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**DESINGULARIZATIONS OF SOME UNSTABLE ORBIT
CLOSURES**

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DESINGULARIZATIONS OF SOME UNSTABLE ORBIT CLOSURES

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Let σ be a semisimple automorphism of a connected reductive group G , and let G_σ be the fixed points of σ . We consider the G_σ -orbits on the space of nilpotent elements in an eigenspace of $d\sigma$. We give a desingularization of the orbit closures and relate the G_σ -orbits to the G -orbits. Along the way, we describe the fixed points of σ on a flag variety G/P where P is a σ -stable parabolic subgroup of G .

I. Introduction. In this note we observe some consequences of Richardson's theorems on orbits of reductive groups, in the following situation. Let G be a simply-connected reductive algebraic group over an algebraically closed field F whose characteristic is either zero or sufficiently large (as specified below). Let \mathfrak{g} be the Lie algebra of G , and let \mathcal{N} be the variety of nilpotent elements in \mathfrak{g} . Let σ be a semisimple automorphism of G , fix a nonzero element $q \in F^\times$, and consider the variety

$$\mathcal{N}_{\sigma,q} = \{x \in \mathcal{N} : d\sigma(x) = qx\}.$$

If q is not a root of unity then $\mathcal{N}_{\sigma,q}$ is the whole q -eigenspace of $d\sigma$, hence is a linear subspace of \mathfrak{g} . If q is a root of unity, the variety $\mathcal{N}_{\sigma,q}$ may even be reducible.

It was shown by Steinberg that the group of σ -fixed points G_σ is also a connected reductive F -group ([S]). The adjoint action of G_σ preserves each eigenspace of $d\sigma$, and $\mathcal{N}_{\sigma,q}$ consists of those G_σ -orbits in the q -eigenspace of $d\sigma$ which are "unstable", in the sense of geometric invariant theory ([H2]). According to a theorem of Kac and Richardson ([Ri3]), the G_σ -orbits on $\mathcal{N}_{\sigma,q}$ are exactly the irreducible components of sets of the form $\mathcal{N}_{\sigma,q} \cap \tilde{\mathcal{O}}$, where $\tilde{\mathcal{O}}$ is a nilpotent G orbit. Richardson also proved (with our assumptions on the characteristic of F , see [Ri1]) that there are only finitely many

nilpotent G -orbits, hence there are only finitely many G_σ -orbits in $\mathcal{N}_{\sigma,q}$.

Let $\mathcal{O} \subseteq \mathcal{N}_{\sigma,q}$ be one such G_σ -orbit. Then the Zariski closure $\overline{\mathcal{O}}$ of \mathcal{O} in $\mathcal{N}_{\sigma,q}$ is an affine variety which is generally singular. The main purpose of this note is to resolve the singularities of $\overline{\mathcal{O}}$ (Prop. (3.2)). More precisely, we construct a vector bundle E over a partial flag variety of G_σ , and define a closed morphism $\pi : E \rightarrow \overline{\mathcal{O}}$ such that $\pi : \pi^{-1}(\mathcal{O}) \rightarrow \mathcal{O}$ is an isomorphism. The idea is simply that (σ, q^{-1}) acts on the known resolution of the closure of $G \cdot \mathcal{O}$, the nilpotent G -orbit containing \mathcal{O} . The desired resolution of $\overline{\mathcal{O}}$ is then found by taking fixed points under (σ, q^{-1}) . Moreover these fixed points separate the various G_σ -orbits in $\mathcal{N}_{\sigma,q} \cap G \cdot \mathcal{O}$, as described in Prop. (4.1) below. For example if σ is induced by an automorphism of the Dynkin diagram, (4.1) implies that every nilpotent G -orbit meets $\mathcal{N}_{\sigma,q}$ in at most one G_σ -orbit. Taking $q = 1$, we recover the well-known fact that nilpotent orbits in $\mathfrak{so}(2n+1)$ and $\mathfrak{sp}(n)$ are determined by elementary divisors.

The method requires a precise description (Prop. (2.3)) of the fixed points of σ in a flag variety G/P where P is a σ -stable parabolic subgroup of G . Richardson ([**Ri3**]) has already proven that there are finitely many orbits and they are all closed. Here we count and describe the orbits explicitly, using Steinberg's work in [**S**].

Hesselink ([**H2**]) has constructed desingularizations of closures of "strata" for more general group actions. Each stratum is a union of orbits, and in the case of nilpotent G -orbits, Kraft proved that the strata and orbits coincide. For our varieties $\mathcal{N}_{\sigma,q}$ it is not known if the orbits are strata, and even if they are (it is an interesting question), the proof is likely to be a more difficult route to a desingularization than the one taken here.

The group action $(G_\sigma, \mathcal{N}_{\sigma,q}, Ad)$ arises in many settings. Suppose that q is not a root of unity, so that $\mathcal{N}_{\sigma,q}$ is a linear space, and in particular an irreducible variety. There is a unique Zariski dense orbit in $\mathcal{N}_{\sigma,q}$, so by definition, the triple $(G_\sigma, \mathcal{N}_{\sigma,q}, Ad)$ is a "prehomogeneous vector space", hereafter abbreviated as PV. The complex PV's which are also irreducible representations were classified by Sato and Kimura ([**S-K**]). The PV's occurring as some $(G_\sigma, \mathcal{N}_{\sigma,q}, Ad)$ are called "PV's of parabolic type" ([**Ru**]), because they also arise as subspaces of nilradicals of parabolic subalgebras which are in-

variant under a Levi subgroup. (G_σ is a Levi subgroup in some reductive subgroup $H < G$ whose Lie algebra contains $\mathcal{N}_{\sigma,q}$.) Most irreducible PV's with finitely many orbits are of parabolic type. However, parabolic PV's can easily be reducible, and there seems to be no classification of reducible PV's.* We remark that the big group G is not to be discarded, as it greatly clarifies the structure of $(G_\sigma, \mathcal{N}_{\sigma,q}, Ad)$.

Suppose now that $q \in F^\times$ is arbitrary, but that σ either has finite order or is conjugation by some element in a one-parameter subgroup of G . Then \mathfrak{g} has a grading $\mathfrak{g} = \bigoplus \mathfrak{g}_i$ such that G_σ has Lie algebra \mathfrak{g}_0 and V is the set of nilpotent elements in \mathfrak{g}_1 . These spaces were initially studied by Vinberg ([V]), who proposed a scheme for classifying the orbits.

My initial interest in such orbit closures $\overline{\mathcal{O}}$ came from the representation theory of p -adic groups ([K-L]). In this setting, G is a complex group (the “Langlands dual group”), σ is inner, and q is the cardinality of the residue field, hence not a root of unity. The intersection cohomology of $\overline{\mathcal{O}}$ is apparently related to multiplicities in unramified principal series representations of the p -adic group dual to G , just as with Schubert varieties and Verma modules (see [G], [R], [Z]). In this context, Zelevinsky found desingularizations of $\overline{\mathcal{O}}$ for $G = GL_n$ and used them to compute the intersection cohomology of some special $\overline{\mathcal{O}}$'s, for which his resolution was “small” in the sense of [G-M]. The resolutions constructed in this paper are not always small.

An earlier version of this paper had σ being inner, as above. However, in addition to other helpful comments, the referee pointed out Sekiguchi's paper [Se], which discusses $\mathcal{N}_{\sigma,-1}$ when σ is an involution. Among other results, Sekiguchi gives a resolution of the orbit closures of maximal dimension in $\mathcal{N}_{\sigma,-1}$, so following the referee's suggestion, I modified this paper to include semisimple automorphisms, thus extending that part of Sekiguchi's work. In this setting, the G_σ -orbits in $\mathcal{N}_{\sigma,-1}$ are of interest in the representation theory of real Lie groups (see [Vo]).

Thanks are due to Gary Seitz, for telling me about Richardson's paper [Ri3].

*Added in proof: See Kasei-Kimura-Yasukura, Amer. J. Math., **108** (1986), 643-692.

II. Fixed point varieties in flag manifolds. Here we use some of Steinberg's results in [S] to describe the fixed point subvariety of a flag manifold under the action of a semisimple automorphism. In this section there is no restriction on the characteristic of the ground field F .

Let G be a connected, simply-connected and semisimple algebraic group over an algebraically closed field F , and let σ be a semisimple automorphism of G . That is, σ is an automorphism of G whose differential $d\sigma$ acts diagonalizably on the Lie algebra \mathfrak{g} of G . We say a subgroup $H \subseteq G$ is " σ -stable" if $\sigma H = H$. If $K \subseteq H \subseteq G$ are closed σ -stable subgroups of G , then σ acts on the variety H/K by the rule $\sigma(hK) = (\sigma h)K$, for $h \in H$. We write $(H/K)_\sigma$ for the fixed points of σ in H/K . According to [S, (8.2)], G_σ is a connected reductive group. By [S, (7.5)], there exists a σ -stable Borel subgroup $B \subseteq G$, and a σ -stable maximal torus $T \subseteq B$. Let U be the unipotent radical of B , and let $\mathfrak{t} \subseteq \mathfrak{t} \oplus \mathfrak{u} = \mathfrak{b}$ be the corresponding Lie algebras. Let Δ, Δ^+, Σ be the roots of \mathfrak{t} in $\mathfrak{g}, \mathfrak{u}$ and $\mathfrak{u}/[\mathfrak{u}, \mathfrak{u}]$, respectively. Since σ preserves T and B , it acts on Δ , preserving Σ and Δ^+ , and on the normalizer N of T in G , and hence on the Weyl group $W = N/T$. Let $W_\sigma^1 = N_\sigma/T_\sigma$. This is the subgroup of W_σ consisting of elements which can be represented in N_σ .

Let $V \subset \mathfrak{t}^*$ be the real span of the roots in Δ , and let V_σ be the fixed points of σ in V . For any root α , let $\bar{\alpha}$ denote its orthogonal projection into V_σ , with respect to a W -invariant inner product on V . Then W_σ preserves and acts faithfully on V_σ ([S, (1.32)]). Let \overline{W}_σ and \overline{W}_σ^1 denote the restrictions of W_σ and W_σ^1 to V_σ . We have $\overline{W}_\sigma \simeq W_\sigma$ as abstract groups, but the latter is a reflection group with respect to a new root system. We describe this more precisely.

The projections of all roots form a non-reduced root system in V_σ . We get a reduced root system as follows ([S, §1]). Let S_α be the collection of positive roots whose projection to V_σ is proportional to $\bar{\alpha}$. There are two possibilities for S_α ([S, (8.2)]):

- (1) $S_\alpha = \{\alpha, \sigma\alpha, \sigma^2\alpha, \dots\}$ no two of which sum to a root, or
- (2) $S_\alpha = \{\alpha, \sigma\alpha, \beta = \alpha + \sigma\alpha\}$ is a σ -stable positive system of type A_2 .

For $\alpha \in \Delta^+$, let $[\alpha] \in V_\sigma$ be the longest projection to V_σ of a root in S_α . Likewise, for any subset $J \subseteq \Delta^+$, let $[J] = \{[\alpha] : \alpha \in J\}$.

Set $[\Delta] := W_\sigma[\Sigma]$. Then by [S, (1.32)], $[\Delta]$ is a root system in V_σ with base $[\Sigma]$, positive roots $[\Delta]^+ = [\Delta^+]$ and Weyl group \overline{W}_σ . (The root system of G_σ turns out to be a subsystem of $[\Delta]$.) According to [S, (8.2)], the reflection $s_{[\alpha]} \in \overline{W}_\sigma$ corresponding to $[\alpha] \in [\Delta^+]$ is given by

$$(1) \quad s_{[\alpha]} = s_\alpha s_{\sigma\alpha} \cdots |_{V_\sigma} \text{ or}$$

$$(2) \quad s_{[\alpha]} = s_\beta |_{V_\sigma},$$

according to the two cases for S_α described above.

All of this is related to the structure of fixed point group G_σ in the following way. For each positive root α , let $U_\alpha \subseteq U$ be the corresponding root subgroup. We have $\sigma U_\alpha = U_{\sigma\alpha}$. Consider the product $\prod_{\beta \in S_\alpha} U_\beta$. In the two cases for S_α , either the root groups in the product commute (case (1)), or the whole product is the three dimensional Heisenberg group (case (2)). Hence the product is a group. Since $\sigma S_\alpha = S_\alpha$, the product is also invariant under σ , and we set

$$U[\alpha] = \left(\prod_{\beta \in S_\alpha} U_\beta \right)_\sigma.$$

By [S, (8.2)] again, $U[\alpha]$ is either trivial, or a one-parameter group. Finally, [S, (8.2)(4)-(7)] combine to give

LEMMA 2.1. *$U[\alpha]$ is nontrivial if and only if the reflection $s_{[\alpha]}$ belongs to \overline{W}_σ^1 . Moreover, \overline{W}_σ^1 is generated by such reflections.*

This allows us to prove

LEMMA 2.2. *There exists a set $Y(\sigma)$ of coset representatives for $W_\sigma^1 \backslash W_\sigma$ such that if $n_w \in N$ represents $w \in Y(\sigma)$, then*

$$n_w^{-1} B_\sigma n_w \subseteq B.$$

Proof. Since U_σ is the product of the $U[\alpha]$'s, this amounts to having $n_w^{-1} U[\alpha] n_w \subseteq U$ for all $\alpha \in \Delta^+$. Since

$$n_w^{-1} U[\alpha] n_w \subseteq \prod_{\beta \in S_\alpha} U_{w^{-1}\beta},$$

it is enough to find coset representatives $w \in W_\sigma$ such that $w^{-1} S_\alpha \subseteq \Delta^+$ whenever $U[\alpha]$ is nontrivial. Let $<$ be the Bruhat order on the

Weyl group \overline{W}_σ , with respect to the positive system $[\Delta^+]$ of $[\Delta]$. This satisfies the rule ([J, (2.19)])

$$s_{[\alpha]}\bar{w} > \bar{w} \Leftrightarrow \bar{w}^{-1}[\alpha] \in [\Delta^+].$$

In each coset in $\overline{W}_\sigma^1 \backslash \overline{W}_\sigma$, choose one element $\bar{w} \in \overline{W}_\sigma$ which is not $<$ any other member of its coset $\overline{W}_\sigma^1 \bar{w}$. Let $w \in W_\sigma$ be the unique element whose restriction to V_σ is \bar{w} , and let $Y(\sigma)$ be the collection of w 's so obtained. Then $Y(\sigma)$ is a set of coset representatives for $W_\sigma^1 \backslash W_\sigma$.

For any $x \in W_\sigma$, we have $x\sigma = \sigma x$, as automorphisms of Δ . Let $\alpha \in \Delta^+$. Since σ preserves Δ^+ and S_α is spanned over the positive integers by the σ -translates of one of its members, we have either $xS_\alpha \subseteq \Delta^+$ or $xS_\alpha \subseteq -\Delta^+$. Moreover, the former possibility holds if and only if $\bar{x}[\alpha] \in [\Delta]^+$. Now take $x = w^{-1}$, where $w \in Y(\sigma)$. By (2.1) and the Bruhat-minimality of w , we have $x[\alpha] \in [\Delta]^+$ whenever $U[\alpha]$ is nontrivial, so w has the required properties. \square

Now let P be a σ -stable parabolic subgroup of G . By [S, (7.5)], there is a maximal torus T and a Borel subgroup B , both σ -stable, such that $T \subseteq B \subseteq P$. With notation and results as above, P corresponds to a σ -stable subset of $\Sigma_P \subseteq \Sigma$. More precisely, Σ_P consists of those simple roots which are roots of \mathfrak{t} in the Lie algebra of the unique Levi subgroup L of P containing T . Since $\sigma T = T$ and $\sigma P = P$, we also have $\sigma L = L$, so Σ_P is indeed σ -stable. Let W_P be the subgroup of W generated by the reflections in Σ_P . Then W_P is also preserved by σ . The following result may be viewed as the determination of all σ -stable parabolic subgroups in the G -conjugacy class of P .

PROPOSITION 2.3. *Let G be a semisimple simply connected algebraic group. Let σ be a semisimple automorphism of G , and let P be a σ -stable parabolic subgroup of G . Then with notation as above,*

$$(1) \quad (G/P)_\sigma = \coprod_{w \in W_\sigma^1 \backslash W_\sigma / (W_P)_\sigma} G_\sigma w P / P \quad (\text{disjoint union}). \text{ In particular, each connected component of } (G/P)_\sigma \text{ is a } G_\sigma\text{-orbit.}$$

(2) *Each double coset $W_\sigma^1 w (W_P)_\sigma$ meets $Y(\sigma)$ (see (2.2)).*

(3) *Each G_σ -orbit in $(G/P)_\sigma$ is complete. In other words, the group of σ -fixed points in any σ -stable parabolic subgroup of G is parabolic in G_σ .*

- (4) *If $P = B$ is a σ -stable Borel subgroup and $y \in Y(\sigma)$, then $(yBy^{-1})_\sigma = B_\sigma$, so $(G/B)_\sigma$ is a disjoint union of $[W_\sigma : W_\sigma^1]$ copies of the flag variety G_σ/B_σ .*

Proof. Assertion (2) follows immediately from (2.2). For (1) we recall the Bruhat decomposition. For each $w \in W$, let U_w be the product, taken in some fixed order, of the root groups U_α with $w^{-1}\alpha \in -\Delta^+$. Let W^P be the set of $w \in W$ such that $w\Sigma_P \subseteq \Delta^+$. Then every point in G/P may be uniquely written as uwP for some $w \in W^P$, $u \in U_w$. Since Σ_P and Δ^+ are σ -stable, so are W^P and U_w . It follows that

$$(G/P)_\sigma = \bigcup_{w \in W^P} (U_w w P/P)_\sigma \subseteq \bigcup_{w \in W_\sigma} U_\sigma w P/P \subseteq \bigcup_{w \in W_\sigma} G_\sigma w P/P.$$

Let $n \in N$ represent some $w \in W_\sigma$. Then $\sigma(n) = nt$ for some $t \in T$, so $\sigma(wP) = \sigma(n)P = ntP = nP = wP$. Hence $w \in W_\sigma$ implies $G_\sigma w P/P \subseteq (G/P)_\sigma$, so we have

$$(G/P)_\sigma = \bigcup_{w \in W_\sigma} G_\sigma w P/P = \bigcup_{y \in Y(\sigma)} G_\sigma y P/P,$$

where $Y(\sigma)$ is as in (2.2).

We next show disjointness. Since $G = UNB = \coprod_{w \in W} UwB$, we have

$$G_\sigma = U_\sigma N_\sigma B_\sigma = \prod_{x \in W_\sigma^1} U_\sigma x B_\sigma.$$

Let $y \in Y(\sigma)$ and consider the orbit $G_\sigma y P/P$ in $(G/P)_\sigma$. By (2.2) we have

$$G_\sigma y P/P = \bigcup_{x \in W_\sigma^1} U_\sigma x B_\sigma y P/P = \bigcup_{x \in W_\sigma^1} U_\sigma xy P/P.$$

It follows that for two elements $y, y' \in Y(\sigma)$ we have $G_\sigma y P/P = G_\sigma y' P/P$ if and only if we have equality of double cosets

$$W_\sigma^1 y W_P = W_\sigma^1 y' W_P.$$

Since $Y(\sigma) \subseteq W_\sigma$, this is the same as

$$W_\sigma^1 y (W_P)_\sigma = W_\sigma^1 y' (W_P)_\sigma,$$

proving (1).

Now $(G/P)_\sigma$, being closed in G/P , is complete. Hence each connected component of $(G/P)_\sigma$ is complete, proving (3).

Finally, let $y \in Y(\sigma)$. Then $y^{-1}B_\sigma y \subseteq B$, so $B_\sigma \subseteq (yBy^{-1})_\sigma$. Both sides are solvable, and are parabolic subgroups of G_σ by (3). Hence they are Borel subgroups of G_σ , and must be equal. \square

2.5. REMARKS. (1) Simple examples (eg. [Ri3, 3.3]) show that (2.3)(4) fails for nonminimal parabolic subgroups. See also (2.6) below.

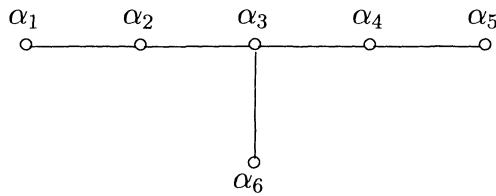
(2) We could have given a more conceptual, though less explicit, construction of $Y(\sigma)$ by invoking [Ri3, 10.2.1] (our (2.3)(3)) at the outset. For, if $w \in W_\sigma$ and B is a σ -stable Borel subgroup of G , then by [Ri3, 10.2.1], B_σ and $(wBw^{-1})_\sigma$ are Borel subgroups of G_σ containing the same maximal torus T_σ , so there exists $x \in W_\sigma^1$ such that $x^{-1}(B_\sigma)x = (wBw^{-1})_\sigma$, from which it follows that $(xw)^{-1}B_\sigma(xw) \subseteq B$.

(3) Matsuki (over \mathbb{C} , [M]) and Springer ($\text{char}(F) \neq 2$, [Sp]) have described all of the G_σ -orbits in G/B when σ is an involution. They prove in particular that $(G/B)_\sigma$ is exactly the union of the closed G_σ -orbits in G/B . Let P be a parabolic subgroup containing B , and let $\pi : G/B \rightarrow G/P$ be the natural projection. If Y is a closed G_σ -orbit in G/P , then $Y = \pi(Y')$ for any closed G_σ -orbit $Y' \subseteq \pi^{-1}(Y)$. Hence the result of Matsuki and Springer implies that $(G/P)_\sigma$ is the union of the closed G_σ -orbits. The same assertion holds when σ is inner but not necessarily involutive. Indeed, σ is then conjugation by some element of a torus $S \subseteq G_\sigma$. Let $Y \subseteq G/P$ be a closed G_σ -orbit as above. By Borel's fixed-point theorem [B, (10.4)], the fixed point set Y_S of S in Y is nonempty, so Y meets $(G/P)_\sigma$, hence $Y \subseteq (G/P)_\sigma$.

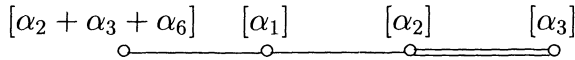
2.6. EXAMPLES. There are two extreme cases of (2.3). If σ is conjugation by an element $s \in T$, then $W_\sigma = W$ and W_σ^1 is generated by the reflections about roots which are trivial on s . On the other hand if σ is induced by an automorphism ρ of the Dynkin diagram, then $W_\sigma^1 = W_\sigma$ ([S, (8.2)(5)]), so $(G/P)_\sigma$ is connected.

Here is an example of a mixed case. Take $G = E_6$ (simply connected version), and let σ be the involution of G whose fixed point set has type C_4 . Explicitly, take ρ to be the automorphism of E_6

induced by the nontrivial diagram symmetry as in the previous paragraph, and let $s = \check{\alpha}_0(-1)$, where α_0 is the highest root and $\check{\alpha}_0(t)$ is the corresponding one parameter subgroup of T . We can take $\sigma = i_s \rho$, where i_s is conjugation by s . Then W_σ , which only depends on ρ , has type F_4 . Meanwhile W_σ^1 , being the Weyl group of G_σ , has type C_4 . Hence $[W_\sigma : W_\sigma^1] = 3$. We compute $Y(\sigma)$. Number the simple roots of E_6 as follows:



Using [S, (8.2)], one gets explicit conditions for each $U[\alpha]$ to be nontrivial, and the simple roots of T_σ in B_σ are then found to be



If $w \in Y(\sigma)$, we must have $w^{-1}\alpha > 0$ for $\alpha = \alpha_1, \alpha_2, \alpha_3, \alpha_2 + \alpha_3 + \alpha_6$. (See the proof of (2.2).) Since w is σ -invariant, we must also have $w^{-1}\alpha_4 > 0$ and $w^{-1}\alpha_5 > 0$. It is now easy to see that w can only be one of $\{1, s_6, s_6 s_1\}$, where $s_i \in W$ is the simple reflection about α_i . Hence this set must be $Y(\sigma)$. Using (2.3), we find that $(G/P)_\sigma$ has $3 - |\Sigma_P \cap \{\alpha_1, \alpha_6\}|$ connected components. The components are not isomorphic in general. For example, let P be a σ -stable parabolic subgroup with Levi component of type A_5 . Then P_σ has Levi of type C_3 , while $(s_6 P s_6^{-1})_\sigma$ has Levi of type A_3 , so $(G/P)_\sigma$ has two components: $G_\sigma/P_\sigma \simeq \mathbb{P}^7$ and $G_\sigma/(s_6 P s_6^{-1})_\sigma$, which is the variety of Lagrangian 4-planes in F^8 .

III. The desingularization. We retain the notation and hypotheses of the previous section, except we now assume that the characteristic of the ground field F is either zero or $p > 2\kappa$, where κ is the maximum of the Coxeter numbers of the simple factors of G . For any variety S on which σ or $d\sigma$ acts, S_σ denotes the fixed points. If H is any σ -stable subgroup of G with Lie algebra \mathfrak{h} , it

follows from [B, III.9.1] that the Lie algebra of H_σ is \mathfrak{h}_σ . We abbreviate the adjoint action of G by $g \cdot Y := Ad(g)Y$ for $g \in G$ and any subset $Y \subseteq \mathfrak{g}$. Let \mathcal{N} be the variety of nilpotent elements in the Lie algebra \mathfrak{g} of G . Fix $q \in F^\times$, and set

$$\mathcal{N}_{\sigma,q} = \{x \in \mathcal{N} : d\sigma(x) = qx\}.$$

We need the analogue of a normal \mathfrak{sl}_2 -triple ([K-R, (I.2)]).

LEMMA 3.1. *Let $e \in \mathcal{N}_{\sigma,q}$. Then there exists $h \in \mathfrak{g}_\sigma, f \in \mathfrak{g}$ such that*

$$[h, e] = 2e, \quad [h, f] = -2f, \quad [e, f] = h.$$

Proof. The proof is a straightforward modification of ([K-R, Prop. 4]). By the version of the Jacobson-Morozov theorem given in [Ca, p. 152], there exists a triple (e, h', f') satisfying the above relations. Write $h' = \sum h'_\lambda$ where $d\sigma(h'_\lambda) = \lambda h'_\lambda, \lambda \in F^\times$. Then $2e = [h', e] = \sum [h'_\lambda, e]$. Comparing $d\sigma$ eigenvalues, we get $2e = [h'_1, e]$. Likewise, we write $f' = \sum f'_\lambda$, and the relation $[e, f'] = h'$ implies $h'_1 = [e, f'_{q^{-1}}] \in [e, \mathfrak{g}]$. Set $h = h'_1$. By [Ko, Cor. 3.5] (which is shown in [Ca, p. 141] to apply when $\text{char}(F) > 2\kappa$), there exists f such that (e, h, f) satisfy the above relations. □

Let $e \in \mathcal{N}_{\sigma,q}$ and fix a triple (e, h, f) as in (3.1). We have a grading $\mathfrak{g} = \bigoplus_i \mathfrak{g}(i)$, where $\mathfrak{g}(i) = \{x \in \mathfrak{g} : [hx] = ix\}$. Each $\mathfrak{g}(i)$ is also $d\sigma$ -stable, since $\text{ad}(h)$ and $d\sigma$ commute. Hence the parabolic subalgebra

$$\mathfrak{p} = \bigoplus_{i \geq 0} \mathfrak{g}(i)$$

is $d\sigma$ -stable, so the corresponding parabolic subgroup P of G is σ -stable, and we are in the situation of (2.3). In particular, P_σ is a parabolic subgroup of the connected reductive group G_σ , and the Lie algebra of P_σ is

$$\mathfrak{p}_\sigma = \bigoplus_{i \geq 0} \mathfrak{g}(i)_\sigma.$$

We next set

$$\mathfrak{p}^2 = \bigoplus_{i \geq 2} \mathfrak{g}(i), \quad \mathfrak{q} = \mathcal{N}_{\sigma,q} \cap \mathfrak{p}^2.$$

The latter is an $\text{Ad}(P_\sigma)$ -invariant linear subspace of $\mathcal{N}_{\sigma,q}$, even if q is a root of unity, because \mathfrak{p}^2 consists of nilpotent elements. Let

$$\mathfrak{p}_0^2 \subset \mathfrak{p}^2$$

be the P -orbit of e . By [Ca, 5.7.3], \mathfrak{p}_0^2 is the unique open dense P -orbit in \mathfrak{p}^2 . It follows that \mathfrak{p}_0^2 and hence $G \cdot e$ are $d\sigma$ stable.

Define the incidence variety

$$E = \{(gP_\sigma, x) \in G_\sigma/P_\sigma \times \mathfrak{g} : x \in g \cdot \mathfrak{q}\}.$$

This is a vector bundle over G_σ/P_σ via projection onto the first factor. One could view E as the fiber product $G_\sigma \times_{P_\sigma} \mathfrak{q}$, but the former picture is more convenient here. Let

$$\pi : E \longrightarrow \mathcal{N}_{\sigma,q}$$

be projection onto the second factor. Then π is G_σ -equivariant, and closed since G_σ/P_σ is complete, by (2.3)(3).

PROPOSITION 3.2. *Let \mathcal{O} be the G_σ -orbit of $e \in \mathcal{N}_{\sigma,q}$. Then the image of π is $\overline{\mathcal{O}}$ and $E \xrightarrow{\pi} \overline{\mathcal{O}}$ is a resolution of singularities.*

Proof. We first show that the P_σ -orbit of e is dense in \mathfrak{q} . From the representation theory of SL_2 ([Ca, 5.4]) we see that the map

$$\text{ad}(e) : \mathfrak{g}(i) \longrightarrow \mathfrak{g}(i+2)$$

is surjective for $i \geq 0$. Hence, given $x \in \mathfrak{q}$, there exists $y \in \mathfrak{p}$ with $[y, e] = x$. We can write $y = \Sigma y^\lambda$ where $y^\lambda \in \mathfrak{p}$ and $d\sigma(y^\lambda) = \lambda y^\lambda$ for $\lambda \in F^\times$. Comparing eigenvalues of $d\sigma$, we get $x = [y^1, e]$, and $y^1 \in \mathfrak{p}_\sigma$. This shows that $\text{ad}(e) : \mathfrak{p}_\sigma \longrightarrow \mathfrak{q}$ is surjective, so $P_\sigma \cdot e$ is open and dense in \mathfrak{q} .

From this it follows easily that the image of π is $\overline{\mathcal{O}}$. Indeed, since the image of π is closed and contains e , we have $\overline{\mathcal{O}} \subseteq \pi(E)$. On the other hand,

$$\mathfrak{q} = \overline{P_\sigma \cdot e} \subseteq \overline{\mathcal{O}}.$$

Since $\pi(E) = G_\sigma \cdot \mathfrak{q}$ and $\overline{\mathcal{O}}$ is preserved by G_σ , we have the other containment.

We next show that π is bijective over \mathcal{O} . We recall the well-known resolution of $\overline{G \cdot e}$ (c.f. [H, p. 108]). Consider the vector bundle

$$\tilde{E} = \{(gP, x) \in G/P \times \mathfrak{g} : x \in g \cdot \mathfrak{p}^2\}.$$

Then the map

$$\tilde{E} \xrightarrow{\tilde{\pi}} \mathfrak{g}$$

given by projection onto the second factor is G -equivariant, closed, has image $\overline{G \cdot e}$, and is bijective over $G \cdot e$.

We define an automorphism σ_q of \tilde{E} by

$$\sigma_q(gP, x) = (\sigma(g)P, q^{-1}d\sigma(x)).$$

The fixed point space of σ_q is

$$\tilde{E}_{\sigma_q} = \{(gP, x) \in (G/P)_{\sigma} \times \mathfrak{g} : x \in \mathcal{N}_{\sigma,q} \cap g \cdot \mathfrak{p}^2\}.$$

This is a disjoint union of vector bundles over the connected components of $(G/P)_{\sigma}$. In the notation of (2.3) these components are given by

$$(G/P)_{\sigma} = \coprod_{w \in W_{\sigma}^1 \setminus W_{\sigma}/(W_P)_{\sigma}} G_{\sigma}wP/P,$$

and each component is a flag variety for G_{σ} .

The component of \tilde{E}_{σ_q} lying over $G_{\sigma}P/P$ is

$$\{(gP, x) \in G_{\sigma}P/P \times \mathfrak{g} : x \in \mathcal{N}_{\sigma,q} \cap g \cdot \mathfrak{p}^2\}.$$

Since $G_{\sigma}/P_{\sigma} = G_{\sigma}P/P$ and for $g \in G_{\sigma}$, we have $\mathcal{N}_{\sigma,q} \cap g \cdot \mathfrak{p}^2 = g \cdot (\mathcal{N}_{\sigma,q} \cap \mathfrak{p}^2) = g \cdot \mathfrak{q}$, this component is none other than E .

Note that $\tilde{\pi}$ restricted to E is just our original $\pi : E \rightarrow \overline{\mathcal{O}}$. Since the fibers of $\tilde{\pi}$ over $G \cdot e$ are singletons, the same must be true of the fibers of π over \mathcal{O} . The proof of (3.2) is now complete if the characteristic of F is zero.

In sufficiently large characteristic, we use an argument from [Ri1] to prove that π is separable. The assumption that F has characteristic $p > 2\kappa$ is, by a wide margin, enough to ensure (see [Ri1, §5]) that the orbit maps under the adjoint action of G are separable. Hence the tangent space to $G \cdot e$ is $T_e G \cdot e = [\mathfrak{g}, e]$. Decompose $\mathfrak{g} = \oplus \mathfrak{g}^{\lambda}$ into $d\sigma$ -eigenspaces, so $\mathcal{O} \subseteq \mathfrak{g}^q$. Then $T_e \mathcal{O} \subseteq \mathfrak{g}^q \cap T_e G \cdot e = \mathfrak{g}^q \cap \oplus_{\lambda} [\mathfrak{g}^{\lambda}, e] = [\mathfrak{g}_{\sigma}, e]$. It follows that the differential of π at $(P_{\sigma}, e) \in E$ is surjective, so π is separable by [B, p. 41]. Hence $\pi : \pi^{-1}(\mathcal{O}) \rightarrow \mathcal{O}$ is an isomorphism by Zariski's Main Theorem. \square

COROLLARY 3.3.

- (1) $\dim \mathcal{O} = \dim G_{\sigma} - \dim P_{\sigma} + \dim \mathfrak{q}$.

- (2) $C_{G_\sigma}(e) = C_{P_\sigma}(e)$, where $C_H(e)$ denotes centralizer in H of e .
- (3) $\mathcal{O} \cap \mathfrak{q}$ is exactly the dense P_σ -orbit on \mathfrak{q} . (See the proof of (3.2).)

Proof. The first two assertions are immediate from (3.2). We use them to compute

$$\begin{aligned} \dim P_\sigma \cdot e &= \dim P_\sigma - \dim C_{P_\sigma}(e) \\ &= \dim P_\sigma - \dim C_{G_\sigma}(e) \\ &= \dim P_\sigma + \dim \mathcal{O} - \dim G_\sigma \\ &= \dim P_\sigma + [\dim G_\sigma + \dim \mathfrak{q} - \dim P_\sigma] - \dim G_\sigma \\ &= \dim \mathfrak{q}. \end{aligned}$$

It follows that $P_\sigma \cdot e$ contains an open subset of \mathfrak{q} which must meet, hence equal, the dense P_σ orbit on \mathfrak{q} . □

According to [K], a result like (3.2) has the following consequence in characteristic zero. Let \mathcal{O} be an G_σ -orbit in $\mathcal{N}_{\sigma, \mathfrak{q}}$, and let E be the bundle over G_σ/P_σ as in (3.2). Let $S^d \check{\mathcal{E}}$ be the graded sheaf of sections of the d^{th} symmetric power of the dual bundle of E . Then $\bigoplus_{d \geq 0} S^d \check{\mathcal{E}}$ is the structure sheaf \mathcal{O}_E of E , and the global sections $H^0(G_\sigma/P_\sigma, S^d \check{\mathcal{E}})$ are the regular functions on E which are polynomial of degree d on each fiber. Let $F[\overline{\mathcal{O}}]$ be the coordinate ring of the affine variety $\overline{\mathcal{O}}$. The map π induces an injection of G_σ -modules

$$\pi^* : F[\overline{\mathcal{O}}] \hookrightarrow \bigoplus_{d \geq 0} H^0(G_\sigma/P_\sigma, S^d \check{\mathcal{E}})$$

given by $\pi^*(f)(mP_\sigma) = f|_{m \cdot \mathfrak{q}}$.

COROLLARY 3.4. *Assume the characteristic of F is zero and that \mathfrak{q} is a completely reducible P_σ -module. Then*

- (1) π^* is an isomorphism of G_σ -modules.
- (2) $\overline{\mathcal{O}}$ is a normal variety.
- (3) $H^i(E, \mathcal{O}_E) = 0$ for $i > 0$. (One says that $\overline{\mathcal{O}}$ has “rational singularities”).

The proof of the analogous result for nilpotent orbits in [H] carries over without change. Note that \mathfrak{q} is a completely reducible P_σ -module if and only if the unipotent radical of P_σ acts trivially on \mathfrak{q} .

IV. From G -orbits to G_σ -orbits. We retain the notation from the proof of (3.2), and investigate the other components of $\tilde{E}_{\sigma_q} = (G \times_P \mathfrak{p}^2)_{\sigma_q}$ occurring there. For $w \in W_\sigma$, we put

$$\mathfrak{q}_w = \mathcal{N}_{\sigma,q} \cap w \cdot \mathfrak{p}^2,$$

so $\mathfrak{q} = \mathfrak{q}_1$. Note that \mathfrak{q}_w is an $\text{Ad}(wPw^{-1})_\sigma$ -invariant linear subspace of $\mathcal{N}_{\sigma,q}$. It follows from (2.3) that for each $w \in W_\sigma^1 \backslash W_\sigma / (W_P)_\sigma$ we have a component

$$E_w = \{(gwP, x) \in G_\sigma wP/P \times \mathfrak{g} : x \in g \cdot \mathfrak{q}_w\},$$

and

$$\tilde{E}_{\sigma_q} = \coprod_{w \in W_\sigma^1 \backslash W_\sigma / (W_P)_\sigma} E_w.$$

One could also view E_w as the fiber product

$$E_w = G_\sigma \times_{P_\sigma} \mathfrak{q}_w.$$

Since E_w is a vector bundle over a smooth variety and $\tilde{\pi}$ is G_σ -equivariant and closed, we see that $\pi(E_w) = G_\sigma \cdot \mathfrak{q}_w$ is an G_σ -stable, closed, irreducible subvariety of $\mathcal{N}_{\sigma,q} \cap \overline{G \cdot e}$. Hence $\pi(E_w) = \overline{\mathcal{O}_w}$ for a unique G_σ -orbit $\mathcal{O}_w \subseteq G \cdot e$. Note that $\pi(E_w)$ meets $G \cdot e$ if and only if $\mathcal{N}_{\sigma,q} \cap w \cdot \mathfrak{p}_0^2 \neq \emptyset$. (Recall that $\mathfrak{p}_0^2 = \mathfrak{p}^2 \cap G \cdot e$ is the unique dense P -orbit in \mathfrak{p}^2 .) By [Ri3] the G_σ -orbits in $\mathcal{N}_{\sigma,q} \cap G \cdot e$ are exactly the irreducible components of $\mathcal{N}_{\sigma,q} \cap G \cdot e$. Thus, the closure of each such G_σ -orbit is an irreducible component of $\mathcal{N}_{\sigma,q} \cap \overline{G \cdot e}$. The main result in this section ties these considerations together and, in tandem with (2.3), reduces the computation of the G_σ -orbits in $G \cdot e$ to knowing the dense orbit in the prehomogeneous vector space $(P, \mathfrak{p}^2, \text{Ad})$. We note that for each G there are only finitely many of the latter to consider.

PROPOSITION 4.1. (1) *The map $w \mapsto \mathcal{O}_w$ described above is a bijection from*

$$\{w \in W_\sigma^1 \backslash W_\sigma / (W_P)_\sigma : \mathcal{N}_{\sigma,q} \cap w \cdot \mathfrak{p}_0^2 \neq \emptyset\}$$

to the set of G_σ -orbits in $\mathcal{N}_{\sigma,q} \cap G \cdot e$. The inverse of this bijection sends a G_σ -orbit $\mathcal{O} \subseteq G \cdot e$ to the $w \in W_\sigma^1 \backslash W_\sigma / (W_P)_\sigma$ such that E_w

is the unique component of \tilde{E}_{σ_q} meeting a $\tilde{\pi}$ -fiber over some point in \mathcal{O} .

(2) The map $\pi : E_w \rightarrow \overline{\mathcal{O}_w}$ is a desingularization of $\overline{\mathcal{O}_w}$.

(3) If $\mathcal{N}_{\sigma,q} \cap w \cdot \mathfrak{p}_0^2$ is nonempty, then $\mathcal{O}_w = G_\sigma \cdot (\mathcal{N}_{\sigma,q} \cap w \cdot \mathfrak{p}_0^2) = \overline{\mathcal{O}_w} \cap G \cdot e$.

Proof. Since $\tilde{\pi}$ is bijective over $G \cdot e$, it is clear that any G_σ -orbit in $\mathcal{N}_{\sigma,q} \cap G \cdot e$ can meet $\pi(E_w)$ for at most one $w \in W_\sigma^1 \setminus W_\sigma / (W_P)_\sigma$. Hence $w \mapsto \mathcal{O}_w$ is injective.

Take $x \in \mathcal{N}_{\sigma,q} \cap G \cdot e$, and look at the fiber $\tilde{\pi}^{-1}(x) = \{(gP, x)\}$, where $x \in g \cdot \mathfrak{p}^2$. We have $qx = d\sigma(x) \in d\sigma(g \cdot \mathfrak{p}^2) = \sigma(g) \cdot \mathfrak{p}^2$, so $x \in \sigma(g) \cdot \mathfrak{p}^2$. But then $(\sigma(g)P, x) \in \tilde{\pi}^{-1}(x)$, so $gP \in (G/P)_\sigma$. This shows that $\mathcal{N}_{\sigma,q} \cap G \cdot e$ is contained in the union of the $\pi(E_w)$'s. Now consider a G_σ -orbit $\mathcal{O}_0 \subseteq \mathcal{N}_{\sigma,q} \cap G \cdot e$, and suppose \mathcal{O}_0 meets $\pi(E_w)$. Then $\mathcal{O}_0 \subseteq \pi(E_w)$ so $\overline{\mathcal{O}_0} \subseteq \pi(E_w)$ since the latter is closed. Recall however, that $\overline{\mathcal{O}_0}$ is an irreducible component of $\mathcal{N}_{\sigma,q} \cap \overline{G \cdot e}$, so we must have $\overline{\mathcal{O}_0} = \pi(E_w)$, since the latter is also irreducible.

Assertion (2) follows from the birationality of $\tilde{\pi}$, as we have argued before.

Let $x \in \overline{\mathcal{O}_w} \cap Ge = G_\sigma q_w \cap Ge$. Then there exist $m \in G_\sigma, g \in G$ and $v \in \mathfrak{p}^2$ such that $x = mw \cdot v = g \cdot e$, so $v = (mw)^{-1}g \cdot e \in \mathfrak{p}^2 \cap G \cdot e = \mathfrak{p}_0^2$. Hence $x \in \mathcal{N}_{\sigma,q} \cap mw \cdot \mathfrak{p}_0^2$. This proves the second equality in (3), the other direction there being trivial.

We now know $\mathcal{O}_w \subseteq G_\sigma \cdot (\mathcal{N}_{\sigma,q} \cap w \cdot \mathfrak{p}_0^2) = \overline{\mathcal{O}_w} \cap G \cdot e$. Moreover, $\mathcal{N}_{\sigma,q} \cap w \cdot \mathfrak{p}_0^2$, being open in the linear space $\mathcal{N}_{\sigma,q} \cap w \cdot \mathfrak{p}^2$, is irreducible. It follows that $G_\sigma \cdot (\mathcal{N}_{\sigma,q} \cap w \cdot \mathfrak{p}_0^2)$ is an irreducible subset of $\mathcal{N}_{\sigma,q} \cap G \cdot e$ containing the irreducible component \mathcal{O}_w of $\mathcal{N}_{\sigma,q} \cap G \cdot e$. Hence $\mathcal{O}_w = G_\sigma \cdot (\mathcal{N}_{\sigma,q} \cap w \cdot \mathfrak{p}_0^2)$. □

COROLLARY 4.2. *Let $\tilde{\mathcal{O}} \subset \mathfrak{g}$ be a nilpotent G -orbit. Then $\tilde{\mathcal{O}} \cap \mathcal{N}_{\sigma,q}$ is a union of at most $|W_\sigma^1 \setminus W_\sigma / (W_P)_\sigma|$ orbits under G_σ .*

COROLLARY 4.3. *Assume σ is induced by a symmetry of the Dynkin diagram of G . Let $\tilde{\mathcal{O}} \subset \mathfrak{g}$ be a nilpotent G -orbit. Then $\tilde{\mathcal{O}}$ meets $\mathcal{N}_{\sigma,q}$ in at most one G_σ -orbit.*

Proof. In this situation, $W_\sigma^1 = W_\sigma$ as remarked in (2.6), so the result is a special case of (4.3). □

When $q = 1$, we are counting the number of nilpotent G_σ -orbits in \mathfrak{g}_σ which are contained in a single G -orbit. It is well-known that

nilpotent orbits in $\mathfrak{so}(2n+1)$ and $\mathfrak{sp}(n)$ are determined by elementary divisors. The above results say this is due to the connectedness of the varieties $(G/P)_\sigma$, which is in turn deduced from the equality $W_\sigma^1 = W_\sigma$. Likewise, every \mathfrak{e}_6 nilpotent orbit meets \mathfrak{f}_4 in at most one F_4 -orbit, and similarly for $G_2 \subset Spin(8)$. In the case $G = SL(2n)$, $G_\sigma = SO(2n)$, one checks that $|Y(\sigma)| = 2$, so (4.2) reduces to the well-known result that at most two nilpotent orbits in $\mathfrak{so}(2n)$ have the same elementary divisors, and these orbits are conjugate in $O(2n)$.

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Existence of shortest directed networks in \mathbb{R}^2	201
MANUEL ALFARO GARCIA	
Hecke characters of singular Drinfel'd modules	215
SUNGHAN BAE	
Factorization method for a bimeromorphic morphism	231
JOSE PEREZ BLANCO	
L^p estimates for operators associated to flat curves without the Fourier transform	243
ANTHONY CARBERY, JAMES THOMAS VANCE, JR., STEPHEN WAINGER, DAVID K. WATSON and JAMES WRIGHT	
S -integer points on elliptic curves	263
ROBERT HOWARD GROSS and JOSEPH SILVERMAN	
On metrics defined by modules	289
JAMES ALLISTER JENKINS	
Conditional Wiener integrals. II	293
CHULL PARK and DAVID LEE SKOUG	
On a Plancherel formula for certain discrete, finitely generated, torsion-free nilpotent groups	313
CAROLYN PFEFFER JOHNSTON	
Desingularizations of some unstable orbit closures	327
MARK STEPHEN REEDER	
Determining multiplicities of half-integral weight newforms	345
THOMAS RICHARD SHEMANSKE and LYNNE WALLING	
Generation of integral orthogonal groups over dyadic local fields	385
FEI XU	



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