hexagon:2611.00154v2

SHEIL-SMALL'S (1974) COVERING PROBLEM HAS A POSITIVE ANSWER

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Abstract. Sheil-Small asked whether every non-constant self-inversive polynomial maps the unit disc onto a domain containing an open disc whose radius is the largest modulus of its coefficients (Hayman–Lingham, Problem 4.24). The answer is yes. More generally, every non-constant polynomial whose coefficients have the same moduli in reverse order maps the unit disc onto a domain containing an open disc of this radius. This class contains the self-inversive polynomials and the polynomials whose zeros, with multiplicity, are symmetric under taking reciprocals (the problem's printed definition). The radius cannot be increased. When all zeros lie on the unit circle, the largest disc in the image has radius half the maximum modulus, so the question is equivalent to the known bound: every coefficient has modulus at most half this maximum (O'Hara–Rodriguez, Saff–Sheil-Small, Kristiansen). The new case, zeros off the unit circle, is reduced to the circle case with the Schur–Cohn Hermitian form.[1]

1. Introduction

Let $\mathbb{D} = \{z \in \mathbb{C} : |z| < 1\}$ be the open unit disc, and write $D(c, r) = \{w \in \mathbb{C} : |w - c| < r\}$ for the open disc with centre c and radius $r > 0$. For a polynomial $P(z) = \sum_{k=0}^{n} a_k z^k$ of degree $n \geq 1$ we put

$$A(P) = \max_{0 \leq k \leq n} |a_k|, \qquad M(P) = \max_{|z|=1} |P(z)|, \qquad P^*(z) = z^n \, \overline{P(1/\bar{z})} = \sum_{k=0}^{n} \overline{a_{n-k}} \, z^k.$$

When P is fixed we write $A = A(P)$ and $M = M(P)$. The polynomial P is called *self-inversive* if $P^* = \lambda P$ for some constant λ with $|\lambda| = 1$. When $P(0) \neq 0$, this says exactly that the zeros of P are symmetric with respect to the unit circle: together with each zero ζ, the point $1/\bar{\zeta}$ is a zero of the same multiplicity (Lemma 2.1 below). This is the definition used by Saff and Sheil-Small [13, p. 21]. Sheil-Small's book [15, p. 228] requires $\lambda = 1$; every self-inversive polynomial satisfies this after multiplication by a suitable constant of modulus 1. T. Sheil-Small posed the following problem in the problem list of the 1973 Canterbury symposium on complex analysis, published in 1974 [5]; it is Problem 4.24 in Hayman and Lingham's problem book [6] (see its Tables 1 and 2).

> **Problem** (Sheil-Small). Let $P(z) = \sum_0^n a_k z^k$ be a self-inversive polynomial, i.e. if ζ is a zero of $P(\zeta)$ with multiplicity m, then $1/\zeta$ is also a zero with multiplicity m. Is it true that $w = P(z)$ maps $\mathbb{D}$ onto a domain containing a disc of radius $A = \max_{0 \leq k \leq n} |a_k|$?

The update in [6] reads: "No progress on this problem has been reported to us." We answer the question in the affirmative. The table and Figure 1 compare our results with what was known.

First version: November 6, 2026. This version: November 17, 2026.

2020 *Mathematics Subject Classification.* Primary 30C10; Secondary 30C15, 42A05.

Key words and phrases. self-inversive polynomial, covering, Schur–Cohn form, de Bruijn's theorem.

Expanded version, with further results [3]: https://hexagonmath.org/2611.00519

[1] Additionally, Theorem 4.1 is proved in Lean 4 with one published result, the coefficient bound of Theorem 3.4, taken as an axiom, and is checked with `lake comparator`:
github.com/david44hello/paper_sheil-small-1974-covering/tree/v3.20/lean

Best result before this paper	**New result**
Open: Problem 4.24 of [6], with no progress reported.	Every non-constant P with $\lvert a_k\rvert = \lvert a_{n-k}\rvert$ for all k (in particular every self-inversive P) maps $\mathbb{D}$ onto a domain containing an open disc of radius A (Theorem 4.1).
The disc of radius $M/2$ follows from de Bruijn's theorem (1947; see Lemma 3.2), applied at a point ζ of maximum modulus, where $\zeta P'(\zeta) = \frac{n}{2}P(\zeta)$ (an identity implicit in Saff and Sheil-Small, 1974). The inequality $M \geq 2A$ (asked by Hayman, 1967) was proved by O'Hara–Rodriguez and Saff–Sheil-Small (1974) except for the middle coefficient, and in full by Kristiansen (1979; a gap in one lemma was closed in the 1980 correction).	Assembled here (Theorem 3.1): if all zeros of P lie on the unit circle, the largest disc in $P(\mathbb{D})$ has radius exactly $M/2$, so here the question is equivalent to $M \geq 2A$.

- *Theorem 4.1 (the covering theorem).* Let $n \geq 1$, and let $P(z) = \sum_{k=0}^{n} a_k z^k$ be a polynomial of degree at most n, not constant, with $\lvert a_k\rvert = \lvert a_{n-k}\rvert$ for $0 \leq k \leq n$. Then $P(\mathbb{D})$ contains an open disc of radius $A = \max_k \lvert a_k\rvert$. This answers Sheil-Small's question [6, Problem 4.24], under either reading of the definition of self-inversive (the quotation has $1/\zeta$, our definition $1/\bar{\zeta}$; see below), and the radius A cannot be increased.
- *Theorem 3.1 (all zeros on the unit circle).* If P has degree $n \geq 1$ and all its zeros on the unit circle, and $\lvert P(\zeta)\rvert = M(P)$ with $\lvert\zeta\rvert = 1$, then $P(\mathbb{D})$ contains $D\big(P(\zeta)/2, M(P)/2\big)$ and no open disc of larger radius.

We make two remarks on Theorem 4.1. First, the problem as printed in [6] pairs a zero ζ with $1/\zeta$, not with $1/\bar{\zeta}$. Read literally, it concerns the polynomials with $z^n P(1/z) = \pm P(z)$, that is, $a_{n-k} = \pm a_k$. With complex coefficients this is a different class (for example $1 + 3iz + z^2$ is of this kind but is not self-inversive). Both classes satisfy $\lvert a_k\rvert = \lvert a_{n-k}\rvert$ (Lemma 2.1), so Theorem 4.1 answers the question under either reading. Second, the radius A cannot be increased, and the disc must be taken open: for $P(z) = 1 + z^n$ we have $A = 1$ and $P(\mathbb{D}) = D(1, 1)$. Section 5 and Figure 2 give examples in which A is large compared with $\lvert a_0\rvert$ and the radius A is still best possible.

Hayman asked in 1967 [4, p. 24] whether every polynomial P with all its zeros on the unit circle satisfies $M(P) \geq 2A(P)$; there the inequality is misprinted as $M \leq 2A$ [6, Update 4.2]. O'Hara and Rodriguez [11, Theorem 3] and, independently, Saff and Sheil-Small [13, Theorem 3] proved $\lvert a_k\rvert \leq M/2$ for every k except the middle index $k = n/2$ (n even). Kristiansen [7, 8] proved the middle case; see [6, Update 4.2], and [12] for an account of his proof.

The disc of radius $M/2$ in Theorem 3.1 comes from a covering theorem of de Bruijn [2] (Lemma 3.2 is the form we use), applied at a point ζ of maximum modulus, where $\zeta P'(\zeta) = \frac{n}{2}P(\zeta)$. Each ingredient appears in one of the two 1974 proofs that $\max_{\lvert z\rvert=1} \lvert P'\rvert = \frac{n}{2}M(P)$ for self-inversive P: Saff and Sheil-Small [13, Theorem 7] work at a point of maximum modulus, and O'Hara and Rodriguez [11, Theorem 1] apply de Bruijn's theorem at a boundary point. The upper bound in Theorem 3.1, that no open disc of radius larger than $M/2$ lies in $P(\mathbb{D})$, is elementary. Thus the case of Sheil-Small's question in which all zeros lie on the unit circle can be assembled from results in print since 1980. By Theorem 3.1, a positive answer for self-inversive polynomials also implies the inequality $M \geq 2A$ of O'Hara–Rodriguez, Saff–Sheil-Small and Kristiansen for polynomials with all zeros on the unit circle (see Remark 4.2). The new part of this paper is the case in which P has zeros off the unit circle. For self-inversive P the disc of radius $M/2$ still exists (Proposition 3.3), but $M/2$ may be smaller than A: for $1 + 4z + z^2$ we have $M/2 = 3$ and $A = 4$ (Figure 2, right). We therefore reduce to the circle case by another route, which we now sketch.

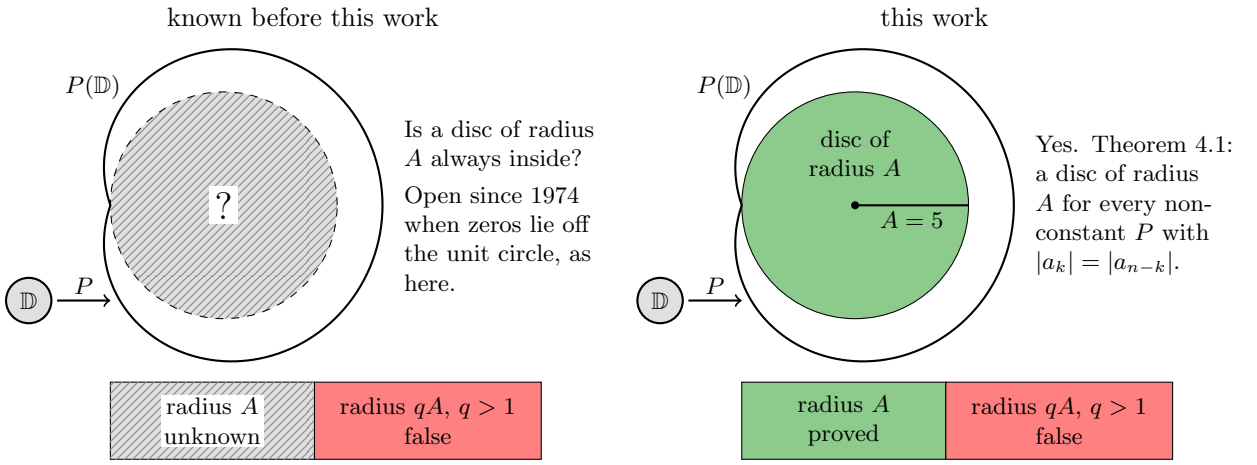


FIGURE 1. Green: known to hold; grey: unknown; red: known to fail. The bar in each panel asks whether every non-constant polynomial with $|a_k| = |a_{n-k}|$ maps $\mathbb{D}$ onto a domain containing an open disc of radius A (left cell), or of radius qA for a fixed $q > 1$ (right cell; false, since $1 + z^n$ maps $\mathbb{D}$ onto $D(1, 1)$ and has $A = 1$). Above the bars, the image of the unit disc $\mathbb{D}$ under the self-inversive polynomial $P(z) = 1 + z + 5z^2 + z^3 + z^4$, drawn to scale. Here $A = 5$, and the zeros of P lie off the unit circle. The class of Theorem 4.1 contains the self-inversive polynomials and the polynomials with $a_{n-k} = \pm a_k$ (the literal reading of Problem 4.24), and the polynomials with all zeros on the unit circle are self-inversive (Lemma 2.1). Left, known before this work: the question was listed as open, whichever reading is meant; when all zeros lie on the unit circle, a disc of radius A follows from results in print: the inequality $M \geq 2A$ (1974, 1979) with de Bruijn's theorem. Right, this work: Theorem 4.1 gives a disc of radius A for every non-constant member of the class, and A is the best radius that holds for all of them (Section 5); Theorem 3.1 gives the exact largest radius $M/2$ when all zeros lie on the unit circle.

The idea of the proof. Suppose that w is a value omitted by P on $\mathbb{D}$. Then $H = P - w$ has no zero in $\mathbb{D}$, and two classical facts about such a polynomial do most of the work. First, on the unit circle $|zH'(z)| \leq |nH(z) - zH'(z)|$. Second, the Hermitian form of Schur and Cohn, given by the matrix (K_{ij}), is positive semidefinite, and its entries are explicit in the coefficients of H (Lemma 2.2). In the proof of Theorem 3.1, the first fact, applied at a point ζ where $|P|$ is largest, places every omitted value at distance at least $M/2$ from $P(\zeta)/2$. For Theorem 4.1, let P have degree at most n with $|a_k| = |a_{n-k}|$ for all k. If $a_0 = 0$, then $P(0) = 0$, so every omitted value w is non-zero, and a 2×2 minor of (K_{ij}) gives $|w| \geq A$; hence $D(0, A) \subset P(\mathbb{D})$. If $a_0 \neq 0$, we normalize so that $a_0 = a_n = 1$. Then the diagonal entries K_{jj} all equal $|1 - w|^2 - 1 \geq 0$, so $|1 - w| \geq 1$, which gives $D(1, 1) \subset P(\mathbb{D})$ and settles the case $A = 1$. When $A > 1$, let j be an index with $|a_j| = A$ and put $E = a_{n-j}/\overline{a_j}$, so that $|E| = 1$ and E does not depend on w; the 2×2 minor on the indices 0 and j gives $|w - (1 + E)| \geq A$ unless $w = 1 - E$. Consequently every value in $D(1 + E, A)$ is taken, except possibly the single value $w_* = 1 - E$ (Figure 3). If w_* is omitted, then the zeros of $P - w_*$ have modulus at least 1 and their product has modulus 1, so all lie on the unit circle; and $P - w_*$ has the same A. Theorem 3.1, together with the inequality $M \geq 2A$ (Theorem 3.4), then applies to it.

Section 2 relates the two readings to the condition $|a_k| = |a_{n-k}|$ and collects the facts about omitted values. Section 3 proves Theorem 3.1, Section 4 proves Theorem 4.1, and Section 5 discusses sharpness. Further results appear in the expanded version [3].

2. Self-inversive polynomials and omitted values

Throughout, $n \geq 1$ is fixed, and for a polynomial $H(z) = \sum_{k=0}^{n} h_k z^k$ of degree *at most* n we write $H^*(z) = z^n \overline{H(1/\bar{z})} = \sum_{k=0}^{n} \overline{h_{n-k}}\, z^k$ (the coefficient h_n may vanish). Then $(H^*)^* = H$, and $|H^*(z)| = |H(z)|$ when $|z| = 1$. We first record how the two readings of "self-inversive" relate to the condition $|a_k| = |a_{n-k}|$.

Lemma 2.1. *Let $P(z) = \sum_{k=0}^{n} a_k z^k$ be a polynomial of degree n with $P(0) \neq 0$.*

(a) *The zeros of P are symmetric under $\zeta \mapsto 1/\bar{\zeta}$, with multiplicities, if and only if $P^* = \lambda P$ for some $|\lambda| = 1$. In that case $\overline{a_{n-k}} = \lambda a_k$ for every k.*

(b) *The zeros of P are symmetric under $\zeta \mapsto 1/\zeta$, with multiplicities, if and only if there is $\varepsilon \in \{1, -1\}$ such that $a_{n-k} = \varepsilon a_k$ for every k.*

In both cases $|a_k| = |a_{n-k}|$ for every k. Every polynomial of degree $n \geq 1$ with all its zeros on the unit circle is self-inversive.

Proof. (a) The zeros of P^* are the points $1/\bar{\zeta}$, where ζ runs through the zeros of P, with the same multiplicities, and P^* has degree n because its leading coefficient is $\overline{a_0} \neq 0$. If the zeros are symmetric, P and P^* have the same zeros and the same degree, so $P^* = \lambda P$ for a constant $\lambda \neq 0$. Since $P^{**} = P$, we get $P = \bar{\lambda} P^* = |\lambda|^2 P$, so $|\lambda| = 1$. The converse is clear, and comparing coefficients in $P^* = \lambda P$ gives $\overline{a_{n-k}} = \lambda a_k$. (b) The same argument with $\widetilde{P}(z) = z^n P(1/z) = \sum_k a_{n-k} z^k$ in place of P^* gives $\widetilde{P} = \varepsilon P$, and applying the map $P \mapsto \widetilde{P}$ twice gives $\varepsilon^2 = 1$. If all zeros $\zeta_1, \ldots, \zeta_n$ lie on the unit circle, then $1/\bar{\zeta_l} = \zeta_l$ and $P(0) \neq 0$, so (a) applies. □

The next lemma is the source of all our inequalities. Part (a) is a classical inequality (on $|z| = 1$ it says $|H'(z)| \leq |(H^*)'(z)|$, the key step in the usual proof of the Erdős–Lax inequality [9]), and part (b), the positivity of the Schur–Cohn Hermitian form, is the easy half of the Schur–Cohn criterion for the location of zeros [14, 1]; see also [10]. We include the short proofs.

Lemma 2.2. *Let $H(z) = \sum_{k=0}^{n} h_k z^k$ be a polynomial of degree at most n with no zero in $\mathbb{D}$. Then there are numbers $\beta_1, \ldots, \beta_n$ with $|\beta_l| \leq 1$ such that*

$$H(z) = h_0 \prod_{l=1}^{n} (1 - \bar{\beta}_l z), \qquad H^*(z) = \overline{h_0} \prod_{l=1}^{n} (z - \beta_l). \tag{1}$$

Consequently:

(a) $|zH'(z)| \leq |nH(z) - zH'(z)|$ *for every z with $|z| = 1$;*

(b) *the function*

$$K(z, \eta) = \frac{H(z)\overline{H(\eta)} - H^*(z)\overline{H^*(\eta)}}{1 - z\bar{\eta}} = \sum_{i,j=0}^{n-1} K_{ij}\, z^i\, \bar{\eta}^j$$

is a polynomial in z and $\bar{\eta}$, and its coefficient matrix $(K_{ij})_{0 \leq i,j \leq n-1}$ is positive semidefinite;

(c) *for $0 \leq j \leq n-1$,*

$$K_{jj} = \sum_{r=0}^{j} \bigl(|h_r|^2 - |h_{n-r}|^2\bigr), \qquad K_{0j} = h_0 \overline{h_j} - \overline{h_n}\, h_{n-j}. \tag{2}$$

Proof. Since $0 \in \mathbb{D}$, $h_0 = H(0) \neq 0$. Let $m \leq n$ be the degree of H and $z_1, \ldots, z_m$ its zeros, repeated according to multiplicity. By hypothesis $|z_l| \geq 1$. Put $\beta_l = 1/\bar{z}_l$ for $l \leq m$ and $\beta_l = 0$ for $m < l \leq n$. Then $H(z) = h_m \prod_{l \leq m} (z - z_l) = h_0 \prod_{l \leq m} (1 - z/z_l)$, which is the first formula in (1)

because $1/z_l = \bar\beta_l$. The second follows from the definition of H^*: $H^*(z) = z^n\,\overline{h_0}\prod_{l=1}^n(1-\beta_l/z) = \overline{h_0}\prod_{l=1}^n(z-\beta_l)$.

(a) Let $|z|=1$ with $H(z)\neq 0$. By (1), $zH'(z)/H(z) = \sum_l\bigl(1-1/(1-\tau_l)\bigr)$ with $\tau_l = \bar\beta_l z$, $|\tau_l|\le 1$. For $|\tau|\le 1$, $\tau\neq 1$, we have $\operatorname{Re}\frac{1}{1-\tau} = \frac{1-\operatorname{Re}\tau}{|1-\tau|^2} \ge \frac12$, because $2(1-\operatorname{Re}\tau) - |1-\tau|^2 = 1-|\tau|^2 \ge 0$. Hence $\operatorname{Re}\bigl(zH'(z)/H(z)\bigr) \le n/2$, and

$$|nH(z) - zH'(z)|^2 - |zH'(z)|^2 = n|H(z)|^2\Bigl(n - 2\operatorname{Re}\frac{zH'(z)}{H(z)}\Bigr) \ge 0.$$

At a zero of H on the circle the inequality in (a) is an equality.

(b) For $|\beta|\le 1$ and all $z,\eta\in\mathbb{C}$ one checks by multiplying out that

$$(1-\bar\beta z)(1-\beta\bar\eta) - (z-\beta)(\bar\eta-\bar\beta) = (1-|\beta|^2)(1-z\bar\eta). \tag{3}$$

Put $u_l = (1-\bar\beta_l z)(1-\beta_l\bar\eta)$ and $v_l = (z-\beta_l)(\bar\eta-\bar\beta_l)$. Then $H(z)\overline{H(\eta)} = |h_0|^2\prod_l u_l$ and $H^*(z)\overline{H^*(\eta)} = |h_0|^2\prod_l v_l$, and the telescoping identity $\prod_l u_l - \prod_l v_l = \sum_l\bigl(\prod_{r<l}v_r\bigr)(u_l-v_l)\bigl(\prod_{r>l}u_r\bigr)$ together with (3) gives

$$K(z,\eta) = |h_0|^2\sum_{l=1}^{n}(1-|\beta_l|^2)\,f_l(z)\,\overline{f_l(\eta)}, \qquad f_l(z) = \prod_{r<l}(z-\beta_r)\prod_{r>l}(1-\bar\beta_r z).$$

Each f_l is a polynomial of degree at most $n-1$. If $c_l\in\mathbb{C}^n$ is its vector of coefficients, then $(K_{ij}) = |h_0|^2\sum_l(1-|\beta_l|^2)\,c_l\,c_l^*$ (where c_l^* is the conjugate transpose), a sum of positive semidefinite matrices.

(c) Compare the coefficients of $z^i\bar\eta^j$ on both sides of $(1-z\bar\eta)K(z,\eta) = H(z)\overline{H(\eta)} - H^*(z)\overline{H^*(\eta)}$. Since the k-th coefficient of H^* is $\overline{h_{n-k}}$, this gives $K_{ij} - K_{i-1,j-1} = h_i\overline{h_j} - \overline{h_{n-i}}\,h_{n-j}$ (with $K_{ij}=0$ when an index is negative). Summing along the diagonal gives the formula for K_{jj}, and the case $i=0$ gives K_{0j}. □

3. Polynomials with all zeros on the unit circle

In this section we prove the following theorem.

Theorem 3.1. *Let P be a polynomial of degree $n\ge 1$ with all its zeros on the unit circle, and let $|\zeta|=1$ with $|P(\zeta)| = M(P)$. Then $P(\mathbb{D})$ contains the disc $D\bigl(P(\zeta)/2,\,M(P)/2\bigr)$, and it contains no open disc of larger radius. Consequently $P(\mathbb{D})$ contains an open disc of radius $A(P)$ if and only if $M(P)\ge 2A(P)$.*

The first step is a covering lemma: a single boundary point z_0 forces a whole disc into the image. For polynomials of degree exactly n it follows from a theorem of de Bruijn [2] (quoted in [11, p. 332]) by letting a point of $\mathbb{D}$ tend to z_0. We give a short proof based on Lemma 2.2(a); it also covers polynomials of degree less than n.

Lemma 3.2. *Let f be a polynomial of degree at most n, and let $|z_0|=1$ with $f'(z_0)\neq 0$. Then $f(\mathbb{D})$ contains the open disc with centre $f(z_0) - z_0f'(z_0)/n$ and radius $|f'(z_0)|/n$.*

Proof. Let $w\notin f(\mathbb{D})$. Then $H = f-w$ has degree at most n and no zero in $\mathbb{D}$, and $H' = f'$. Lemma 2.2(a) at z_0 gives $|f'(z_0)| \le \bigl|n\bigl(f(z_0)-w\bigr) - z_0f'(z_0)\bigr|$, that is, $\bigl|w - \bigl(f(z_0) - z_0f'(z_0)/n\bigr)\bigr| \ge |f'(z_0)|/n$. Therefore no omitted value lies in the disc. □

Proposition 3.3. *Let F be a polynomial of degree at most n, not constant, with $F^* = \lambda F$ for some $|\lambda|=1$. Let $M = M(F)$ and let $|\zeta|=1$ with $|F(\zeta)| = M$. Then $\zeta F'(\zeta) = \frac{n}{2}F(\zeta)$, and $D\bigl(F(\zeta)/2,\,M/2\bigr)\subset F(\mathbb{D})$.*

Proof. For real t put $g(t) = |F(e^{it})|^2$. Since $1/\bar{z} = z$ on the unit circle, $F^* = \lambda F$ gives $\overline{F(e^{it})} = \lambda e^{-int} F(e^{it})$, so $g(t) = \lambda e^{-int} F(e^{it})^2$. Near t_0 with $e^{it_0} = \zeta$ we have $F(e^{it}) \neq 0$ (as $M > 0$), and logarithmic differentiation gives

$$\frac{g'(t)}{g(t)} = -in + 2i\,\frac{zF'(z)}{F(z)}\Big|_{z=e^{it}}.$$

The left side is real, and it vanishes at t_0, where g is largest. Hence $\zeta F'(\zeta) = \frac{n}{2} F(\zeta)$. In particular $F'(\zeta) \neq 0$, and Lemma 3.2 with $z_0 = \zeta$ gives the disc with centre $F(\zeta) - \frac{1}{2}F(\zeta) = F(\zeta)/2$ and radius $\frac{1}{n} \cdot \frac{n}{2}|F(\zeta)| = M/2$. □

Proof of Theorem 3.1. Write $M = M(P)$. By Lemma 2.1, P is self-inversive, so Proposition 3.3 gives $D(P(\zeta)/2, M/2) \subset P(\mathbb{D})$. Now let $D(c, r) \subset P(\mathbb{D})$; we show that $r \leq M/2$. Since P has no zero in $\mathbb{D}$, the point 0 is not in $D(c, r)$, so $|c| \geq r > 0$. By the maximum principle $|P| < M$ in $\mathbb{D}$, so $D(c, r) \subset D(0, M)$. Since $D(c, r)$ contains the points $c + tc/|c|$ with $0 \leq t < r$, we get $|c| + r \leq M$. Together with $|c| \geq r$, this gives $2r \leq |c| + r \leq M$. The largest radius is therefore exactly $M/2$, and a disc of radius A lies in $P(\mathbb{D})$ if and only if $A \leq M/2$ (Figure 2, left). □

To compare $A(P)$ with $M(P)$ we use the following theorem.

Theorem 3.4 ([7, 8, 11, 13])**.** *Let $P(z) = \sum_{k=0}^{n} a_k z^k$ have degree $n \geq 1$ and all its zeros on the unit circle. Then $|a_k| \leq M(P)/2$ for $0 \leq k \leq n$.*

For $k \neq n/2$ this is [11, Theorem 3] and [13, Theorem 3]. For $k = n/2$ (n even) it is due to Kristiansen [7, Section 2], who works with real trigonometric polynomials whose zeros are all real. To pass to his setting, put $m = n/2$. By Lemma 2.1, $P^* = \lambda P$ with $|\lambda| = 1$, so $Q(\theta) = e^{-im\theta} P(e^{i\theta})$ satisfies $\overline{Q} = \lambda Q$, and $T = cQ$ is real when $c^2 = \lambda$. Then T is a real trigonometric polynomial of exact degree m (its top coefficient is $c\,a_n \neq 0$) whose $2m$ zeros in a period are all real, $\max|T| = M(P)$, and the constant term of T is $c\,a_{n/2}$. So the case $k = n/2$ says that the constant term t_0 of such a T satisfies $|t_0| \leq \frac{1}{2}\max|T|$, where $t_0 = \frac{1}{2\pi}\int_0^{2\pi} T\,d\theta$: applied to T and to $-T$, this is the upper bound for t_0 in [13, Conjecture 4], which Kristiansen proved [7]. The proof of Lemma 2 of [7] was incomplete; the correction [8] completes it with an argument of T. Sheil-Small.

Corollary 3.5. *If P has degree $n \geq 1$ and all its zeros on the unit circle, then $P(\mathbb{D})$ contains an open disc of radius $A(P)$.*

Proof. By Theorem 3.4, $A(P) \leq M(P)/2$; now apply Theorem 3.1. □

4. The covering theorem

In this section we prove the main theorem, using Lemma 2.2 for the omitted values and Corollary 3.5 for the polynomials with all zeros on the unit circle.

Theorem 4.1. *Let $n \geq 1$, and let $P(z) = \sum_{k=0}^{n} a_k z^k$ be a polynomial of degree at most n that is not constant. Suppose that*

$$|a_k| = |a_{n-k}| \qquad (0 \leq k \leq n). \tag{4}$$

Then $P(\mathbb{D})$ contains an open disc of radius $A = \max_k |a_k|$.

Proof. Since P is not constant, $A > 0$. We distinguish two cases.

Case 1: $a_0 = 0$. Then $a_n = 0$ as well, so the maximum A is attained at an index j with $1 \leq j \leq n-1$ (in particular $n \geq 2$). Moreover $P(0) = 0$. Let $w \notin P(\mathbb{D})$; then $w \neq 0$. Apply Lemma 2.2 to $H = P - w$, of degree at most n, whose coefficients are $h_0 = -w$, $h_n = 0$ and $h_k = a_k$ for $0 < k < n$. In the sum (2) for K_{jj} the terms with $1 \leq r \leq j$ vanish by (4): for these r both r and $n - r$ lie between 1 and $n - 1$, so $h_r = a_r$ and $h_{n-r} = a_{n-r}$. Hence $K_{jj} = |h_0|^2 - |h_n|^2 = |w|^2$, and $K_{0j} = -w\,\overline{a_j}$. The 2×2 principal minor of the positive semidefinite matrix (K_{pq}) on the indices

0 and j gives $|K_{0j}|^2 \le K_{00}K_{jj}$, that is, $|w|^2A^2 \le |w|^4$. Hence $|w| \ge A$ for every omitted value w, and $D(0,A) \subset P(\mathbb{D})$.

Case 2: $a_0 \neq 0$. Then $a_n \neq 0$, so P has degree n. Choose α with $|\alpha| = 1$ and $\alpha^n = a_0/a_n$ (possible since $|a_0| = |a_n|$), and replace P by $P(\alpha z)/a_0$. This multiplies $P(\mathbb{D})$ by $1/a_0$, hence every radius by $1/|a_0|$; it multiplies A by the same factor and preserves (4). We may therefore assume $a_0 = a_n = 1$, and then $A \ge 1$.

Let $w \notin P(\mathbb{D})$ and apply Lemma 2.2 to $H = P - w$: now $h_0 = 1 - w$, $h_n = 1$ and $h_k = a_k$ for $0 < k < n$. As in Case 1, the terms with $1 \le r \le j$ in (2) cancel, so all diagonal entries are equal:

$$K_{jj} = |1 - w|^2 - 1 =: d \qquad (0 \le j \le n-1).$$

Positive semidefiniteness gives $d \ge 0$, that is, $|w - 1| \ge 1$. If $A = 1$, this shows that every value in $D(1,1)$ is taken, and we are done.

Suppose $A > 1$. Then A is attained at some j with $1 \le j \le n-1$. Put $E = a_{n-j}/\overline{a_j}$ and $u = w - 1$. By (4), $|E| = 1$. By (2), $K_{0j} = (1-w)\overline{a_j} - a_{n-j} = -\overline{a_j}\,(u + E)$, and the 2×2 minor on the indices 0 and j gives

$$A\,|u + E| \le d = |u|^2 - 1. \tag{5}$$

Since $|E| = 1$, we also have $|u|^2 - 1 = |u^2| - |E^2| \le |u^2 - E^2| = |u + E|\,|u - E|$, so (5) gives $A\,|u+E| \le |u+E|\,|u-E|$. If $u \neq -E$, dividing by $|u+E|$ gives $|u-E| \ge A$, that is, $|w-(1+E)| \ge A$. We have shown that every omitted value other than $w_* = 1-E$ lies outside $D(1+E, A)$ (Figure 3):

$$D(1 + E, A) \setminus \{w_*\} \subset P(\mathbb{D}). \tag{6}$$

If $w_* \in P(\mathbb{D})$, then (6) gives $D(1 + E, A) \subset P(\mathbb{D})$, and we are done. Suppose $w_* \notin P(\mathbb{D})$, and let $S = P - w_*$. Its constant term is E and its leading coefficient is 1. It has no zero in $\mathbb{D}$, so its n zeros have modulus at least 1, while their product has modulus $|E| = 1$. Hence all zeros of S lie on the unit circle. The coefficients of S are $E, a_1, \dots, a_{n-1}$ and 1, so $A(S) = A$. By Corollary 3.5, $S(\mathbb{D})$ contains an open disc of radius A, and so does $P(\mathbb{D}) = S(\mathbb{D}) + w_*$. □

Remark 4.2. Since $|w_* - (1 + E)| = 2$, the point $w_* = 1 - E$ lies in $D(1 + E, A)$ only when $A > 2$ (Figure 3, right), that is, only when $A > 2|a_0|$ before the normalization. Thus Theorem 3.4 is needed only when $A > 2|a_0|$ and w_* is omitted; otherwise (6) already gives $D(1 + E, A) \subset P(\mathbb{D})$. The threshold is the same as in [11, Section 2, Remark C], where the middle case of Theorem 3.4 is proved when $|a_{n/2}| \le 2|a_n|$. Moreover, if A is attained at some index $j \neq n/2$, then $A(S) = |a_j|$ with $j \neq n/2$, and [11, Theorem 3] or [13, Theorem 3] suffices. Thus the middle case of Theorem 3.4, due to Kristiansen, is used only when n is even, $|a_{n/2}|$ is strictly larger than every other $|a_k|$ and than $2|a_0|$, and w_* is omitted. Conversely, Theorem 4.1 implies the middle case: by Theorem 3.1, for polynomials with all zeros on the unit circle Theorem 4.1 is equivalent to Theorem 3.4.

5. Sharpness

We show that the radius A in Theorem 4.1 cannot be increased, and that this remains true when A is large compared with $|a_0|$.

Example 5.1. For $P(z) = 1 + z^n$ we have $A = 1$ and $P(\mathbb{D}) = D(1,1)$, which contains no open disc of radius larger than 1 and no closed disc of radius 1. Thus in Theorem 4.1 the radius cannot be increased, and "open" cannot be replaced by "closed".

The next example shows that the radius stays sharp when A is large compared with $|a_0|$.

Example 5.2. Let $a \ge 4$, $m \ge 1$, and $P(z) = 1 + az^m + z^{2m}$. With $z^m = e^{i\theta}$ we get $P = e^{i\theta}(a + 2\cos\theta)$, so

$$\operatorname{Re} P = a\cos\theta + 2\cos^2\theta \qquad (|z| = 1).$$

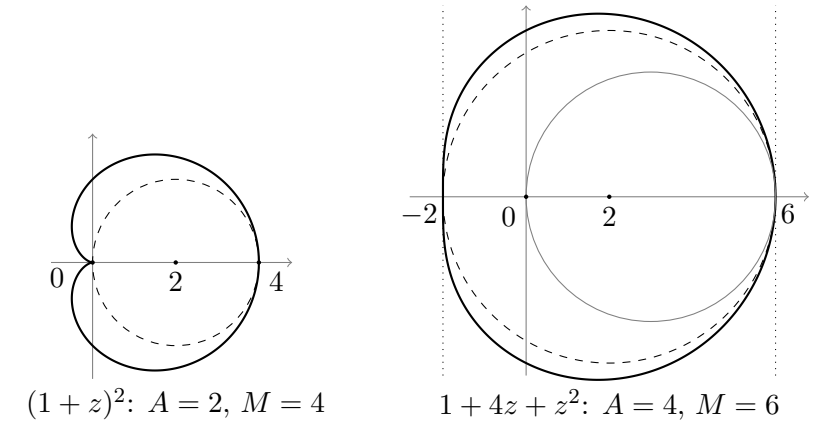


FIGURE 2. Two images of $\mathbb{D}$, in polar coordinates $w = \rho e^{i\psi}$. Left: the image under $(1+z)^2$ is bounded by the cardioid $\rho = 2 + 2\cos\psi$; all zeros lie on the unit circle, and the largest disc inside it is $D(2,2)$, of radius $M/2 = A$ (Theorem 3.1). Right: the image under $1+4z+z^2$ is bounded by the limaçon $\rho = 4 + 2\cos\psi$; it lies in the strip $-2 < \operatorname{Re} w < 6$ (dotted), and the dashed disc $D(2,4)$ of Theorem 4.1 has the largest possible radius $A = 4$ (Example 5.2); the grey disc is $D(3,3)$, of radius $M/2$.

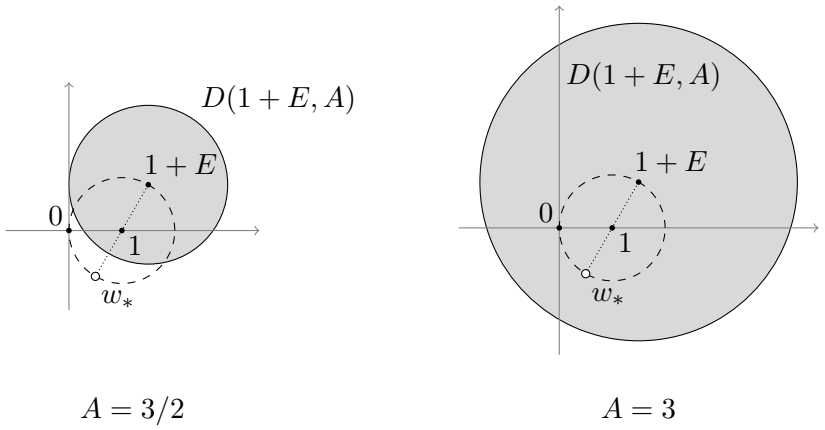


FIGURE 3. The discs in Case 2 of the proof of Theorem 4.1, after the normalization $a_0 = a_n = 1$, drawn for $E = e^{i\pi/3}$. The image $P(\mathbb{D})$ itself is not drawn. The dashed circle is $|w-1| = 1$, the boundary of $D(1,1)$. The grey disc is $D(1+E,A)$, with its centre $1+E$, and the open dot is the point $w_* = 1-E$, joined to $1+E$ by a dotted segment. The left panel has $A = 3/2$, the right panel $A = 3$. See the proof of Theorem 4.1 and Remark 4.2.

As a function of $x = \cos\theta \in [-1,1]$, the right-hand side has derivative $a + 4x \geq 0$, so it takes values in $[2-a, 2+a]$. By the maximum principle for the harmonic function $\operatorname{Re} P$, the set $P(\mathbb{D})$ lies in the strip $2-a < \operatorname{Re} w < 2+a$, of width $2a$. Every disc in $P(\mathbb{D})$ therefore has radius at most $a = A$. By Theorem 4.1 a disc of radius A does lie in $P(\mathbb{D})$: here $E = 1$, and $w_* = 0$ is taken because $P(z) = 0$ when z^m is the root of $t^2 + at + 1$ in $(-1,0)$ (the roots are negative with product 1), so the disc of the proof is $D(2,a)$ (Figure 2, right, for $a = 4$, $m = 1$).

Acknowledgments

This work was done overwhelmingly by AI models, steered by the author in a continuous critical dialogue, alternating between Anthropic's Claude and OpenAI's ChatGPT. The author takes full responsibility for the paper.

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