

## Shift Automorphisms in the Hénon Mapping

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**Abstract.** We investigate the global behavior of the quadratic diffeomorphism of the plane given by  $H(x, y) = (1 + y - Ax^2, Bx)$ . Numerical work by Hénon, Curry, and Feit indicate that, for certain values of the parameters, this mapping admits a “strange attractor”. Here we show that, for  $A$  small enough, all points in the plane eventually move to infinity under iteration of  $H$ . On the other hand, when  $A$  is large enough, the nonwandering set of  $H$  is topologically conjugate to the shift automorphism on two symbols.

Several numerical studies have recently appeared [3, 4, 7, 8] on the dynamics of the diffeomorphisms of the plane

$$H(X, Y) = (1 + Y - AX^2, BX) .$$

Interest in these maps [12, 14, 5] has been prompted by Hénon’s numerical evidence [8] for a “strange attractor” when  $A = 1.4$ ,  $B = 0.3$ . Feit [4] has shown, for  $A > 0$  and  $0 < B < 1$ , that the non-wandering set  $\Omega(H)$  is contained in a compact set, and that all points outside this set escape to infinity. Curry [3] has shown that, for Hénon’s values of the parameters, one of the fixed points has a topologically transverse homoclinic orbit, and hence that there is a horseshoe embedded in the dynamics of the map.

The present note is intended to clarify the behavior of the mapping  $H$  for parameter values far from those where “strange attractors” have been observed. Hénon and Feit have noted that for  $B = 0.3$  and  $A$  outside a certain interval (roughly  $[-0.12, 2.67]$ ) no attractors are observed; numerically, all points seem to escape to infinity. We exhibit, for any  $B \neq 0$ , a pair of  $A$  values,  $A_0 < 0 < A_2$ , such that the non-wandering set  $\Omega(H)$  is empty for  $A < A_0$ , but for  $A > A_2$ ,  $\Omega(H)$  is the zero-dimensional basic set obtained from Smale’s horseshoe construction [9, 11, 13]. We begin by rewriting the map in a more convenient form; then we establish Feit’s result (for all  $A, B \neq 0$ ) in a version more suited to our purposes, by

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constructing a filtration; and finally, for  $A > A_2$  we exhibit the elements of the horseshoe construction in our compact set.

Hénon notes that the map  $H$  represents one canonical form for quadratic maps with constant Jacobian determinant. We will find it convenient to consider the alternate canonical form for such maps

$$F(x, y) = (A + By - x^2, x).$$

It is easily verified that for  $A$  and  $B$  both nonzero, the linear change of coordinates

$$X = x/A \quad Y = By/A$$

gives a topological conjugacy between  $H$  and  $F$ , with the parameter values  $A$  and  $B$  unchanged. For Hénon's map  $H$ , the parameter value  $A = 0$  gives a linear map, while in our map  $A = 0$  has no special significance. In fact, our results are established without the restrictions  $A > 0, 0 < B < 1$  imposed by earlier papers; we assume only that  $B \neq 0$ . Thus our analysis includes the orientation-preserving cases  $B < 0$ , and the area-preserving cases  $B = \pm 1$ , which were considered by Hénon in an earlier numerical study [6]. Actually, the  $B$ -values with absolute value greater than one do not exhibit new behaviour, since the inverse map

$$F^{-1}(x, y) = (y, (x - A + y^2)/B)$$

with given parameter values  $A = a, B = b \neq 0$  is conjugate to the forward map  $F$  with  $A = a/b^2, B = 1/b$  by the linear change of variables

$$x \rightarrow -by \quad y \rightarrow -bx.$$

To state our result, we fix  $B$  and define three crucial  $A$ -values

$$A_0 = -(1 + |B|)^2/4$$

$$A_1 = 2(1 + |B|)^2$$

$$A_2 = (5 + 2\sqrt{5})(1 + |B|)^2/4$$

and, for any particular  $A$ -value, we define  $R = R(A)$  by

$$R = (1/2) \{1 + |B| + [(1 + |B|)^2 + 4A]^{1/2}\}.$$

With this notation, our results are summarized in the following theorem.

**Theorem.** i) For  $A < A_0, \Omega(F) = \emptyset$ .

ii) For  $A \geq A_0, \Omega(F)$  is contained in the square  $S = \{(x, y) \mid |x| \leq R, |y| \leq R\}$ .

iii) For  $A \geq A_1, A = \bigcap_{n \in \mathbb{Z}} F^n(S)$  is a topological horseshoe; for  $B \neq 0$ , there is a continuous semi-conjugacy of  $\Omega(F) \subset A$  onto the 2-shift.

iv) For  $A > A_2, A = \Omega(F)$  has a hyperbolic structure and is conjugate to the 2-shift.

The value  $A_0$  is, as Hénon remarked, precisely the  $A$ -value at which the first fixed point of  $F^2$  appears. Thus, statement i) above follows from the Brouwer translation theorem [1, 2]; however, we shall give a direct proof of this fact. On the other hand, the values we give for  $A_1$  and  $A_2$  are somewhat larger than the

experimental values given by Hénon and Feit (when  $B=0.3$ ,  $A_1=3.38$ ,  $A_2=4.00$ ). In fact, they are clearly not the lowest values that yield the desired conclusions, but they yield these conclusions relatively easily.

The proofs of statements i)–iii) rely on the following technical lemmas:

**Lemma 1.** a)  $R$  is real if and only if  $A \geq A_0$ . In this case,  $R$  is positive and equals the larger root of

$$R^2 - (|B| + 1)R - A = 0 .$$

b)  $A - |B|R > R$  if and only if  $A > A_1$  .

*Proof.* a) is trivial; it implies that  $A + |B|R = R^2 - R$  and the first inequality of b) is equivalent to  $R > 2(1 + |B|)$ . Substituting this into the definition of  $R$  and solving for  $A$  gives the second inequality of b).  $\square$

We will find it convenient to denote the image of the point  $(x_0, y_0)$  by  $(x_1, y_1) = F(x_0, y_0)$ , and use negative subscripts for pre-images.

**Lemma 2.** a) The image under  $F$  of the horizontal strip  $|y_0| \leq C$  is the region bounded by the two parabolas

$$A - |B|C - y_1^2 \leq x_1 \leq A + |B|C - y_1^2 .$$

The image under  $F$  of the vertical strip  $|x_0| \leq C$  is the horizontal strip  $|y_1| \leq C$ .

b) The inverse image of the vertical strip  $|x_0| \leq C$  is the region bounded by the two parabolas

$$-C - A - x_{-1}^2 \leq By_{-1} \leq C - A - x_{-1}^2 .$$

The inverse image of the horizontal strip  $|y_0| \leq C$  is the vertical strip  $|x_{-1}| \leq C$ .

*Proof.* These are straightforward calculations.  $\square$

In the following, we interpret  $\min(a, R)$  or  $\max(a, R)$  with  $R$  complex as equal to  $a$ .

**Lemma 3.** a) If  $x_0 \leq \min(-|y_0|, -R)$ , then  $x_1 \leq x_0$ , with equality only for  $x_0 = -R$ ,  $y_0 = \pm R$ .

b) If  $x_0 \geq -|y_0|$  and  $By_0 \geq \max(0, |B|R)$ , then  $By_{-1} \geq By_0$  and  $|y_{-1}| \geq |y_0|$ , with equality only for  $x_0 = -R$ ,  $y_0 = \pm R$ .

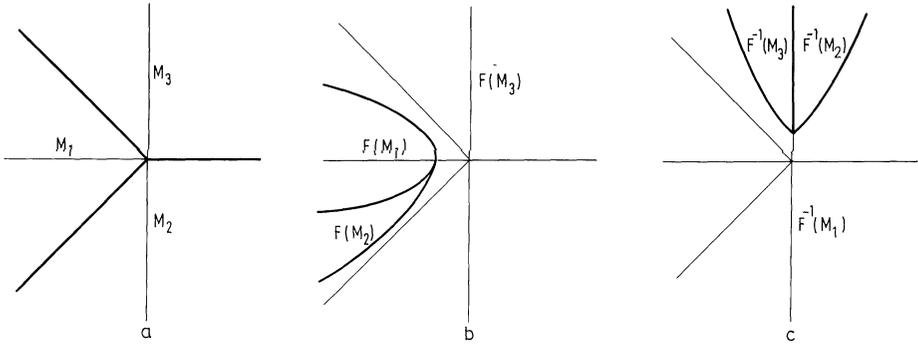
*Proof.* For a), by the definition of  $x_1$  and, in the last inequality below, our hypothesis on  $x_0$ ,

$$\begin{aligned} x_1 - x_0 &= A + By_0 - x_0^2 - x_0 \\ &\leq A + |B||y_0| - x_0^2 - x_0 \\ &\leq A - (|B| + 1)x_0 - x_0^2 . \end{aligned}$$

The last expression is zero for

$$x_0 = -(1 + |B|)/2 \pm [(1 + |B|)^2 + 4A]^{1/2}/2 .$$

If  $R$  is complex, so is  $x_0$ , and the expression above is negative for all  $x_0$ , whereas when  $R$  is real, the lesser root is  $x_0 = -R$ , so that the expression remains negative



**Fig. 1a-c.** Filtration for  $A < A_0$ . Situation shown is for  $B > 0$ ;  $B < 0$  is obtained by reflection about the  $x$ -axis. **a** Filtration. **b** Image under  $F$ . **c** Image under  $F^{-1}$

for  $x_0 < -R$ . On the other hand, when  $x_0 = -R$  but  $|y_0| < R$ , the last inequality above is strict, so that equality only holds for  $x_0 = -|y_0| = -R$ .

The proof of b) is similar. Consider

$$\begin{aligned}
 B(y_{-1} - y_0) &= y_0^2 + x_0 - A - By_0 \\
 &\geq y_0^2 - (1 + |B|)y_0 - A .
 \end{aligned}$$

The last expression is positive provided  $|y_0| > \max(0, R)$ ; if  $B$  is positive, this says  $y_{-1} > y_0 \geq 0$ , whereas for  $B$  negative, it says  $y_{-1} < y_0 \leq 0$ . The equality statements follow as before.  $\square$

Now, to prove statement i) of the theorem, we define a partition of the plane by

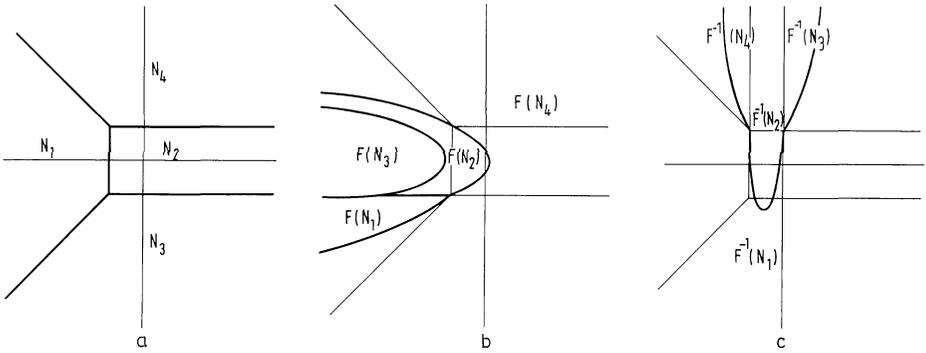
$$\begin{aligned}
 M_1 &= \{(x, y) \mid x \leq -|y|\} \\
 M_2 &= \{(x, y) \mid x \geq -|y| \text{ and } By \leq 0\} \\
 M_3 &= \{(x, y) \mid x \geq -|y| \text{ and } By \geq 0\}
 \end{aligned}$$

(see Fig. 1a).

**Proposition 1.** For  $A < A_0$ ,

- a)  $F(M_1 \cup M_2) \subset \text{interior } M_1$ .
- b)  $x$  is strictly decreasing along  $F$ -orbits in  $M_1$ .
- c)  $F^{-1}(M_2 \cup M_3) \subset \text{interior } M_3$ .
- d)  $|y|$  is strictly increasing along  $F^{-1}$ -orbits in  $M_3$ .

*Proof.* By Lemma 3a, if  $(x_0, y_0) \in M_1$ , then  $y_1 = x_0 > x_1$ . The inequality is strict because  $R$  is complex. Also, since  $x_0 \leq 0$ ,  $y_1 = -|y_1|$ . This shows  $F(M_1) \subset \text{interior } M_1$  and statement b). Moreover, by Lemma 2a, the  $x$ -axis maps to a parabola opening left with vertex at  $(A, 0)$ ; this lies to the left of the boundary of  $M_1$ . Furthermore, the image of the line  $By = -\varepsilon$  is a parabola to the left of the previous one, so that  $F(M_2)$  lies to the left of the boundary of  $M_1$  (see Fig. 1b).



**Fig. 2a-c.** Partition for  $A \geq A_0$ . Situation shown is for  $B > 0$ . **a** Partition. **b** Image under  $F$ . **c** Image under  $F^{-1}$

The proof of c) and d) is similar. If  $(x_0, y_0) \in M_3$ , then by Lemma 3b,

$$|y_{-1}| > |y_0| = |x_{-1}|$$

and

$$By_{-1} > By_0 \geq 0.$$

An analysis similar to the above, using Lemma 2b, completes the proof of c) (see Fig. 1c).  $\square$

Proposition 1 gives a filtration for  $F$  with Liapunov functions for the extreme sets  $M_1, M_3$ , and  $M_2 \cap F(M_2) = \emptyset$ , so that  $\Omega(F) = \emptyset$  for  $A < A_0$ . Statement ii) of the theorem is proven by an analogous construction, with the positive  $x$ -axis above expanded into another element of the filtration. Specifically, when  $R$  is real (i.e.,  $A \geq A_0$ ), define four sets by Fig. 2a

- $N_1 = \{(x, y) \mid x \leq \min(-|y|, R)\}$
- $N_2 = \{(x, y) \mid x \geq -R, |y| \leq R\}$
- $N_3 = \{(x, y) \mid x \geq -|y|, By \leq |B|R\}$
- $N_4 = \{(x, y) \mid x \geq -|y|, By \geq |B|R\}.$

**Proposition 2.** For  $A \geq A_0$ ,

- a)  $F(N_1) \subset N_1$ .
- b)  $F(N_2 \cup N_3) \subset N_1 \cup N_2$ .
- c)  $x$  is decreasing along  $F$ -orbits in  $N_1$  (strictly decreasing except at the two points  $x = -|y| = -R$ ).
- d)  $F^{-1}(N_3 \cup N_4) \subset N_4$ .
- e)  $F^{-1}(N_2) \subset N_2 \cup N_3 \cup N_4$ .
- f)  $|y|$  is increasing along  $F^{-1}$ -orbits in  $N_4$  (strictly increasing except at the point  $(-R, R \text{ sign}(B))$ ).

*Proof.* The only statements whose proof differs from Proposition 1 are b) and e). b) is proven by invoking Lemma 2a with  $C = R$ , and by noting that the right boundary of  $F(N_2)$  intersects  $x = -R$  at  $|y| = R$  by Lemma 1a (see Fig. 2b).

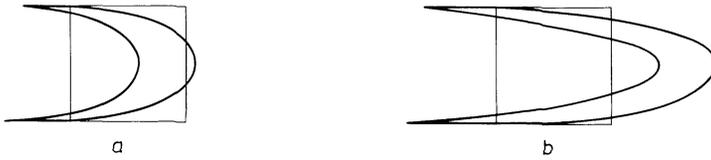


Fig. 3a and b. Image of  $S$ . a  $A_0 \leq A < A_1$ . b  $A_1 \leq A$

Similarly, we note that the boundary curves  $-x_0 = |y_0| > R$  of  $N_1$  map under  $F^{-1}$  to curves in the interior of  $N_4$ . This follows from Lemma 3b and proves d). Also, the line segment  $x_0 = -R, |y_0| \leq R$  maps to the parabolic segment

$$By_{-1} = x_{-1}^2 - R - A, \quad |x_{-1}| \leq R$$

which is disjoint from  $N_1$ . This proves e) (see Fig. 2c).

Proposition 1 does not, strictly speaking, give a filtration for  $F$ , since one of the two left corners of the square  $S$  maps to the boundary of  $N_1$  under  $F$ , and to the boundary of  $N_4$  under  $F^{-1}$ . This could be taken care of by a slight modification of  $N_1$  and  $N_2$ , but for our purposes, it suffices to note that, by c) and f), all points in the interior of  $N_1 \cup N_4$  are wandering. In fact, they escape to infinity in at least one time direction. By b) and e), this implies that  $\Omega(F) \subset N_2 \cap F^{-1}(N_2)$ . But from Lemma 2, we see immediately that

$$N_2 \cap F^{-1}(N_2) \subset S = \{(x, y) \mid |x| \leq R, |y| \leq R\}$$

thus proving statement ii) of the Theorem.

To prove statement iii) of the Theorem, we note that, by Lemma 2a,  $F(S)$  is the region bounded by the parabolas

$$x_1 = A \pm |B|R - y_1^2, \quad |y_1| \leq R$$

and the two horizontal line segments

$$y_1 = \pm R, \quad -(1 + 2|B|)R \leq x_1 \leq -R.$$

The latter follows from the identities

$$A + |B|R - R^2 = -R$$

$$A - |B|R - R^2 = -(1 + 2|B|)R$$

which follow immediately from Lemma 1. The vertex of the left boundary of  $F(S)$  is at  $(A + |B|R, 0)$ ; as  $A$  increases, this moves to the right. When  $A$  passes  $A_1$ , it crosses the right edge of  $S$ , by Lemma 1b (see Fig. 3). Thus, for  $A > A_1$ , we have the topological part of the horseshoe: the image of any horizontal line segment in  $S$  is a parabola which cuts across  $S$  in two segments. By a standard analysis [9, 11, 13] points in the invariant set  $A = \bigcap_{-\infty \leq n \leq \infty} F^n(S)$  can be coded by a bisequence of 0's and 1's according to which of the two components of  $S_{-1} = S \cap F(S)$  contain successive backward iterates and which of the two components of  $S_1 = S \cap F^{-1}(S)$  contain successive forward iterates. The coding gives a continuous orbit-

preserving map of  $A$  onto the Cantor set underlying the shift automorphism on two symbols. To see that  $\Omega(F) \subset A$  maps onto the shift space, we note that every periodic sequence corresponds to a nested intersection of closed disks, and hence to at least one periodic orbit of  $F$ ; but the closure of the set of these periodic orbits is a set of non-wandering points in  $A$  mapping onto the shift space. This establishes statement iii) of the Theorem.

To prove statement iv), we first note that the matrix of partial derivatives of  $F$

$$JF = \begin{pmatrix} -2x & B \\ 1 & 0 \end{pmatrix}$$

and of  $F^{-1}$

$$JF^{-1} = \begin{pmatrix} 1/B & 2x/B \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$$

are independent of  $A$  and  $y$ . Thus, for  $B \neq 0$  fixed, the hyperbolicity of an invariant set depends only on the projection of this set onto the  $x$ -axis. We will show that orbits which stay away from a band about the  $x$ -axis (whose width depends on  $B$ ) have two constant bundles of sectors

$$S_\lambda^+ = \{(\xi, \eta) \mid |\xi| \geq \lambda|\eta|\}$$

$$S_\lambda^- = \{(\xi, \eta) \mid \lambda|\xi| \leq |\eta|\}$$

with  $\lambda > 1$  which are invariant, respectively, under the Jacobians  $JF$  and  $JF^{-1}$ . We will then show that the invariant set  $A = \bigcap F^n(S)$  is disjoint from this band when  $A > A_2$ .

**Lemma 4.** *Suppose that, for some  $\lambda > 1$ ,  $x$  satisfies*

$$|x| \geq \lambda(1 + |B|)/2.$$

*Then: a) For any vector  $(\xi_0, \eta_0) \in S_\lambda^+$ , the vector  $(\xi_1, \eta_1) = JF_x(\xi_0, \eta_0)$  satisfies  $|\xi_1| > \lambda|\xi_0|$ .*

*b) For any vector  $(\xi_0, \eta_0) \in S_\lambda^-$ ,  $(\xi_{-1}, \eta_{-1}) = JF_x^{-1}(\xi_0, \eta_0)$  satisfies  $|\eta_{-1}| \geq \lambda|\eta_0|$ .*

*Proof.* By hypothesis,

$$2|x| \geq \lambda + \lambda|B|$$

so that

$$1) \quad 2|x| - |B|/\lambda > 2|x| - \lambda|B| \geq \lambda,$$

$$2) \quad 2|x| - \lambda \geq \lambda|B|.$$

To show a), we use the formula for  $JF_x$ , the inequality  $|a+b| \geq |a| - |b|$ , the hypothesis  $|\eta_0| \leq |\xi_0|/\lambda$ , and 1) in succession to conclude

$$\begin{aligned} |\xi_1| &= |-2x\xi_0 + B\eta_0| \geq 2|x||\xi_0| - |B||\eta_0| \\ &\geq (2|x| - |B|/\lambda)|\xi_0| > \lambda|\xi_0|. \end{aligned}$$

Similarly, to show b), we use the formula for  $JF_x^{-1}$  and 2) to obtain

$$\begin{aligned} |\eta_{-1}| &= |\xi_0 + 2x\eta_0|/|B| \\ &\geq (2|x| - \lambda)|\eta_0|/|B| \\ &\geq \lambda|\eta_0|. \quad \square \end{aligned}$$

As a consequence, we can prove the following.

**Proposition 3.** *If  $(x_0, y_0)$  and  $(x_1, y_1) = F(x_0, y_0)$  both satisfy*

$$|x| > \lambda(1 + |B|)/2$$

for some  $\lambda > 1$ , then

a) *for any vector  $(\xi_0, \eta_0) \in S_\lambda^+$ ,  $(\xi_1, \eta_1) = JF_{x_0}(\xi_0, \eta_0)$  belongs to  $S_\lambda^+$ , and*

$$|(\xi_1, \eta_1)| \geq \lambda|(\xi_0, \eta_0)|.$$

b) *For any vector  $(\xi_1, \eta_1) \in S_\lambda^-$ ,  $(\xi_0, \eta_0) = JF_x^{-1}(\xi_1, \eta_1)$  belongs to  $S_\lambda^-$  and*

$$\lambda|(\xi_1, \eta_1)| \leq |(\xi_0, \eta_0)|.$$

*Proof.* Our notation above is such that in both a) and b),

$$(\xi_1, \eta_1) = JF_{x_0}(\xi_0, \eta_0).$$

In particular,  $\eta_1 = \xi_0$ . To show a), we invoke Lemma 4a to get

$$\lambda|\eta_1| = \lambda|\xi_0| \leq |\xi_1|$$

so that  $(\xi_1, \eta_1) \in S_\lambda^+$ , while by the definition of  $S_\lambda^+$

$$\lambda|\eta_0| \leq |\xi_0| = |\eta_1|.$$

This proves a). Similarly, to establish b), we use Lemma 4b to conclude

$$|\eta_0| \geq \lambda|\eta_1| = \lambda|\xi_0|$$

and the definition of  $S_\lambda^-$  to conclude

$$|\xi_0| = |\eta_1| \geq \lambda|\xi_1|. \quad \square$$

Our last step in establishing statement iv) is to verify the hypotheses of Proposition 3 for all points of  $A = \cap F^n(S)$  when  $A > A_2$ .

**Proposition 4.** *If  $A > A_2$ , there exists  $\lambda > 1$  such that*

$$|x| \geq \lambda(1 + |B|)/2$$

for all  $(x, y) \in S \cap F^{-1}(S)$ .

*Proof.* From Lemma 1b), we see that the pre-image  $F^{-1}(S)$  lies outside the parabola

$$By_1 = R - A + x_1^2$$

which intersects the edge of  $S$  at a pair of points with  $x$ -coordinates  $\pm x_*$  where

$$x_*^2 = By - R + A = A - (1 + |B|)R.$$

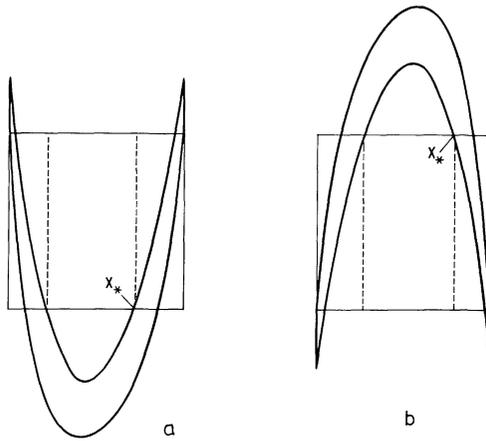


Fig. 4a and b. Preimage of  $S$ ;  $A > A_1$ . a  $B > 0$ . b  $B < 0$

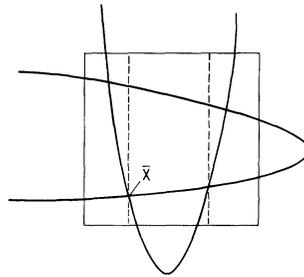


Fig. 5

It is clear that  $F^{-1}(S) \cap S$  lies in the region  $|x| \geq |x_*|$  (see Fig. 4).

Let us write  $A$  in the form

$$A = k(1 + |B|)^2 / 2 .$$

A quick calculation from the formula for  $R$  then gives

$$R = (1 + \sqrt{1 + 2k})(1 + |B|) / 2$$

so that

$$x_*^2 = (k - 1 - \sqrt{1 + 2k})(1 + |B|)^2 / 2 .$$

For  $k > 0$ , this quantity increases with  $k$  and the left hand factor equals 1 when  $2k = 5 + 2\sqrt{5}$  or  $A = A_2$ . Thus when  $A > A_2$ , we can take

$$\lambda^2 = (k - 1 - \sqrt{1 + 2k}) > 1$$

to get the conclusion of the proposition, and hence hyperbolicity of  $\lambda$ .  $\square$

We close with the observation that the conclusion of Proposition 4 for points of  $A$  could be obtained with lower values of  $A$  if, instead of estimating the

intersection of the edge of  $F^{-1}(S)$  with the edge of  $S$ , we considered the smallest  $x$ -value,  $|\bar{x}|$ , among the four intersections of the edge of  $F^{-1}(S)$  with the edge of  $F(S)$  (see Fig. 5). This point, which is a solution of the two quadratic equations

$$By = R - A + x^2$$

$$x = A + |B|R - y^2$$

is a lower bound for  $|x|$  on  $A$  which satisfies the hypotheses of Proposition 4 for values of  $A$  somewhat lower than  $A_2$ .

We finally remark that our theorem shows that the phenomena of the ‘‘Hénon attractor’’ are part of a bifurcation occurring in the creation of a horseshoe from nothing. This gives another perspective on the significance of these mappings for dynamical systems theory.

*Note.* After this paper was written, it came to our attention that S. Newhouse has outlined a proof of a similar result [10].

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