007 IEEE International Conference on Computer Design (ICCD’07), a Best Paper Award Nomination from 2005 and 2009 IEEE/ACM Design Automation Conference, the Best Paper Award from 1999 IEEE/ACM Design Automation Conference. He served as a technical program committee member for ASPDAC, BMAS, ASPDAC, ISQED, ICCAD.