

EXOTIC QUASICONFORMALLY HOMOGENEOUS SURFACES

PETRA BONFERT-TAYLOR, RICHARD D. CANARY, JUAN SOUTO,
AND EDWARD C. TAYLOR

ABSTRACT. We construct uniformly quasiconformally homogeneous Riemann surfaces which are not quasiconformal deformations of regular covers of closed orbifolds.

1. INTRODUCTION

Recall that a hyperbolic manifold M is K -*quasiconformally homogeneous* if for all $x, y \in M$ there is a K -quasiconformal map $f : M \rightarrow M$ with $f(x) = y$. It is said to be *uniformly quasiconformally homogeneous* if it is K -quasiconformally homogeneous for some K . We consider only complete and oriented hyperbolic manifolds.

In dimensions 3 and above, every uniformly quasiconformally homogeneous hyperbolic manifold is isometric to the regular cover of a closed hyperbolic orbifold (see [1]). The situation is more complicated in 2 dimensions. It remains true that any hyperbolic surface which is a regular cover of a closed hyperbolic orbifold is uniformly quasiconformally homogeneous. If S is a non-compact regular cover of a hyperbolic 2-orbifold, then any quasiconformal deformation of S remains uniformly quasiconformally homogeneous. However, typically a quasiconformal deformation of S is not itself a regular cover of a closed hyperbolic 2-orbifold (see Lemma 5.1 in [1].)

It is thus natural to ask if every uniformly quasiconformally homogeneous hyperbolic surface is a quasiconformal deformation of a regular cover of a closed hyperbolic orbifold. The goal of this note is to answer this question in the negative:

Theorem 1.1. *There are uniformly quasiconformally homogeneous surfaces which are not quasiconformal deformations of the regular cover of any closed hyperbolic 2-orbifold.*

Bonfert-Taylor and Taylor were partially supported by the National Science Foundation grant DMS-0706754, Canary was partially supported NSF grants DMS-0504791 and DMS-0554239, Souto was partially supported by NSF grant DMS-0706878 and by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation.

In order to prove Theorem 1.1, we associate to every connected graph X with constant valence a hyperbolic surface S_X which is obtained by “thickening” X . In particular, S_X is quasi-isometric to X . Each element $\varphi \in \text{Aut}(X)$ gives rise to a quasiconformal automorphism h_φ of S_X (with uniformly bounded dilatation). If $\text{Aut}(X)$ acts transitively on the set of vertices of X , then the associated set of quasiconformal automorphisms is coarsely transitive, i.e. there exists D such that if $x, y \in S_X$, then there exists $\varphi \in \text{Aut}(X)$ such that $d(h_\varphi(x), y) \leq D$. One may then use work of Gehring and Palka [5] to show that S_X is uniformly quasiconformally homogeneous.

We choose X to be a Diestel-Leader graph $DL(m, n)$ with $m \neq n$. These graphs have transitive groups of automorphisms, but Eskin, Fisher and Whyte [4] recently showed that they are not quasi-isometric to the Cayley graph of any group. The proof is completed by the observation that any surface which is a quasiconformal deformation of a regular cover is quasi-isometric to the Cayley graph of the deck transformation group.

On the other hand it is easy to construct hyperbolic surfaces which are quasi-isometric to graphs with transitive automorphism group, which are not uniformly quasiconformally homogeneous (see section 5). So, one is left to wonder if there is a simple geometric characterization of uniformly quasiconformally homogeneous surfaces.

Acknowledgements: The authors are grateful to Yair Minsky and Kevin Whyte for very interesting conversations.

2. TURNING GRAPHS INTO SURFACES

For simplicity, let X be a connected, countable graph such that every vertex has valence $d \geq 3$ and every edge has length 1. It will be convenient to assume that every edge of X has two distinct endpoints. In this section we *thicken* X into a hyperbolic surface S_X quasi-isometric to X in such a way that whenever the group of automorphisms of X acts transitively on the set of vertices, then S_X is uniformly quasiconformally homogeneous.

We start by introducing some notation. Let \mathcal{V} and \mathcal{E} be the sets of vertices and edges of the graph X . For each vertex $v \in \mathcal{V}$ let \mathcal{E}_v be the set of edges of X which contain v . By assumption \mathcal{E}_v has d elements for each v . For each v , choose a bijection

$$s_v : \mathcal{E}_v \rightarrow \{1, \dots, d\}$$

Observe that if φ is an automorphism of X , then φ induces a bijection $(\varphi_*)_v : \mathcal{E}_v \rightarrow \mathcal{E}_{\varphi(v)}$ for all $v \in \mathcal{V}$. Consider the permutation

$$s_v^\varphi = s_{\varphi(v)} \circ (\varphi_*)_v \circ s_v^{-1} : \{1, \dots, d\} \rightarrow \{1, \dots, d\}.$$

The building blocks of our construction will be copies of a fixed hyperbolic surface F that is homeomorphic to a sphere with d holes such that each boundary component of F is a geodesic of length 1. Label the components of ∂F by $\gamma_1, \dots, \gamma_d$. For each i , choose a base point $p_i \in \gamma_i$ and observe that the choice of the base point together with the orientation of F determines uniquely a parametrization $\mathbb{S}^1 \rightarrow \gamma_i$ with constant velocity 1. We state the following observation as a lemma for future reference:

Lemma 2.1. *For each $d \geq 3$, there exists $K_d > 1$ such that if $\sigma \in \mathfrak{S}_d$ is a permutation of the set $\{1, \dots, d\}$ then there is a K_d -quasiconformal map $f_\sigma : F \rightarrow F$ which is an isometry when restricted to a neighborhood of ∂F and such that $f_\sigma(\gamma_i) = \gamma_{\sigma(i)}$ and $f_\sigma(p_i) = p_{\sigma(i)}$.*

Consider the hyperbolic surface $F \times \mathcal{V}$ and set $F_v = F \times \{v\}$. We will construct S_X by gluing the components of $F \times \mathcal{V}$ together. The gluing maps are determined by the edges of X as follows. Given an edge $e \in \mathcal{E}$, let $v, v' \in \mathcal{V}$ be its two vertices, which we assumed are always distinct. We identify the curves $\gamma_{s_v(e)} \times \{v\} \subset \partial F_v$ and $\gamma_{s_{v'}(e)} \times \{v'\} \subset \partial F_{v'}$. More precisely, let

$$g_e : \gamma_{s_v(e)} \times \{v\} \rightarrow \gamma_{s_{v'}(e)} \times \{v'\}$$

be the unique orientation-reversing isometry which maps the marked point $(p_{s_v(e)}, v)$ to $(p_{s_{v'}(e)}, v')$. Let \sim be the equivalence relation on $F \times \mathcal{V}$ generated by the maps g_e for all $e \in \mathcal{E}$. The equivalence classes of \sim contains either one point in the interior of $F \times \mathcal{V}$ or two points in the boundary. In particular, the quotient space of \sim

$$S_X = F \times \mathcal{V} / \sim$$

is a surface. Moreover, since the gluing maps g_e are isometries, the hyperbolic metric of $F \times \mathcal{V}$ descends to a hyperbolic metric on S_X . By construction, this metric has injectivity radius bounded from above and below. In particular, if we choose ϵ_F to be a lower bound for the length of any homotopically non-trivial closed curve on F and δ_F to be a lower bound for the length of any properly embedded arc in F which is not properly homotopic into the boundary of F , then $\epsilon_d = \min\{\epsilon_F/2, \delta_F\}$ is a lower bound for the injectivity radius of S_X .

Associated to every edge $e \in \mathcal{E}$ there is a simple closed geodesic c_e in S_X and c_e is disjoint from $c_{e'}$ for every pair of distinct edges $e, e' \in \mathcal{E}$.

Let $\mathcal{C} = \{c_e | e \in \mathcal{E}\}$ be the collection of all such geodesics and notice that $S_X \setminus \mathcal{C}$ is isometric to the interior of $F \times \mathcal{V}$.

It follows that the graph X can be recovered from S_X as the dual graph to the multicurve \mathcal{C} . Moreover, there is a projection $\pi_X : S_X \rightarrow X$ which maps every component of \mathcal{C} to the midpoint of its associated edge and maps every component of $S_X \setminus \mathcal{C}$ to its associated vertex. The map π_X is then a (K, C) -quasi-isometry where $K = C = 2\text{diam}(F)$. We recall that a map $g : Y \rightarrow Z$ between two metric spaces is a (K, C) -quasi-isometry if

$$\frac{1}{K}d_Y(x, y) - C \leq d_Z(g(x), g(y)) \leq Kd_Y(x, y) + C$$

for all $x, y \in Y$ and if $z \in Z$ there exists $y \in Y$ such that $d_Z(g(y), z) \leq C$.

It also follows from the identification of X with the dual graph to \mathcal{C} that every homeomorphism $f : S_X \rightarrow S_X$ which maps \mathcal{C} to itself, meaning $f(\mathcal{C}) = \mathcal{C}$ and $f^{-1}(\mathcal{C}) = \mathcal{C}$, induces an automorphism of the graph X .

Lemma 2.2. *Every automorphism of the graph X is induced by a K_d -quasiconformal homeomorphism of S_X which preserves \mathcal{C} , where K_d is the constant provided by Lemma 2.1.*

Proof. Given an automorphism $\varphi : X \rightarrow X$ recall the definition of the permutation

$$s_v^\varphi : \{1, \dots, d\} \rightarrow \{1, \dots, d\}$$

given above for each $v \in \mathcal{V}$. Let $f_v : F \rightarrow F$ be the K_d -quasiconformal map associated by Lemma 2.1 to the permutation s_v^φ and define

$$H_\varphi : F \times \mathcal{V} \rightarrow F \times \mathcal{V}, \quad H_\varphi(x, v) = (f_v(x), \varphi(v))$$

Observe that H_φ is K_d -quasiconformal. Moreover, if an edge $e \in \mathcal{E}$ contains v , then

$$H_\varphi(\gamma_{s_v(e)} \times \{v\}) = \gamma_{s_{\varphi(v)}(\varphi(e))} \times \varphi(v)$$

Also, by construction H_φ maps marked points to marked points. It follows that H_φ descends to a K_d -quasiconformal homeomorphism

$$h_\varphi : S_X \rightarrow S_X$$

with $h_\varphi(c_e) = c_{\varphi(e)}$ and $h_\varphi^{-1}(c_e) = c_{\varphi^{-1}(e)}$ for all $e \in \mathcal{E}$. In other words, h_φ induces φ . \square

Remark: It is not possible to construct the quasiconformal automorphisms in Lemma 2.1 so that one obtains an action of Σ_d on F . Therefore, we do not in general obtain an action of $\text{Aut}(X)$ on S_X .

We now combine Lemma 2.2 with a technique of Gehring and Palka [5] to show that if X is a graph with transitive automorphism group, then S_X is uniformly quasiconformally homogeneous.

Lemma 2.3. *Given $d \geq 3$, there exists $L_d > 1$ such that if X is a connected graph such that every vertex has valence $d \geq 3$, every edge has length 1, and $\text{Aut}(X)$ acts transitively on the vertices of X , then there is a L_d -quasiconformally homogeneous hyperbolic surface S_X quasi-isometric to X .*

Proof. Let x and y be any two points on S_X . By Lemma 2.2 there exists a K_d -quasiconformal automorphism $h : S_X \rightarrow S_X$ such that $h(x)$ and y both lie in (the image of) F_v for some vertex v of X . Therefore, $d(x, h(y)) \leq \text{diam}(F)$.

Let $\epsilon_d > 0$ be a lower bound for the injectivity radius of S_X . (Notice that ϵ_d depends only on d and the choice of surface F above.) Lemma 2.6 in [1] (which is derived from Lemma 3.2 in [5]) implies that there exists a K'_d -quasiconformal map $\psi : S_X \rightarrow S_X$ such that $\psi(h(x)) = y$ where

$$K'_d = (e^{\epsilon_d/2} + 1)^{\frac{4\text{diam}(F)+2}{\epsilon_d}}.$$

Then, $\psi \circ h$ is a $K_d K'_d$ -quasiconformal map taking x to y . Therefore, S_X is L_d -quasiconformally homogeneous where $L_d = K_d K'_d$. \square

3. DIESTEL-LEADER GRAPHS

Diestel and Leader [3] constructed a family of graphs whose automorphism groups act transitively on their vertices and conjectured that these graphs are not quasi-isometric to the Cayley graph of any finitely generated group. Eskin, Fisher and Whyte [4] recently established this conjecture. In this section we give a brief description of the Diestel-Leader graphs (see Diestel-Leader [3] or Woess [8] for more detailed descriptions).

Given $m, n \geq 2$ consider two trees T_m and T_n of valence $m + 1$ and $n + 1$ respectively and such that every edge has length 1. Choose points $\theta_m \in \partial_\infty T_m$ and $\theta_n \in \partial_\infty T_n$ in the corresponding Gromov boundaries and vertices $0_m \in T_m$ and $0_n \in T_n$. Finally, consider \mathbb{R} as a graph with vertices of valence 2 at every integer $k \in \mathbb{Z}$. Observe that the Busemann function

$$\beta_m : T_m \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$$

centered at θ_m and normalized at 0_m is a simplicial map between both graphs. Notice that for any two vertices $v, w \in T_m$, there exists an automorphism φ of T_m such that $\varphi(v) = w$ and

$$\beta_m(\varphi(x)) - \beta_m(x) = \beta_m(w) - \beta_m(v)$$

for all $x \in T_m$. Clearly, the same is true for the corresponding Busemann function

$$\beta_n : T_n \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$$

We orient the tree T_m (resp. T_n) in such a way that every positively oriented edge points towards θ_m (resp. θ_n).

Let $T_m \times T_n$ be the product of the two trees T_m and T_n in the category of graphs. In other words, the set of vertices of $T_m \times T_n$ is the product of the set of vertices of T_m and T_n and an edge in $T_m \times T_n$ with vertices (v, v') and (w, w') is a pair (e, e') where e is an edge in T_m with vertices v and w and e' is an edge in T_n with vertices v' and w' . See [6] for a more precise description of the product.

The automorphism groups of the two oriented trees T_m and T_n act transitively on the set of vertices and every pair $(\varphi, \psi) \in \text{Aut}(T_m) \times \text{Aut}(T_n)$ of automorphisms induces an automorphism of $T_m \times T_n$. It follows that $\text{Aut}(T_m) \times \text{Aut}(T_n)$ acts transitively on the set of vertices of $T_m \times T_n$.

Consider the simplicial map

$$f : T_m \times T_n \rightarrow \mathbb{R}, \quad (x, y) \mapsto \beta_m(x) - \beta_n(y)$$

The pre-image $DL(m, n) = f^{-1}(0)$ of 0 is a connected graph and it is clear from the discussion above that the subgroup of $\text{Aut}(T_m) \times \text{Aut}(T_n)$ which preserves $f^{-1}(0)$ acts transitively on the vertices of $DL(m, n)$. The following result of Eskin, Fisher and Whyte [4] is the key fact needed to prove our main Theorem:

Theorem 3.1 (Eskin, Fisher, Whyte). *If $m \neq n$, then $DL(m, n)$ is not quasi-isometric to the Cayley-graph of any finitely generated group.*

4. THE PROOF OF THE MAIN THEOREM

We are now ready to give the proof of our main Theorem. We first observe that a quasiconformal deformation of a regular cover of a closed orbifold is quasi-isometric to the Cayley graph of a finitely generated group.

Lemma 4.1. *Suppose that a surface Σ is a quasiconformal deformation of a surface S which normally covers a closed orbifold \mathcal{O} , then Σ is quasi-isometric to the Cayley graph of the (finitely generated) group of deck transformations of the covering map $S \rightarrow \mathcal{O}$.*

Proof. Since any K -quasiconformal map is a $(K, K \log 4)$ -quasi-isometry (see Theorem 11.2 in [7]), Σ is quasi-isometric to S . Let G be the, necessarily finitely generated, group of deck transformations of the covering

$S \rightarrow \mathcal{O}$. Since G acts on S cocompactly and discretely, the Svarc-Milnor lemma (see, for example, Proposition 8.19 in [2]) implies that S is quasi-isometric to the Cayley graph of G . \square

We are now ready to prove Theorem 1.1:

Proof of Theorem 1.1. Let $X = DL(2, 3)$ be the $(2, 3)$ -Diestel-Leader graph and let S_X be the Riemann surface associated to X in the previous section. Since $Aut(X)$ acts transitively on the vertices of X , it follows from Lemma 2.3 that S_X is uniformly quasiconformally homogeneous. Suppose for the sake of contradiction that S_X is a quasiconformal deformation of a Riemann surface S which is a regular cover $S \rightarrow \mathcal{O}$ of a compact orbifold \mathcal{O} . By Lemma 4.1, the surface S_X is quasi-isometric to the Cayley graph of a finitely generated group. Since S_X is quasi-isometric to X , the same is true for $X = DL(2, 3)$. This contradicts Eskin, Fisher and Whyte's Theorem 3.1. \square

5. SURFACES QUASI-ISOMETRIC TO CAYLEY GRAPHS NEED NOT BE UNIFORMLY QUASICONFORMALLY HOMOGENEOUS

It is easy to check that every hyperbolic surface S is quasi-isometric to a graph X with unit-length edges and bounded valence. Any quasiconformal automorphism of S induces a quasi-isometry of X (which is only coarsely well-defined) and the quasi-isometry constants may be uniformly bounded by the dilatation of the quasiconformal map. One may then readily show that if S is uniformly quasiconformally homogeneous, then S is quasi-isometric to a graph X such that there exists $C, L > 0$ such that the set of (L, C) -quasi-isometries of X acts transitively on X .

One might hope this construction, which is a sort of quasi-inverse to the construction in section 2, could be used to construct a characterization of uniformly quasiconformally homogeneous surfaces. However, uniform quasiconformal homogeneity is not a quasi-isometry invariant. For example, if we let X be the "ladder" graph made by joining equal integer points on two copies of the real line, S_X is quasi-isometric to the real line as is any finite area hyperbolic surface S homeomorphic to a twice-punctured torus. The thickened ladder S_X is uniformly quasiconformally homogeneous, by Lemma 2.3, but S is not, as it has no lower bound on its injectivity radius (see Theorem 1.1 in [1]).

One may further construct hyperbolic surfaces with bounded geometry (i.e. having upper and lower bounds on their injectivity radius) which are quasi-isometric to graphs with transitive automorphism group which are not uniformly quasiconformally homogeneous.

Example 5.1. *A bounded geometry surface S' which is quasi-isometric to the Cayley graph of the free group F_2 on 2 generators, but is not uniformly quasiconformally homogeneous.*

Construction of Example 5.1: Let T be the infinite 4-valent tree and let S_T be the uniformly quasiconformally homogeneous surface constructed by Lemma 2.3. One may form a new surface S' by removing a disk D from S_T and replacing it by a surface F which is homeomorphic to a torus with a disk removed. We place a hyperbolic structure on S' such that there is an isometry from $S_T - U$ to $S' - V$ where U is a bounded neighborhood of D and V is a bounded neighborhood of F . One may further assume that the boundary ∂F of F is totally geodesic in the resulting hyperbolic structure. It follows that S' is also quasi-isometric to T , which is the Cayley graph of F_2 .

Every non-separating closed geodesic on S' must intersect F . One may then readily check, using the fact that a K -quasiconformal automorphism is a $(K, K \log 4)$ -quasi-isometry, that given a non-separating closed geodesic α in F and any $K > 1$, there exists R_K such that if $g : S \rightarrow S'$ is K -quasiconformal then $g(\alpha)$ lies in the neighborhood of radius R_K about F . It immediately follows that S' cannot be uniformly quasiconformally homogeneous.

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