A surface with canonical map of degree 24

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Abstract

We construct a complex algebraic surface with geometric genus $p_g = 3$, irregularity $q = 0$, self-intersection of the canonical divisor $K^2 = 24$ and canonical map of degree 24 onto $\mathbb{P}^2$.
2010 MSC: 14J29.

1 Introduction

Let S be a smooth minimal surface of general type with geometric genus $p_g \geq 3$. Denote by $\phi : S \dashrightarrow \mathbb{P}^{p_g-1}$ the canonical map and let $d := \deg(\phi)$. The following Beauville's result is well-known.

Theorem 1 ([Be]). *If the canonical image $\Sigma := \phi(S)$ is a surface, then either:*

(i) $p_g(\Sigma) = 0$, *or*

(ii) Σ *is a canonical surface (in particular* $p_g(\Sigma) = p_g(S)$*).*

Moreover, in case (i) $d \leq 36$ *and in case* (ii) $d \leq 9$.

Beauville has also constructed families of examples with $\chi(\mathcal{O}_S)$ arbitrarily large for $d = 2, 4, 6, 8$ and $p_g(\Sigma) = 0$. Despite being a classical problem, for $d > 8$ the number of known examples drops drastically. Tan's example [Ta, §5] with $d = 9$ and Persson's example [Pe] with $d = 16$, $q = 0$ are well known. Du and Gao [DG] show that if the canonical map is an abelian cover of $\mathbb{P}^2$, then these are the only possibilities for $d > 8$. More recently the author has given examples with $d = 12$ [Ri2] and $d = 16$, $q = 2$ [Ri3].

In this paper we construct a surface S with $p_g = 3$, $q = 0$ and $d = 24$, obtained as a $\mathbb{Z}_2^4$-covering of $\mathbb{P}^2$. The canonical map of S factors through a $\mathbb{Z}_2^2$-covering of a surface with $p_g = 3$, $q = 0$ and $K^2 = 6$ having 24 nodes, which in turn is a double covering of a Kummer surface.

Notation

We work over the complex numbers. All varieties are assumed to be projective algebraic. A $(-n)$-curve on a surface is a curve isomorphic to $\mathbb{P}^1$ with self-intersection $-n$. Linear equivalence of divisors is denoted by $\equiv$. The rest of the notation is standard in Algebraic Geometry.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank an anonymous referee for suggestions to improve the exposition of the paper.

This research was partially supported by FCT (Portugal) under the project PTDC/MAT-GEO/0675/2012, the fellowship SFRH/BPD/111131/2015 and by CMUP (UID/MAT/00144/2013), which is funded by FCT with national (MEC) and European structural funds through the programs FEDER, under the partnership agreement PT2020.

2 $\mathbb{Z}_2^n$-coverings

The following is taken from [Ca], the standard reference is [Pa].

Proposition 2. *A normal finite $G \cong \mathbb{Z}_2^r$-covering $Y \to X$ of a smooth variety X is completely determined by the datum of*

1. *reduced effective divisors D_σ, $\forall \sigma \in G$, with no common components;*
2. *divisor classes $L_1, \dots, L_r$, for $\chi_1, \dots, \chi_r$ a basis of the dual group of characters $G^\vee$, such that*
$$2L_i \equiv \sum_{\chi_i(\sigma)=-1} D_\sigma.$$

Conversely, given 1. and 2., one obtains a normal scheme Y with a finite $G \cong \mathbb{Z}_2^r$-covering $Y \to X$, with branch curves the divisors D_σ.

The covering $Y \to X$ is embedded in the total space of the direct sum of the line bundles whose sheaves of sections are the $\mathcal{O}_X(L_i)$, and is there defined by equations
$$u_{\chi_i} u_{\chi_j} = u_{\chi_i \chi_j} \prod_{\chi_i(\sigma)=\chi_j(\sigma)=-1} x_\sigma,$$
where x_σ is a section such that $\operatorname{div}(x_\sigma) = D_\sigma$.

The scheme Y can be seen as the normalization of the Galois covering given by the equations
$$u_{\chi_i}^2 = \prod_{\chi_i(\sigma)=-1} x_\sigma,$$
and Y is irreducible if $\{\sigma | D_\sigma > 0\}$ generates G.

For a covering $\pi : Y \to X$ with ramification divisor R, the Hurwitz formula $K_Y = \pi^*(K_X) + R$ holds. Let us describe the canonical system for the case where π is a $\mathbb{Z}_2^2$-covering with smooth branch divisor. We have branch curves D_1, D_2, D_3 and relations $2L_i \equiv D_j + D_k$, for all permutations (i, j, k) of $\{1, 2, 3\}$. The covering π factors as
$$\phi : Y \to W_i, \quad \varphi : W_i \to X,$$
where φ is the double covering corresponding to L_i. Let R_i be the ramification divisor of ϕ. One has
$$K_Y \equiv \phi^*(K_{W_i}) + R_i \quad \text{and} \quad K_{W_i} \equiv \varphi^*(K_X + L_i),$$
which gives
$$K_Y \equiv \pi^*(K_X + L_i) + \frac{1}{2}\pi^*(D_i), \quad i = 1, 2, 3.$$

Finally we notice that taking the quotient by a subgroup H of the Galois group of the covering corresponds to considering the subalgebra generated by the line bundles L_χ^{-1}, where χ ranges over the characters orthogonal to H.

3 The construction

We show in the Appendix the existence of reduced plane curves C_6 of degree 6 and C_7 of degree 7 through points $p_0, \dots, p_5$ such that:

· C_7 has a triple point at p_0 and tacnodes at $p_1, \dots, p_5$;

· C_6 is smooth at p_5, has a node at p_0 and tacnodes at $p_1, \dots, p_4$;

· the branches of the tacnode of C_j at p_i are tangent to the line T_i through p_0, p_i, $j = 1, 2$, $i = 1, \dots, 4$;

· the branches of the tacnode of C_7 at p_5 are tangent to C_6;

· the singularities of $C_6 + C_7$ are resolved via one blow-up at p_0 and two blow-ups at each of $p_1, \dots, p_5$.

Step 1 (Construction)
Consider the map

$$\mu : X \longrightarrow \mathbb{P}^2$$

which resolves the singularities of the curve C_7. Then μ is given by blow-ups at

$$p_0, p_1, p_1', \dots, p_5, p_5',$$

where p_i' is infinitely near to p_i. Let $E_0, E_1, E_1', \dots, E_5, E_5'$ be the corresponding exceptional divisors (with self-intersection -1).

Let x, y, z, w be generators of the group $\mathbb{Z}_2^4$ and

$$\psi : Y \longrightarrow X$$

be the $\mathbb{Z}_2^4$-covering defined by

$$D_x := \widetilde{T}_1 - E_0 - 2E_1',$$

$$D_y := \widetilde{T}_2 - E_0 - 2E_2',$$

$$D_z := \widetilde{C}_6 - 2E_0 - \sum_1^4 (2E_i + 2E_i') - 2E_5',$$

$$D_w := \widetilde{C}_7 + \widetilde{T}_4 - 4E_0 - \sum_1^3 (2E_i + 2E_i') - (2E_4 + 4E_4') - (2E_5 + 2E_5'),$$

$$D_{xy} := \widetilde{T}_3 - E_0 - 2E_3',$$

$$D_{xz} := \cdots := D_{zw} := 0,$$

where the notation $\widetilde{\cdot}$ stands for the total transform $\mu^*(\cdot)$.

We note that each of the divisors D_x, D_y, D_{xy} and $\widetilde{T}_4 - E_0 - 2E_4'$ (contained in D_w) is a disjoint union of two (-2)-curves.

For $i, j, k, l \in \{-1, 1\}$, let χ_{ijkl} denote the character which takes the value i, j, k, l on x, y, z, w, respectively. There exist divisors L_{ijkl} such that

$$2L_{ijkl} \equiv \sum_{\chi_{ijkl}(\sigma) = -1} D_\sigma, \qquad (1)$$

thus the covering ψ is well defined. Since there is no 2-torsion in the Picard group of X, then ψ is uniquely determined. The surface Y is smooth because the curves $D_x, \dots, D_{xy}$ are smooth and disjoint. Division of the equations (1) by 2 gives that the L_{ijkl} are according to the following table. For instance $L_{-1111} \equiv \widetilde{T} - E_0 - E_1' - E_3'$.

	$\widetilde{T}$	E_0	E_1	E_1'	E_2	E_2'	E_3	E_3'	E_4	E_4'	E_5	E_5'
L_{-1111}	1	−1	0	−1	0	0	0	−1	0	0	0	0
L_{1-111}	1	−1	0	0	0	−1	0	−1	0	0	0	0
L_{-1-111}	1	−1	0	−1	0	−1	0	0	0	0	0	0
L_{11-11}	3	−1	−1	−1	−1	−1	−1	−1	−1	−1	0	−1
L_{-11-11}	4	−2	−1	−2	−1	−1	−1	−2	−1	−1	0	−1
L_{1-1-11}	4	−2	−1	−1	−1	−2	−1	−2	−1	−1	0	−1
$L_{-1-1-11}$	4	−2	−1	−2	−1	−2	−1	−1	−1	−1	0	−1
L_{111-1}	4	−2	−1	−1	−1	−1	−1	−1	−1	−2	−1	−1
L_{-111-1}	5	−3	−1	−2	−1	−1	−1	−2	−1	−2	−1	−1
L_{1-11-1}	5	−3	−1	−1	−1	−2	−1	−2	−1	−2	−1	−1
$L_{-1-11-1}$	5	−3	−1	−2	−1	−2	−1	−1	−1	−2	−1	−1
L_{11-1-1}	7	−3	−2	−2	−2	−2	−2	−2	−2	−3	−1	−2
$L_{-11-1-1}$	8	−4	−2	−3	−2	−2	−2	−3	−2	−3	−1	−2
$L_{1-1-1-1}$	8	−4	−2	−2	−2	−3	−2	−3	−2	−3	−1	−2
$L_{-1-1-1-1}$	8	−4	−2	−3	−2	−3	−2	−2	−2	−3	−1	−2

Step 2 (Invariants)
Since

$$K_X \equiv -3\widetilde{T} + E_0 + \sum_1^5 (E_i + E_i'),$$

then

$$\chi(\mathcal{O}_Y) = 16\chi(\mathcal{O}_X) + \frac{1}{2}\sum \left(L_{ijkl}^2 + K_X L_{ijkl}\right) =$$
$$= 16 - 1 - 1 - 1 + 0 - 1 - 1 - 1 + 0 - 1 - 1 - 1 + 0 - 1 - 1 - 1 = 4.$$

For the computation of

$$p_g(Y) = p_g(X) + \sum h^0(X, \mathcal{O}_X(K_X + L_{ijkl})),$$

let

$$\mathcal{T}_1 := \left(\widetilde{T}_4 - E_0 - 2E_4' + E_5 - E_5'\right),$$

$$\mathcal{T}_2 := \left(\widetilde{T}_2 + \widetilde{T}_3 + \widetilde{T}_4 - 3E_0 - \sum_2^4 2E_i' + E_5 - E_5'\right),$$

$$\mathcal{L}_1 := \left|3\widetilde{T} - E_0 - \sum_1^3 (E_i + E_i') - E_4 - E_5\right|$$

and

$$\mathcal{L}_2 := \left|2\widetilde{T} - (E_1 + E_1') - E_2 - E_3 - E_4 - E_5\right|.$$

Each of $\mathcal{T}_1$, $\mathcal{T}_2$ is a disjoint union of (-2)-curves intersecting negatively $K_X + L_{11-1-1}$, $K_X + L_{1-1-1-1}$, respectively, thus we have

$$|K_X + L_{11-1-1}| = \mathcal{T}_1 + \mathcal{L}_1$$

and

$$|K_X + L_{1-1-1-1}| = \mathcal{T}_2 + \mathcal{L}_2.$$

We show in the Appendix that $\mathcal{L}_1$ has only one element and $\mathcal{L}_2$ is empty. Hence

$$h^0(X, \mathcal{O}_X(K_X + L_{11-1-1})) = 1$$

and

$$h^0(X, \mathcal{O}_X(K_X + L_{1-1-1-1})) = 0.$$

Analogously

$$h^0(X, \mathcal{O}_X(K_X + L_{-11-1-1})) = h^0(X, \mathcal{O}_X(K_X + L_{-1-1-1-1})) = 0.$$

It is easy to see that

$$h^0(X, \mathcal{O}_X(K_X + L_{11-11})) = h^0(X, \mathcal{O}_X(K_X + L_{111-1})) = 1$$

and

$$h^0(X, \mathcal{O}_X(K_X + L_{ijkl})) = 0$$

for the remaining cases. We conclude that

$$p_g(Y) = 0 + 1 + 1 + 1 = 3.$$

Now we compute the self-intersection of the canonical divisor for the minimal model S of Y. The divisor

$$\xi_1 := \frac{1}{2}\psi^* \left(\sum_1^3 \left(\widetilde{T}_i - E_0 - 2E_i' \right) \right)$$

is a disjoint union of $8 \times 6 = 48$ (-1)-curves and the divisor

$$\xi_2 := \frac{1}{2}\psi^* \left(\widetilde{T}_4 - E_0 - 2E_4' + E_5 - E_5' \right)$$

is a disjoint union of $8 \times 3 = 24$ (-1)-curves.

The covering ψ factors through the double covering $\varphi : W \to X$ with branch locus $D_z + D_w$. We have $K_W \equiv \varphi^*(K_X + L_{11-1-1})$, hence the Hurwitz formula gives

$$K_Y \equiv \xi_1 + \psi^*(K_X + L_{11-1-1}).$$

Thus one of the canonical curves of Y is

$$\xi_1 + 2\xi_2 + \psi^*(\mathcal{C}),$$

where $\mathcal{C}$ is the unique element in the linear system $\mathcal{L}_1$ defined above. From $\xi_1\xi_2 = \xi_1\psi^*(\mathcal{C}) = \psi^*(\mathcal{C})^2 = 0$ and $\xi_2\psi^*(\mathcal{C}) = 24$, we get $K_Y^2 = -48$. We show in the Appendix that the curve $\mathcal{C}$ is irreducible, therefore $\psi^*(\mathcal{C})$ is nef and then $K_S^2 = 24$.

Step 3 (The canonical map)
The divisors

$$D_z,\ D_w,\ D_{zw}$$

define a $\mathbb{Z}_2^2$-covering
$$\rho : U \to X.$$
We have
$$\chi(\mathcal{O}_U) = 4\chi(\mathcal{O}_X) + \frac{1}{2}\sum \left(L_{11kl}^2 + K_X L_{11kl}\right) = 4 + 0 + 0 + 0 = 4$$
and
$$p_g(U) = p_g(X) + \sum h^0(X, \mathcal{O}_X(K_X + L_{11kl})) = 0 + 1 + 1 + 1 = 3.$$
The surface U is the quotient of Y by the subgroup H generated by x, y. The group H acts on the minimal model S of Y with only isolated fixed points, so S/H is the canonical model $\bar{U}$ of U and then
$$K_{\bar{U}}^2 = 6.$$

Finally we want to show that the canonical map of U is of degree 6 onto $\mathbb{P}^2$. It suffices to verify that the canonical system has no base component nor base points. The canonical system of U is generated by the divisors
$$K_1 := \frac{1}{2}\rho^*(D_z) + \rho^*(K_X + L_{111-1}),$$
$$K_2 := \frac{1}{2}\rho^*(D_w) + \rho^*(K_X + L_{11-11}),$$
$$K_3 := \frac{1}{2}\rho^*(D_{zw}) + \rho^*(K_X + L_{11-1-1}).$$
Denote by $\vartheta_1, \dots, \vartheta_4$ the four (-1)-curves
$$\frac{1}{2}\rho^*(\widetilde{T}_4 - E_0 - 2E_4')$$
and by ϑ_5, ϑ_6 the two (-1)-curves
$$\frac{1}{2}\rho^*(E_5 - E_5').$$
Let
$$\pi : U \to U'$$
be the contraction to the minimal model and $q_1, \dots, q_6 \in U'$ be the points obtained by contraction of $\vartheta_1, \dots, \vartheta_6$. If κ is an effective canonical divisor of U', then
$$H := \pi^*(\kappa) + \vartheta_1 + \dots + \vartheta_6$$
is a canonical curve of U. So, the multiplicity of a curve ϑ_i in H is 1 if and only if the curve κ does not contain the point q_i.

Since the multiplicity of $\vartheta_5 + \vartheta_6$ in K_1 is 1, the points q_5, q_6 are not base points of the canonical system of U'. The multiplicity of $\vartheta_1 + \dots + \vartheta_4$ in K_2 is 1, so also the points $q_1, \dots, q_4$ are not base points of the canonical system of U'. Now to conclude the non-existence of other base points, it suffices to show that the plane curves
$$\mu \circ \rho(K_i),\ i = 1, 2, 3,$$

have common intersection $\{p_0, p_1, \ldots, p_5\}$ and their singularities are no worse than stated. This is done in the Appendix. Here we just note that these curves are

$$T_4 + C_6, \quad C_7, \quad T_4 + C_3,$$

where C_3 is the plane cubic corresponding to the unique element in the linear system $\mathcal{L}_1$, defined in Step 2 above.

Step 4 (Conclusion)
The $\mathbb{Z}_2^4$-covering $\psi : Y \to X$ factors as

$$Y \xrightarrow{4:1} U \xrightarrow{4:1} X.$$

Since $p_g(Y) = p_g(U) = 3$ and the canonical map of U is of degree 6, then the canonical map of Y is of degree 24.

Remark 3. *Consider the intermediate double covering $\epsilon : Q \to X$ of ρ with branch locus D_z. Then Q is a Kummer surface: each divisor $\epsilon^* \left(\widetilde{T} - E_0 - 2E_i'\right)$ is a disjoint union of four (-2)-curves. The surface U contains 24 disjoint (-2)-curves $A_1, \ldots, A_{24}$, the pullback of $\sum_1^3 \epsilon^* \left(\widetilde{T}_i - E_0 - 2E_i'\right)$, such that the covering $Y \to U$ is a $\mathbb{Z}_2^2$-Galois covering ramified over the divisors*

$$A_1 + \cdots + A_8, \ A_9 + \cdots + A_{16}, \ A_{17} + \cdots + A_{24}.$$

Appendix

The following code is implemented with the Computational Algebra System Magma [BCP], version V2.21-8.

First we compute the curves C_6 and C_7 referred in Section 3. We choose the points $p_0, \ldots, p_5$ with a symmetry axis and compute the curves using the Magma function *LinSys* given in [Ri1].

```
A<x,y>:=AffineSpace(Rationals(),2);
P:=[A![0,0],A![2,2],A![-2,2],A![3,1],A![-3,1],A![0,5]];
M1:=[[2],[2,2],[2,2],[2,2],[2,2],[1,1]];
M2:=[[3],[2,2],[2,2],[2,2],[2,2],[2,2]];
T:=[[],[[1,1]],[[-1,1]],[[3,1]],[[-3,1]],[[1,0]]];
J6:=LinSys(LinearSystem(A,6),P,M1,T);
J7:=LinSys(LinearSystem(A,7),P,M2,T);
C6:=Curve(A,Sections(J6)[1]);
C7:=Curve(A,Sections(J7)[1]);
```

We consider the projective closure of the curves and verify that they are irreducible and the singularities are exactly as stated.

```
P2<x,y,z>:=ProjectiveClosure(A);
C6:=ProjectiveClosure(C6);
C7:=ProjectiveClosure(C7);
IsAbsolutelyIrreducible(C6);
IsAbsolutelyIrreducible(C7);
```

```
SingularPoints(C6 join C7);
HasSingularPointsOverExtension(C6 join C7);
[ResolutionGraph(C6,P[i]):i in [1..#P-1]];
[ResolutionGraph(C7,P[i]):i in [1..#P]];
[ResolutionGraph(C6 join C7,P[i]):i in [1..#P]];
```

To clarify the situation at the origin, we use:

```
d:=DefiningEquation(TangentCone(C7,A![0,0]));
d eq y*(x^2 + 40585383/1587545*y^2);
```

thus the singularity is ordinary.

The defining polynomials of C_6 and C_7 are

```
289*x^6+754326*x^4*y^2+2610657*x^2*y^4+1906344*y^6-2013848*x^4*y*z
-17946576*x^2*y^3*z-22212504*y^5*z+1336400*x^4*z^2
+35856160*x^2*y^2*z^2+89326224*y^4*z^2-22270208*x^2*y*z^3
-146421504*y^3*z^3+295936*x^2*z^4+84049920*y^2*z^4
```

and

```
8683464*x^6*y-494984955*x^4*y^3-1064093674*x^2*y^5-558251235*y^7
-11358312*x^6*z+1253331746*x^4*y^2*z+8340957732*x^2*y^4*z
+7286240034*y^6*z-920312219*x^4*y*z^2-17394911410*x^2*y^3*z^2
-32292289971*y^5*z^2+179839940*x^4*z^3+11716330200*x^2*y^2*z^3
+55580514660*y^4*z^3-1270036000*x^2*y*z^4-32468306400*y^3*z^4
```

Now we show that the linear system $\mathcal{L}_1$, defined in Step 2 above, has exactly one element. Let L_1 be the corresponding linear system of plane cubics. By parameter counting, $\dim(L_1) \geq 0$. If $\dim(L_1) \geq 1$, then one of its curves contains the line T_3, because

$$\left(\widetilde{T}_3 - E_0 - E_3 - E_3'\right)\left(3\widetilde{T} - E_0 - \sum_1^3 (E_i + E_i') - E_4 - E_5\right) = 0.$$

The other component of this curve is a conic, but one can verify that the conic through p_4 tangent to the lines T_1, T_2 at p_1, p_2, which is given by the equation

$$x^2 - 9y^2 + 32y - 32 = 0,$$

does not contain the point p_5. We compute the unique plane cubic C_3 in L_1 and show that it is irreducible:

```
M:=[[1],[1,1],[1,1],[1,1],[1,0],[1,0]];
J3:=LinSys(LinearSystem(A,3),P,M,T);
#Sections(J3) eq 1;
C3:=ProjectiveClosure(Curve(A,Sections(J3)[1]));
IsAbsolutelyIrreducible(C3);
```

The defining polynomial of C_3 is

```
17*x^3-924*x^2*y-153*x*y^2-996*y^3+1164*x^2*z
+544*x*y*z+6516*y^2*z-544*x*z^2-7680*y*z^2
```

To conclude that the linear system $\mathcal{L}_2$, defined in Step 2, is empty, it suffices to note that the conic C through $p_1, \dots, p_5$ is not tangent to the line T_1 at the point p_1. An equation for C is

$$-12x^2 + 11y^2 - 93y + 190 = 0.$$

Finally we verify that the curves

$$T_4 + C_6, \quad C_7, \quad T_4 + C_3,$$

referred in the end of Section 3, have intersection $\{p_0, p_1, \dots, p_5\}$:

```
T4:=Curve(P2,x+3*y);
PointsOverSplittingField((T4 join C6) meet C7 meet (T4 join C3));
```

and the singularities are no worse than stated:

```
[ResolutionGraph(T4 join C3 join C6 join C7,p):p in P];
```

To clarify the situation at the origin, we use:

```
TC:=TangentCone(T4 join C3 join C6 join C7,P2![0,0,1]);
DefiningEquation(TC) eq y*(x+3*y)*(x + 240/17*y)
*(x^2 + 82080/289*y^2)*(x^2 + 40585383/1587545*y^2);
```

thus the singularity is ordinary.

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