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# Rationally connected 3-folds and symplectic geometry

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*Pour Jean-Pierre Bourguignon, à l'occasion de ses 60 ans*

## 0 Introduction

Let  $X$  be a compact Kähler manifold. Denoting by  $J$  the operator of complex structure acting on  $T_X$ , Kähler forms on  $X$  are symplectic forms which satisfy the compatibility conditions

$$\omega(Ju, Ju) = \omega(u, u), \quad u \in T_{X,x}, \quad \omega(u, Ju) > 0, \quad 0 \neq u \in T_{X,x}.$$

The first condition tells that  $\omega$  is of type  $(1, 1)$ . The last condition is called the taming condition. We will consider more generally taming symplectic forms  $\alpha$  on  $X$ . These forms are thus non necessarily of type  $(1, 1)$  but their  $(1, 1)$ -part is positive (but not necessarily closed).

Let  $X$  and  $Y$  be two complex projective or compact Kähler manifolds. The set of taming symplectic forms on  $X$ , resp.  $Y$ , is connected and thus determines a (deformation class of) symplectic structures on  $X$ , resp.  $Y$ . We will say that  $X$  and  $Y$  are symplectomorphic (as Kähler manifolds) if for some taming symplectic forms  $\alpha$  on  $X$ , resp.  $\beta$  on  $Y$ , there is a diffeomorphism

$$\psi : X \cong Y,$$

such that  $\psi^*\beta = \alpha$ .

This notion might be too restrictive, as it depends too much on the complex structure.

For this reason, we will rather consider the following relation:

**Definition 0.1** *Two complex projective or compact Kähler manifolds  $X$  and  $Y$  are symplectically equivalent if they belong to the same class for the equivalence relation generated by Kähler deformations and symplectomorphisms in the previous sense.*

Here we say that  $X'$  is a Kähler deformation of  $X$  if the following holds : there exists a family  $\pi : \mathcal{X} \rightarrow B$ , where  $\pi$  is a smooth proper morphism between complex analytic spaces,  $B$  is connected,  $X$  is isomorphic to one fiber  $\mathcal{X}_0$  and  $X'$  is isomorphic to another fiber  $\mathcal{X}_1$ . Furthermore there should be a continuously varying family of Kähler forms  $\alpha_b$  on  $\mathcal{X}_b$ ,  $b \in B$ .

Concretely,  $X$  and  $Y$  are symplectically equivalent if there exists a chain of compact Kähler manifolds

$$X = X_0, X'_0, X_1, X'_1, \dots, X_n, X'_n \cong Y,$$

where  $X'_i$  is a Kähler deformation of  $X_i$  and  $X'_i$  is symplectomorphic to  $X_{i+1}$  (as a Kähler manifold).

**Remark 0.2** We could have considered the more natural notion of symplectic equivalence between the two Kähler manifolds  $X$  and  $Y$ , saying that  $X$  and  $Y$  are symplectically equivalent if for some symplectic form  $\beta$  which is in the same deformation class as a Kähler form on  $Y$ , and for some symplectic form  $\alpha$  which is in the same deformation class as a Kähler form on  $X$ ,  $Y$  and  $X$  are symplectomorphic. Being symplectically equivalent in the sense of Definition 0.1 implies being symplectically equivalent in this broader sense. Unfortunately our results do not apply to this situation. The difference lies in the fact that we want to consider symplectic forms taming actual complex structures (rather than almost complex structures).

In the sequel, the compact Kähler manifolds  $X$  we will consider are *uniruled* manifolds, which means the following (cf [7]):

**Definition 0.3** *A projective complex manifold (or compact Kähler) is uniruled if there exist compact complex manifolds  $Z$  and  $B$ , and dominating morphisms*

$$f : Z \rightarrow X, g : Z \rightarrow B,$$

where  $f$  is generically finite and the generic fiber of  $g$  is isomorphic to  $\mathbb{P}^1$ .

In other words, there is a (maybe singular) rational curve in  $X$  passing through any point of  $X$ , where a (singular) rational curve is defined as a connected curve whose normalization has only rational components.

The starting point of this work is the following result, due independently to Kollár and Ruan [18] (we refer to [6], [12], [13] for purely symplectic characterizations and studies of uniruledness) :

**Theorem 0.4** *Let  $X$  and  $Y$  be two symplectically equivalent compact Kähler manifolds. Then if  $X$  is uniruled,  $Y$  is also uniruled.*

We sketch later on the proof of this result, in order to point out why the proof does not extend to cover the rational connectedness property, which we will consider in this paper. Let us recall the definition (cf [2], [8], [7]).

**Definition 0.5** *A compact Kähler manifold  $X$  is rationally connected if for any two points  $x, y \in X$ , there exists a (maybe singular) rational curve  $C \subset X$  with the property that  $x \in C, y \in C$ .*

Examples of rationally connected varieties are given by smooth Fano varieties, i.e. smooth projective varieties  $X$  satisfying the condition that  $-K_X$  is ample. (This is the main result of [2], and [8].)

The following question was asked to me by Pandharipande and Starr :

**Question 0.6** *Assume  $X$  is rationally connected. Let  $Y$  be a compact Kähler manifold symplectically equivalent to  $X$ . Is  $Y$  also rationally connected?*

**Remark 0.7** A compact Kähler manifold  $X$  which is rationally connected satisfies  $H^2(X, \mathcal{O}_X) = 0$ , hence is projective. Thus, under the assumption above,  $X$  is projective, and if the answer to question 0.6 is positive,  $Y$  is also projective.

This question has an easy positive answer in the case of surfaces, as an immediate consequence of theorem 0.4. Indeed, let  $X$  be rationally connected of dimension 2, and let  $Y$  be symplectically equivalent to  $X$ . Then  $Y$  is uniruled, as  $X$  is. On the other hand  $b_1(Y) = 0$ , because  $b_1(X) = 0$  and  $Y$  is diffeomorphic to  $X$ . Thus  $Y$  is a rational surface, hence rationally connected.

In this note, we prove the following partial results concerning Question 0.6 in dimension 3.

**Proposition 0.8** *Let  $X$  be rationally connected of dimension 3, and let  $Y$  be compact Kähler symplectomorphic to  $X$  as a Kähler manifold. If  $Y$  is not rationally connected,  $X$  and  $Y$  admit almost holomorphic rational maps*

$$\phi : X \dashrightarrow \Sigma, \phi' : Y \dashrightarrow \Sigma'$$

*to a surface, with rational fibers  $C$ , resp.  $D$ , of the same class (here we use symplectic equivalence to identify  $H_2(X, \mathbb{Z})$  and  $H_2(Y, \mathbb{Z})$ ).*

Here *almost holomorphic* means that the map is well-defined near a generic fiber. We then consider the case where the above map  $\phi$  is well-defined.

**Proposition 0.9** *Under the same assumptions as in proposition 0.8, assume that the rational map  $\phi$  above is well-defined and that either  $\Sigma$  is smooth, or  $\phi$  does not contract a divisor to a point. Then  $Y$  is also rationally connected.*

We will use this result together with some birational geometry arguments to prove the following:

**Theorem 0.10** *Let  $X, Y$  be compact Kähler 3-folds. Assume that  $X$  and  $Y$  are symplectically equivalent and that one of the two following assumptions hold:*

1.  $X$  is Fano.
2.  $X$  is rationally connected, and  $b_2(X) \leq 2$ .

*Then  $Y$  is rationally connected.*

This answers question 0.6 when  $X$  is a Fano threefold or satisfies  $b_2 \leq 2$ . The two considered cases have a small overlap. In the class where  $b_2(X) \leq 2$ , one has all the blow-ups of Fano manifolds with  $b_2 = 1$  along a connected submanifold. Thus this is not a bounded family. It is known on the contrary that Fano manifolds form a bounded family (see [2], [8], or [16] for the 3-dimensional case). However the bound for  $b_2$  of a Fano threefold is 10 (cf [16]), showing that the Fano case is far from being included in the second case.

**Remark 0.11** Note that for varieties with  $b_2 = 1$ , question 0.6 obviously has an affirmative answer. Indeed a uniruled projective manifold with  $b_2 = 1$  is necessarily Fano. Hence if  $X$  is rationally connected with  $b_2 = 1$ , by theorem 0.4 any projective manifold which is symplectomorphic to it is also uniruled with  $b_2 = 1$  hence Fano, hence rationally connected.

We can also deduce from our approach a conditional answer to question 0.6. Ruan made the following conjecture:

**Conjecture 0.12** *Let  $X$  be a projective threefold, and let  $\tau : \tilde{X} \rightarrow X$  be a blow-up of  $X$  along points or curves. Then if  $A \in H_2(X, \mathbb{Z}) = H^4(X, \mathbb{Z})$  is a degree 2 homology class, for any cohomology classes  $\alpha_1, \dots, \alpha_r \in H^*(X)$ , and for any genus  $g$ , one has*

$$GW_{g,A}^X(\alpha_1, \dots, \alpha_r) = GW_{g,\tau^*A}^{\tilde{X}}(\tau^*\alpha_1, \dots, \tau^*\alpha_r).$$

This conjecture is now proved for blow-ups of points, or blow-ups of curves satisfying certain conditions (cf [5], [10]). We prove the following:

**Theorem 0.13** *Assume conjecture 0.12 holds. Then question 0.6 has a positive answer for threefolds.*

To conclude this introduction, let us sketch the proof of theorem 0.4, and explain on an example the difficulty one meets to extend it to the rational connectedness question.

**Proof of theorem 0.4.** Let  $\alpha$  be a taming symplectic form on  $X$  (one can take here a Kähler form). We will denote in the sequel the degree of curves  $C$  in  $X$  with respect to  $\alpha$  (that is the integrals  $\int_C \alpha$ ) by  $deg_\alpha(C)$ . Let  $\mu_\alpha(X)$  be the minimum of the following set:

$$S_X := \{deg_\alpha(C), C \text{ moving rational curve in } X\}.$$

Here by “moving”, we mean that the deformations of  $C$  sweep-out  $X$ . Note that the minimum of the set  $S_X$  is well defined, because there are finitely many families of curves of bounded degree in  $X$  and the  $(1,1)$ -part  $\alpha^{1,1}$  of  $\alpha$  is  $> \epsilon\omega$  where  $\omega$  is any Kähler form on  $X$ . Let now  $C$  be a moving rational curve on  $X$ , which satisfies  $deg_\alpha(C) = \mu_\alpha(X)$  and let  $[C] \in H_2(X, \mathbb{Z})$  be its homology class. We claim that for  $x \in X$ , and for adequate cohomology classes  $A_1, \dots, A_r \in H^4(X, \mathbb{Z})$ , the Gromov-Witten invariant  $GW_{0,[C]}([x], A_1, \dots, A_r)$  counting genus 0 curves passing through  $x$  and meeting representatives  $B_i$  of the homology classes Poincaré dual to  $A_i$ , is non zero. To see this, we observe that by minimality of  $deg_\alpha(C)$ , any genus 0 curve of degree  $< deg_\alpha(C)$  is not moving, that is, its deformations do not sweep-out  $X$ . It follows that for a general point  $x \in X$ , any genus 0 curve of class  $[C]$  and passing through  $x$  is irreducible, with normal bundle generated by sections. This implies that the set  $Z_{x,[C]}$  of rational curves of classes  $[C]$  passing through  $x$  has the expected dimension and it is nonempty by assumption. Let  $r$  be its dimension, and choose for  $A_i$ ,  $1 \leq i \leq r$  a class  $h^2$ , where  $h$  is ample line bundle on  $X$ . It is then clear that  $GW_{0,[C]}^X([x], A_1, \dots, A_r) \neq 0$ , as this number is the degree of a big and nef line bundle on  $Z_{x,[C]}$ .

As  $Y$  is symplectically isomorphic to  $X$ , (for some symplectic structures on  $X$ , resp.  $Y$ , in the deformation class determined by Kähler forms,) we conclude that  $GW_{0,\psi_*[C]}^Y([y], A'_1, \dots, A'_r) \neq 0$ , where  $A'_i = \psi_*A_i \in H^4(Y, \mathbb{Z})$ . But in turn, because Gromov-Witten invariants can be computed using rational curves on  $Y$  by excess formulas (see [11], [1]), this implies that there is through any point  $y \in Y$  a rational curve of class  $\psi_*[C]$ . Thus  $Y$  is uniruled. ■

**Remark 0.14** The proof above shows in fact a strongest statement, namely the fact that a uniruled compact Kähler manifold  $X$  admits non-zero Gromov-Witten invariants in genus 0 passing through one point:

$$GW_{0,[C]}^X([x], A_1, \dots, A_r) \neq 0.$$

From this point of view, the proof of Theorem 0.10 is somewhat different. Indeed we do not prove that a projective rationally connected 3-fold  $X$  admits non-zero Gromov-Witten invariants in genus 0 passing through two points:  $GW_{0,[C]}^X([x], [x], A_1, \dots, A_r) \neq 0$ , which would be the natural symplectic analogue of rational connectedness.

This is also related to the remark 0.2. Indeed, the Kollár-Ruan proof applies as well to the more general definition of symplectic equivalence considered in remark 0.2. This is not the case for our proof.

**Remark 0.15** We used in this sketch of proof the terminology “rational curve in  $X$ ” to mean “stable genus 0 maps  $f : C \rightarrow X$ ”, which are the correct objects to count in order to compute the Gromov-Witten invariants (cf [3]). However, note that if  $f$  is as above,  $f(C)$  is a rational curve in the previous sense.

If we want to apply the reasoning to study rational connectedness, we are faced to the following problem: we could as before introduce the minimal degree for which there are rational curves in  $X$  passing through any two points of  $X$ . On the other hand, it might be that curves of this degree are all reducible, with one component which is highly obstructed, so that one cannot conclude that the corresponding Gromov-Witten invariant is non zero. In fact, consider the case of a Hirzebruch surface  $p : F \rightarrow \mathbb{P}^1$  which is a deformation (hence symplectically equivalent to) of a quadric  $\mathbb{P}^1 \times \mathbb{P}^1$  : Let  $C_0$  be a rational curve which is a section of  $p$  with sufficiently negative self-intersection :  $C_0^2 < -4$ . Then one has in  $F$  rational curves consisting of the union of two fibers with the section  $C_0$ . Such curves  $C$  can be chosen so as to pass through any two points of  $F$ , and we may assume they are, among the rational curves satisfying this property, of minimal degree with respect to an adequate polarization. On the other hand, we have  $C^2 < 0$  and it is clear that these curves disappear under a deformation from  $F$  to  $\mathbb{P}^1 \times \mathbb{P}^1$ . The corresponding 2-points Gromov-Witten invariant is 0 in this case.

The paper is organized as follows. In section 1, we prove proposition 0.8. In section 2, we study the remaining case, where  $X$  is an almost conic bundle (we mean by this that  $X$  admits a rational map  $f$  to a projective surface  $\Sigma$ , with generic fiber isomorphic to  $\mathbb{P}^1$ , and that the rational map  $f$  is well-defined along the generic fiber). We show that  $\phi$  is actually a morphism (for an adequate choice of birational model of  $\Sigma$ ) when  $b_2(X) \leq 2$  or  $X$  is Fano.

We also show that when  $\phi$  is well-defined, there are many non zero Gromov-Witten invariants on  $X$ . This will be extended in section 3 to the general case assuming conjecture 0.12. The proofs of theorems 0.10 and 0.13 use in turn these non zero Gromov-Witten invariants on  $Y$ . They are completed in section 3, where we consider more generally symplectic equivalence.

**Thanks.** It is a pleasure to acknowledge discussions with Jason Starr and Rahul Pandharipande on this question.

# 1 Study of the rationally connected fibration of $Y$

In this section, we will assume that  $X, Y$  are projective complex manifolds, that  $X$  is rationally connected and that  $X$  and  $Y$  are symplectomorphic with respect to some taming forms  $\alpha, \beta$  on  $X, Y$  respectively. We will explain in section 3 how to deal with symplectic equivalence.

We will denote as before  $\psi : X \cong Y, \psi^*\beta = \alpha$  such a symplectomorphism.

We start now as in the proof of Theorem 0.4. Introducing as before moving rational curves (or rather genus 0 stable maps)  $C$  on  $X$ , of minimal degree with respect to  $\alpha$ , we concluded that there is a covering family of rational curves (genus 0 stable maps) in  $Y$  in the class  $\psi_*([C])$ .

Let us prove first

**Lemma 1.1** *Let  $f : D \rightarrow Y$  be a member of this family which passes through a general point of  $Y$ . Then  $f(D)$  is irreducible, and the map  $f : D \rightarrow f(D)$  is generically one-to-one (hence a normalization map).*

**Proof.** If the generic degree of  $f : D \rightarrow f(D)$  is  $> 1$ , or if  $f(D)$  is not irreducible for generic  $f$ ,  $Y$  is covered by a family of rational curves  $C'$  of degree (w.r.t.  $\beta$ ) smaller than  $\deg_\beta(\psi_*([C])$ . Introducing the minimal degree with respect to  $\beta$  of a moving rational curve on  $Y$ , we would then conclude as in the proof of Theorem 0.4 that there is a non zero Gromov-Witten invariant  $GW_{0,[C'']}^Y([y], B_1, \dots, B_{r'})$  on  $Y$  for some class  $[C'']$  which satisfies  $\deg_\beta([C'']) < \deg_\beta(\psi_*[C]) = \deg_\alpha([C])$ . This implies that  $GW_{0,\psi^*[C'']}^X([x], A'_1, \dots, A'_{r'}) \neq 0$ , where  $A'_i = \psi^{-1*}B_i$ , so that  $X$  is covered by a family of rational curves of degree  $< \deg_\alpha([C])$ , contradicting the minimality of  $\deg_\alpha([C])$ . ■

Our goal in this section is to show the following, (which implies proposition 0.8):

**Proposition 1.2** *If  $Y$  is not rationally connected, then the covering family of curves  $C$  in  $X$  is given by an almost holomorphic rational map*

$$\phi : X \dashrightarrow \Sigma$$

*to a surface, with rational fibers of class  $[C]$ . Furthermore,  $Y$  also admits an almost holomorphic rational map*

$$\phi' : Y \dashrightarrow \Sigma'$$

*with rational fiber of class  $[D] = \psi_*[C]$ .*

Here almost holomorphic means that the rational map  $\phi$  is well-defined along the generic fiber of  $\phi$ . Equivalently, choosing a desingularization

$$\tilde{\phi} : \tilde{X} \rightarrow \Sigma, \tau : \tilde{X} \rightarrow X$$

of  $\phi$ , where  $\tau$  is a composition of blow-ups along smooth centers, this means that the exceptional divisors of  $\tau$  do not dominate  $\Sigma$ . As the fibers of this fibration are rational curves, but  $X$  is not necessarily ruled (as it may not exist a line bundle with intersection  $-1$  with fibers), we will say that  $X$  is an *almost conic bundle*.

The proof of the proposition is based on the following lemma (here we do not distinguish the image curve and the map, as we know that the map is generically the normalization map):

**Lemma 1.3**  *$Y$  is rationally connected, unless possibly if the curve  $D$  above satisfies  $c_1(K_Y) \cdot [D] = -2$  and  $GW_{0,[D]}^Y([y]) = 1$ .*

**Proof.** By lemma 1.1,  $Y$  is covered by a family of generically imbedded and generically irreducible rational curves  $D$  of class  $[D] = \psi_*[C]$ . Let  $y$  be a general point of  $Y$ , and let  $D$  be a general curve in this family passing through  $y$ . We denote by  $f : \tilde{D} \rightarrow Y$  the normalization of  $D$ , so  $\tilde{D}$  is a smooth rational curve. The normal bundle  $N_f = f^*T_Y/f_*T_{\tilde{D}}$  is generated by sections at a point  $\tilde{y} \in \tilde{D}$  such that  $f(\tilde{y}) = y$  because the point  $y$  is general in  $Y$ . Thus we have  $h^0(\tilde{D}, N_f) \geq 2$ , with equality if and only if  $N_f$  is the trivial bundle:  $N_f = \mathcal{O}_{\tilde{D}} \oplus \mathcal{O}_{\tilde{D}}$ . (Of course we used here the fact that  $\tilde{D}$  is isomorphic to  $\mathbb{P}^1$ ).

Suppose that  $h^0(\tilde{D}, N_f) > 2$ . Then the dimension of the family of curves in the class  $[D]$  and passing through  $y$  is at least 1.

This implies that the rationally connected fibration  $r_Y : Y \dashrightarrow B$  (see [2], [8]) of  $Y$  has fiber dimension at least 2, because  $y$  being a general point,  $r_Y$  contracts all the rational curves passing through  $y$ . Thus the basis  $B$  of the rationally connected fibration of  $Y$  has dimension at most 1. We use now the following elementary lemma.

**Lemma 1.4** *Let  $X, Y$  be compact Kähler manifolds which are symplectically equivalent. Assume  $X$  is rationally connected. If the basis  $B$  of the rationally connected fibration of  $Y$  has dimension  $\leq 1$ ,  $Y$  is rationally connected.*

**Proof.** Note that under our assumptions,  $H^2(Y, \mathcal{O}_Y) = 0$ , and  $Y$  is in fact projective. We know that  $\pi_1(X)$  is trivial because  $X$  is rationally connected (cf [9]). As  $Y$  is diffeomorphic to  $X$ ,  $\pi_1(Y)$  is also trivial. It follows that if the basis  $B$  of the rationally connected fibration of  $Y$  has dimension 1, it is isomorphic to  $\mathbb{P}^1$ . This contradicts [4], which implies that the basis of the rationally connected fibration is not uniruled. ■

From this lemma and the previous arguments, we conclude that if  $Y$  is not rationally connected,  $N_f \cong \mathcal{O}_{\tilde{D}} \oplus \mathcal{O}_{\tilde{D}}$ , which implies by adjunction that

$$c_1(K_Y) \cdot [D] = -2.$$

It remains to prove that if  $Y$  is not rationally connected, one has  $GW_{0,[D]}^Y([y]) = 1$ . We know by the above reasoning that if  $Y$  is not rationally connected, all the rational curves in the class  $[D]$  passing through  $y$  are immersed rational curves with trivial normal bundle. The normalizations  $f : \tilde{D} \rightarrow Y$  of these curves thus satisfy

$$H^0(\tilde{D}, N_f(-\tilde{y})) = 0, H^1(\tilde{D}, N_f(-\tilde{y})) = 0,$$

and thus there are finitely many such pairs  $(\tilde{D}, \tilde{y})$  and their number is equal to  $GW_{0,[D]}^Y([y])$ . Suppose first that there are through  $y$  two distinct curves  $D_y, D'_y$  in the family above. Then there is a surface in  $Y$  consisting of points connected to  $y$  by a chain of rational curves, namely the surface swept out by the curves  $D'_{y'}, y' \in D_y$ . This implies as before that the general fiber of the rationally connected fibration of  $Y$  has dimension at least 2, and we conclude as before with a contradiction.

We should finally consider the case where for given  $y$ , there is only one curve  $D$  passing through  $y$ , but at least two distinct points  $\tilde{y}, \tilde{y}' \in \tilde{D}$  over  $y$ . This is excluded



as follows. We proved that the union  $\Sigma'$  of the components of the family of rational curves of class  $[D]$  which pass through a general point of  $Y$  is 2-dimensional and the evaluation map

$$\Phi : \tilde{\mathcal{D}} \rightarrow Y$$

is generically finite, where  $q : \tilde{\mathcal{D}} \rightarrow \Sigma$  is the family of normalizations. Furthermore, the restriction  $\phi$  of  $\Phi$  to the general fiber  $\tilde{D}_\sigma$  over a point  $\sigma \in \Sigma'$  is generically injective. Thus there is only a surface of points  $y$  in  $Y$ , such that for some  $\sigma \in \Sigma$ , there are two distinct points  $\tilde{y}, \tilde{y}' \in \tilde{D}_\sigma$  over  $y$ . This contradicts the fact that the point  $y$  is generic in  $Y$ .

Hence we proved that  $GW_{0,[D]}^Y([y]) = 1$  if  $Y$  is not rationally connected.

The proof shows that the map  $\Phi : \tilde{\mathcal{D}} \rightarrow Y$  is birational, and thus provides  $\phi' := q \circ \Phi^{-1} : Y \dashrightarrow \Sigma'$ . ■

**Proof of proposition 1.2.** Notice that, as  $\psi$  is a symplectomorphism with respect to taming symplectic forms,  $\psi^*c_1(K_Y) = c_1(K_X)$ . Furthermore, we have by assumption  $[D] = \psi_*([C])$ . Thus we have

$$c_1(K_X) \cdot [C] = c_1(K_Y) \cdot [D] = -2,$$

$$GW_{0,[C]}^X([x]) = GW_{0,[D]}^Y([y]) = 1.$$

The first equality together with the fact that the general curve passing through the point  $X$  is irreducible, and thus has globally generated normal bundle, implies that for general  $x \in X$ , the normal bundle of a curve  $C$  of class  $[C]$  passing through  $x$  is trivial, which shows that there are finitely many such curves through  $x$ , and that the set of such curves has the expected dimension 0. Thus the number of these curves is equal to  $GW_{0,[C]}^X([x])$  and this is equal to 1 by the second equality above. In conclusion we proved that if  $\Sigma_0$  is the set parameterizing rational curves in  $X$  of class  $[C]$  and  $\Sigma$  is the union of components of  $\Sigma_0$  parameterizing moving curves, then the universal curve

$$q' : \mathcal{C} \rightarrow \Sigma, \Phi' : \mathcal{C} \rightarrow X,$$

has the property that  $\Phi'$  has degree 1. Thus  $\Phi'$  is birational, and

$$\phi := q' \circ \Phi'^{-1} : X \dashrightarrow \Sigma$$

gives the desired fibration into rational curves.

In order to conclude the proof, it just remains to prove that the rational maps  $\phi : X \dashrightarrow \Sigma$  and  $\phi' : Y \dashrightarrow \Sigma'$  (given in the proof of lemma 1.3) are almost holomorphic. Assume this is not the case: let  $\tau : X' \rightarrow X$  be a composition of blow-ups along smooth centers, such that  $\tilde{\phi} := \phi \circ \tau$  is well-defined. Assume there is an exceptional divisor  $E \subset X'$  which dominates  $\Sigma$  and is contracted to a curve  $Z$  (or a point) in  $X$ . Then if  $C'$  is the general fiber of  $\tilde{\phi}$ ,  $C'$  meets  $E$ . On the other hand,  $K_{X'} = \tau^*K_X + F$  where  $F$  is supported on the exceptional locus, and the multiplicity of  $E$  in  $F$  is  $> 0$ . Thus we find that

$$\begin{aligned} c_1(K_{X'}) \cdot [C'] &= -2 = (\tau^*c_1(K_X) + F) \cdot [C'] \\ &> \tau^*c_1(K_X) \cdot [C'] = c_1(K_X) \cdot [C] = -2, \end{aligned}$$

which is a contradiction. The same proof applies to  $Y$ . ■

## 2 The case where $X$ is an almost conic bundle

We now study almost conic bundles  $\phi : X \dashrightarrow \Sigma$  with generic fiber  $C$ . When  $X$  is rationally connected,  $\Sigma$  is a rational surface, and thus we may assume to begin that  $\Sigma = \mathbb{P}^2$ . (Indeed, the fact that  $\phi$  is almost a morphism does not depend on the birational model of the target.) Notice that, because  $\phi$  is almost holomorphic, we have  $H \cdot C = 0$ , where the line bundle  $H$  on  $X$  is defined by

$$H := \phi^* \mathcal{O}_{\mathbb{P}^2}(1).$$

The first result is the following:

**Proposition 2.1** *Assume that either  $X$  is Fano, or  $b_2(X) = 2$ . Then  $H$  is numerically effective, unless we are not in the Fano case, and there exists a curve class  $[C']$  not proportional to  $[C]$  such that for some cohomology classes  $A_1, \dots, A_r \in H^*(X)$ ,*

$$GW_{0,[C']}^X([C], A_1, \dots, A_r) \neq 0.$$

**Proof.** Suppose first that  $X$  is Fano. Then any rational curve  $Z \subset X$  satisfies  $K_X \cdot Z < 0$  hence has at least a one dimensional space of deformations. Thus, if  $Z$  is irreducible,  $Z$  can be moved so as to be not contained in the indeterminacy locus of  $\phi$ . Thus  $\phi^* H \cdot Z \geq 0$ . To conclude that  $\phi^* H$  is numerically effective, we now prove that all the 1-dimensional components  $Z$  of the indeterminacy locus are rational curves. Indeed, this follows from the fact that any component  $E$  of the exceptional divisor over  $Z$  of a desingularization  $\tilde{\phi}$  of  $\phi$  is recontracted to a curve or a point in  $\Sigma$ , because  $\phi$  is almost holomorphic. If the morphism  $\tilde{\phi}|_E$  factors through the map  $E \rightarrow Z$  for any  $E$ , then  $\phi$  is in fact generically well defined along  $Z$ . Otherwise,  $Z$  is dominated by fibers of  $\tilde{\phi}$ . 2-dimensional fibers of  $\phi$  are rationally connected and 1-dimensional fibers as well. Thus  $Z$  is rational. This concludes the Fano case.

Suppose now that  $b_2(X) = 2$  but  $X$  is not Fano. We have to show that either  $H$  is numerically effective, or there exists a curve class  $[C']$  not proportional to  $[C]$  such that for some cohomology classes  $A_1, \dots, A_r \in H^*(X)$ ,

$$GW_{0,[C']}^X([C], A_1, \dots, A_r) \neq 0.$$

As  $K_X$  is not nef, there exists a Mori contraction  $c : X \rightarrow X'$ , with  $(Pic X') \otimes \mathbb{Q} = \mathbb{Q}$  and  $-K_{X/X'}$  relatively ample. We consider the three possible dimensions of  $X'$  (cf [15]).

1)  $dim X' = 1$ , that is  $X' = \mathbb{P}^1$ . In this case, the contraction is given by a pencil whose fibers are Del Pezzo surfaces. Let  $L = c^* \mathcal{O}_{\mathbb{P}^1}(1)$ . If  $L \cdot C = 0$ , then  $L$  is proportional to  $H$  (because  $b_2(X) = 2$ ), and this contradicts the fact that the Iitaka dimension of  $H$  is at least 2. In the other case, we observe that the fibers of  $c$  are uniruled. Fix a polarization  $h$  on  $X$  and introduce the minimal degree with respect to  $h$  of rational curves contained in the fibers of  $c$  and sweeping-out  $X$ . Let  $[C']$  be the class curve such that  $L \cdot [C'] = 0$  and achieving this minimal degree.  $[C']$  is unique and all the rational curves of class  $[C']$  are supported on fibers of  $c$ . Exactly as in the proof of theorem 0.4, one then shows that for a covering family of rational curves  $C'$  of this minimal degree, the generic member is irreducible with semipositive normal bundle. Using now the fact that  $C$  intersects non trivially the generic fiber of  $c$ , one concludes immediately that there is a non zero Gromov-Witten invariant

$$GW_{0,[C']}^X([C], A_1, \dots, A_r).$$

2)  $\dim X' = 2$ . We have  $c^* \text{Pic } X' = \mathbb{Z}L$ , where  $L$  is ample on  $X'$ , and if  $C \cdot L = 0$  we conclude as before that  $L$  is proportional to  $H$ . In this case  $H$  is numerically effective. In the other case, the map  $c : X \rightarrow X'$  has for generic fiber a rational curve  $C'$  with trivial normal bundle and satisfying  $K_X \cdot C' = -2$ . Furthermore there are only finitely many 2-dimensional fibers of  $c$ . If  $C$  is generic, there is thus exactly a 1-dimensional family of fibers  $C'$  meeting  $C$ , and this is exactly the expected dimension. It thus follows that there is a non trivial Gromov-Witten invariant

$$GW_{0,[C']}^X([C], A_1),$$

where  $A_i = h^2 \in H^4(X, \mathbb{Z})$  for some ample class  $h \in H^2(X, \mathbb{Z})$ .

3)  $\dim X' = 3$ . In this case  $c$  is a divisorial contraction. Note that  $C$  is not proportional to the contracted extremal ray, because  $C$  is a moving curve. A look at the list of divisorial contractions (cf [14]) shows the following (see [17]): Let  $E$  be the exceptional divisor of the contraction, so that  $E$  is either a ruled surface contracted to a smooth curve, or  $\mathbb{P}^2$  or  $\mathbb{P}^1 \times \mathbb{P}^1$  contracted to a point. Let  $[C']$  be the class of the fiber of the contracting ruling in the first case, or the class of a line in the second case, or the class of one of the two rulings in the third case. Then for any curve class  $\gamma$  such that  $\gamma \cdot E \neq 0$ , one has  $GW_{0,[C']}^X(\gamma, A_1, \dots, A_r) \neq 0$ , for an adequate number  $r$ , which will be in fact 0 or 1.

On the other hand  $E \cdot C = 0$  is impossible, because in this case  $E$  and  $H$  would be proportional in  $\text{Pic } X$ , and  $E$  is contractible while the Iitaka dimension of  $H$  is at least 2. We deduce from this that one has  $GW_{0,[C']}^X([C], A_1, \dots, A_r) \neq 0$ , where  $A_i = h^2 \in H^4(X, \mathbb{Z})$  for some ample class  $h \in H^2(X, \mathbb{Z})$ . ■

From this, we get the following result:

**Corollary 2.2** *Assume that either  $X$  is Fano, or  $b_2(X) = 2$ . Then there exists a well-defined morphism  $\phi : X \rightarrow \Sigma$  with fiber  $C$ , where  $\Sigma$  is a normal surface, unless we are not in the Fano case and there exists a curve class  $[C']$  not proportional to  $[C]$  such that for some cohomology classes  $A_1, \dots, A_r \in H^*(X)$ ,*

$$GW_{0,[C']}^X([C], A_1, \dots, A_r) \neq 0.$$

**Proof.** We use the contraction theorem (cf [14], p 162) which tells that such a morphism exists if and only if  $H$  is numerically effective and the curves  $Z \subset X$  satisfying  $Z \cdot H = 0$  also satisfy  $Z \cdot K_X < 0$ .

Indeed, by the previous theorem, we know that  $H$  is numerically effective, unless there exists a curve class  $[C']$  not proportional to  $[C]$  such that for some cohomology classes  $A_1, \dots, A_r \in H^*(X)$ ,

$$GW_{0,[C']}^X([C], A_1, \dots, A_r) \neq 0.$$

Thus, in order to apply the contraction theorem, we just have to show that for any curve  $Z \subset X$  satisfying the condition  $Z \cdot H = 0$ , one has  $K_X \cdot Z < 0$ .

In the Fano case, this is obvious. When  $b_2(X) = 2$ , the orthogonal of  $H$  in  $H_2(X, \mathbb{Z})$  is generated by the class of  $C$ , which satisfies the condition  $C \cdot K_X = -2$ . ■

**Remark 2.3** We will use the fact that we may furthermore assume (by changing  $\Sigma$  if necessary) that  $\phi$  does not contract a divisor to a point of  $\Sigma$ . This follows from the fact that if  $E = \phi^{-1}(x)$  (counted with multiplicities) is a divisor contracted to a point  $x$  of  $\Sigma$ , then  $H - \epsilon E$  remains numerically effective for a sufficiently small  $\epsilon$ . On the other hand, curves  $Z$  satisfying  $Z \cdot (H - \epsilon E) = 0$  satisfy the condition  $K_X \cdot Z < 0$  for the same reasons as before.

We consider now the case where  $\phi$  is well defined (but  $\Sigma$  may be singular). Our main result is the following:

**Theorem 2.4** *Let  $X$  be a rationally connected 3-fold which admits a morphism  $\phi : X \rightarrow \Sigma$  to a normal surface  $\Sigma$ , with generic fiber a rational curve  $C$ . Assume that either  $\Sigma$  is smooth, or  $\phi$  does not contract a divisor to a point of  $\Sigma$ . Then there exist integers  $g, r$  with  $g < r$ , cohomology classes  $A_1, \dots, A_N \in H^4(X, \mathbb{Z})$  and a homology class  $[C'] \in H_2(X, \mathbb{Z})$  not proportional to  $[C]$  such that*

$$GW_{g, [C']}^X(\underbrace{[C], \dots, [C]}_r, A_1, \dots, A_N) \neq 0.$$

Before giving the proof, let us establish a few lemmas.

**Lemma 2.5**  *$\Sigma$  contains a complete linear system of generically smooth curves  $Z$  of genus  $g$ , which do not meet generically the singular locus of  $\Sigma$ , and satisfy*

$$r = h^0(\Sigma, \mathcal{O}_\Sigma(Z)) - 1 = h^0(Z, \mathcal{O}_Z(Z)) > g. \quad (2.1)$$

**Proof.** If  $\Sigma$  is smooth,  $\Sigma$  is rational and the result is obvious (we can even take  $g = 0$ ). In general, we start from a “very moving” generic smooth rational curve  $\Gamma_0 \subset X$ . Recall that “very moving” means that the normal bundle  $N_{\Gamma_0/X}$  is ample. Using the assumption that no divisor is contracted to a point by  $\phi$  or that  $\Sigma$  is smooth, one concludes that for  $\Gamma_0$  generic  $\phi(\Gamma_0) =: \Gamma'_0$  avoids the singular locus of  $\Sigma$ .

Let  $\mathcal{L} := \mathcal{O}_\Sigma(\Gamma'_0)$ . Observe that  $H^1(\Sigma, \mathcal{O}_\Sigma) = 0$ , because  $\Sigma$  admits a desingularization which is rationally connected. It follows that the restriction map:

$$H^0(\Sigma, \mathcal{L}) \rightarrow H^0(\Gamma'_0, N_{\Gamma'_0/\Sigma})$$

is surjective. Observe now that because the equisingular deformations of  $\Gamma'_0$  in  $\Sigma$  (which are rational nodal curves) cover  $\Sigma$ , one has  $K_\Sigma \cdot \Gamma'_0 < 0$ .

In fact we may even assume  $K_\Sigma \cdot \Gamma'_0 < -1$ , replacing if necessary  $\Gamma_0$  by a ramified cover of it, which by ampleness of the normal bundle, can be deformed to an embedding.

It thus follows that

$$\deg N_{\Gamma'_0/\Sigma} = \deg K_{\Gamma'_0} \otimes K_\Sigma^{-1}|_{\Gamma'_0} \geq \deg K_{\Gamma'_0} + 2.$$

This inequality implies that the linear system  $H^0(\Gamma'_0, N_{\Gamma'_0/\Sigma})$  has no base-point on  $\Gamma'_0$  so that a generic deformation  $Z$  of  $\Gamma'_0$  is smooth. Letting  $g$  be the arithmetic genus of  $\Gamma'_0$ , that is the genus of a generic deformation  $Z$  of  $\Gamma'_0$  in  $\Sigma$ , we now find that  $Z$  satisfies the desired property

$$r = h^0(\Sigma, \mathcal{O}_\Sigma(Z)) - 1 = h^0(Z, \mathcal{O}_Z(Z)) > g,$$

because  $\Gamma'_0$  does. ■

**Remark 2.6** The inequality  $h^0(Z, \mathcal{O}_Z(Z)) > g$  also implies that  $h^1(Z, \mathcal{O}_Z(Z)) = 0$ , a fact which will be used later on.

Let  $x_1, \dots, x_r$  be  $r$  generic points of  $\Sigma$ . Then there is a unique curve  $Z \subset \Sigma$  belonging to the linear system  $|\mathcal{L}|$ . This curve is smooth and by Bertini the surface  $X_Z := \phi^{-1}(Z)$  is smooth. Choose now a section  $\Gamma \subset X_Z$  of the morphism  $\phi_Z := \phi|_{X_Z} : X_Z \rightarrow Z$ . Let  $C_i := \phi^{-1}(x_i)$ . Let us prove now the following:

**Lemma 2.7**  $\mathcal{L}, x_1, \dots, x_r, \Gamma$  being as above, for any  $k > 0$ , any stable map  $f : \Gamma_1 \rightarrow X$  of class

$$[\Gamma] + k[C]$$

meeting the  $r$  generic fibers  $C_1, \dots, C_r$  of  $\phi$  has the property that  $\phi \circ f(\Gamma_1) = Z$ .

**Proof.** This is almost obvious. We just have to be a little careful with the singularities of  $\Sigma$ . Let us thus introduce a desingularization  $\tau : \Sigma' \rightarrow \Sigma$  of  $\Sigma$ . Let  $\mathcal{L}' := \tau^*\mathcal{L}$  and  $\tilde{x}_1, \dots, \tilde{x}_r$  the points of  $\Sigma'$  over the generic points  $x_1, \dots, x_r$  of  $\Sigma$ .

Then if  $f : \Gamma_1 \rightarrow X$  is a curve as above, denote by  $\tilde{\Gamma}'_1 \subset \Sigma'$  the proper transform of  $\Gamma'_1 := \phi \circ f(\Gamma_1) \subset \Sigma$  (counted with multiplicities) in  $\Sigma'$ . We observe that because the class of  $f(\Gamma_1)$  is  $[\Gamma] + k[C]$  and  $\phi(C)$  is a point,  $\tilde{\Gamma}'_1$  belongs to one of the linear systems

$$|\tau^*\mathcal{L} - E|$$

on  $\Sigma'$ , where  $E$  is an effective divisor supported on the exceptional locus of the desingularization. The linear system above has dimension  $\leq r$ , with equality if and only if  $E$  is empty. As  $\tilde{\Gamma}'_1$  passes through  $r$  generic points of  $\Sigma'$ , it follows that the linear system  $|\tau^*\mathcal{L} - E|$  has dimension  $r$ . Thus  $E$  is empty, and the curve  $\Gamma'_1$  does not meet the singular locus of  $\Sigma$ . Hence  $\Gamma'_1 \in |\mathcal{L}|$ , and as it passes through  $x_1, \dots, x_r$ , it must be equal to  $Z$ . ■

Consider the morphism  $\phi_Z : X_Z \rightarrow Z$ . The smooth fiber of  $\phi_Z$  is a  $\mathbb{P}^1$ , and the singular fibers are chains of  $\mathbb{P}^1$ 's. Note that by successive contractions of  $-1$ -curves not meeting  $\Gamma$ , one can construct from  $F_Z$  a geometrically ruled surface  $X_Z^0$ . The curve  $\Gamma$  is then the inverse image of a curve (still denoted  $\Gamma$ ) in  $X_Z^0$ .  $\Gamma$  is a section of the structural morphism  $p : X_Z^0 = \mathbb{P}(\mathcal{E}) \rightarrow Z$ , where  $\mathcal{E} := p_*\mathcal{O}_{X_Z^0}(\Gamma)$  is a rank 2 vector bundle on  $Z$ . We shall denote by  $\sigma : X_Z \rightarrow X_Z^0$  such a contraction morphism. It will be convenient to choose the following basis  $E_i$  of the lattice

$$H^2(X_Z, \mathbb{Z})/\sigma^*H^2(X_Z^0, \mathbb{Z}) = \sigma^*H^2(X_Z^0, \mathbb{Z})^\perp.$$

We factor  $\sigma : X_Z \rightarrow X_Z^0$  as a sequence of  $m$  blow-ups at one point. Let  $\sigma_i : X_Z \rightarrow X_Z^i$  be the successive surfaces appearing in this process. Then we define for  $i \geq 1$ ,  $[E_i] := \sigma_i^*[E]$ , where  $E$  is the exceptional curve of the blow-up  $X_Z^i \rightarrow X_Z^{i-1}$ . The classes  $[E_i]$  are effective, and they satisfy

$$[E_i]^2 = -1, [E_i] \cdot K_{X_Z} = -1.$$

**Proof of theorem 2.4.** We will denote by  $j : X_Z \hookrightarrow X$  the inclusion. For a curve  $\Gamma$  contained in  $X_Z$  we will denote by  $[\Gamma]_{X_Z} \in H^2(X_Z, \mathbb{Z})$  its cohomology class in  $X_Z$  and  $[\Gamma] \in H^4(X, \mathbb{Z})$  its cohomology class in  $X$ . Hence  $[\Gamma] = j_*[\Gamma]_{X_Z}$ .

Let  $g, r, x_1, \dots, x_r, Z, \Gamma \subset X_Z$  be as in lemmas 2.5, 2.7. Let  $C_1, \dots, C_r$  be the generic fibers  $\phi^{-1}(x_i)$  of  $\phi$ . We now consider curves (stable maps) of genus  $g$  and class  $[\Gamma] + k[C]$  in  $X$ , where  $k$  will be chosen sufficiently large.

The expected dimension of the family of such curves is equal to

$$\begin{aligned} -K_X \cdot ([\Gamma] + k[C]) &= 2k - K_X \cdot [\Gamma] = 2k + \chi(\Gamma, N_{\Gamma/X}) \\ &= 2k + \chi(\Gamma, N_{\Gamma/X_Z}) + \chi(Z, N_{Z/\Sigma}) = 2k + \chi(\Gamma, N_{\Gamma/X_Z^0}) + r \\ &= 2k + r + \chi(Z, \mathcal{E}) + g - 1 = 2k + r + \deg \mathcal{E} + 1 - g. \end{aligned}$$

If we consider the family of such curves meeting  $C_1, \dots, C_r$ , its expected dimension is  $N := 2k + \deg \mathcal{E} + 1 - g$ , and by lemma 2.7, we know that these curves are all contained in a given surface  $X_Z$ , where  $Z$  is a generic member of the linear system  $|\mathcal{L}|$  on  $\Sigma$ . Note that  $N$  is the expected dimension of the space of deformations of a smooth curve of class  $[\Gamma] + k[C]$  in  $X_Z$ . If  $k$  satisfies the condition  $\Gamma^2 + 2k > 2g$ , choose a section  $\Gamma_k$  of  $X_Z \rightarrow Z$  of class  $[\Gamma] + k[C]$  in  $X_Z$ .

Then as  $N_{\Gamma_k/X_Z}$  has degree  $> 2g - 2$ , it satisfies

$$H^1(\Gamma_k, N_{\Gamma_k/X_Z}) = 0.$$

As furthermore  $H^1(\Gamma_k, (N_{X_Z/X})|_{\Gamma_k}) = H^1(N_{Z/\Sigma}) = 0$  by remark 2.6, one concludes that  $H^1(\Gamma_k, N_{\Gamma_k/X}) = 0$ , so that the deformation space of  $\Gamma_k$  in  $X$  is locally smooth of the right dimension  $N + r$ . Furthermore, if  $y_1, \dots, y_N \in \Gamma_k$  are generic, and  $D := \{y_1, \dots, y_N\}$ , the restriction map:

$$H^0(\Gamma_k, N_{\Gamma_k/X_Z}) \rightarrow H^0(D, N_{\Gamma_k/X_Z} | D)$$

is an isomorphism. Choosing  $N$  curves  $B_1, \dots, B_N \subset X$  meeting  $X_Z$  in  $y_1, \dots, y_N$  respectively, we find that  $\Gamma_k$  is an isolated point in the family of curves of genus  $g$  meeting  $C_1, \dots, C_r$  and  $B_1, \dots, B_N$ . This gives at least one positive contribution to  $\underbrace{GW_{g, [\Gamma_k]}^X([C], \dots, [C], [B_1], \dots, [B_N])}_r$ .

However, in order to compute the Gromov-Witten invariant above, we need to control all curves in  $X_Z$  whose class in  $X$  is equal to  $[\Gamma_k] = j_*[\Gamma_k]_{X_Z}$ .

From lemma 2.7, we know that any curve in  $X$  of class  $[\Gamma_k]$  which meets  $C_1, \dots, C_r$  is contained in  $X_Z$ . In order to conclude the proof, we have to compute the contribution to  $\underbrace{GW_{g, [\Gamma_k]}^X([C], \dots, [C], [B_1], \dots, [B_N])}_r$  of all the families of curves  $f : \Gamma_1 \rightarrow X_Z$ ,

where  $\Gamma_1$  is (maybe nodal) of arithmetic genus  $g$ , such that the class in  $X$  of  $f(\Gamma_1)$  (counted with multiplicities) is equal to  $[\Gamma_k]$ , with  $k$  large.

For this, we need the following lemma

**Lemma 2.8** *Classes in the kernel of  $j_* : H_2(X_Z, \mathbb{Z}) \rightarrow H_2(X, \mathbb{Z})$  are integral combinations of the classes  $\frac{1}{2}[C] - [E_i]$ .*

**Proof.**  $H_2(X_Z, \mathbb{Z})$  is generated over  $\mathbb{Z}$  by the classes  $[C]$  of the fiber of  $\phi_Z$ , the class  $[\Gamma]$  of a section of  $\phi_Z$  and the classes  $[E_i]$ .

If  $\alpha \in \text{Ker } j_*$ , write

$$\alpha = n[C] + m[\Gamma] + \sum_i n_i \left( \frac{1}{2}[C] - [E_i] \right), \quad n, m, n_i \in \mathbb{Z}.$$

Then we must have  $m = 0$  because  $\phi_*(j_*\alpha) = 0 = m[Z]$ . Next we have  $K_X \cdot [E_i] = -1$ , because  $K_{X_Z} \cdot [E_i] = -1$  and  $K_X$  has the same restriction as  $K_{X_Z}$  on the fibres of  $\phi_Z$ . Furthermore  $K_X \cdot [C] = -2 \neq 0$ , and  $K_X \cdot (\frac{1}{2}[C] - [E_i]) = 0$ . Thus

$$j_*\alpha = 0 \Rightarrow K_X \cdot \alpha = 0 \Rightarrow n = 0.$$

Hence we proved that  $\alpha$  is a combination of the  $\frac{1}{2}[C] - [E_i]$  with integral coefficients  $n_i$ . Note that if such a combination belongs to  $H_2(X_Z, \mathbb{Z})$ , the  $n_i \in \mathbb{Z}$  satisfy the condition that 2 divides  $\sum_i n_i$ . ■

We need thus to study maps  $f : \Gamma_1 \rightarrow X_Z$  where  $\Gamma_1$  is a nodal curve of genus  $g$ ,  $f_*[\Gamma_1]_{fund} = \gamma := [\Gamma_k] + \sum_i n_i(\frac{1}{2}[C] - [E_i])$ . Note that for each such map,  $\phi_Z \circ f : \Gamma_1 \rightarrow Z$  is an isomorphism on the (unique) genus  $g$  component of  $\Gamma_1$  and contracts all the other components of  $\Gamma_1$ , which must be rational. As  $\deg N_{Z/\Sigma} > 2g - 2$ , it follows that  $H^1(\Gamma_1, f^*N_{Z/\Sigma}) = 0$ , and as an easy consequence, for fixed  $\gamma$ , the contribution of all these families to  $GW_{g, [\Gamma_k]}^X(\underbrace{[C], \dots, [C]}_r, [B_1], \dots, [B_N])$  is equal to

$$GW_{g, \gamma}^{X_Z}([B_1]_{|X_Z}, \dots, [B_N]_{|X_Z}).$$

Of course  $[B_i]_{|X_Z}$  is a multiple of the class of a point of  $X_Z$ . It thus remains to prove that for  $k$  large enough and any  $\gamma = [\Gamma_k] + \sum_i n_i(\frac{1}{2}[C] - [E_i])$ ,

$$GW_{g, \gamma}^{X_Z}(\underbrace{[pt], \dots, [pt]}_N) \geq 0.$$

Note that by deforming  $X_Z$ , we may assume the successive blow-ups starting from  $X_Z^0$  are at  $m$  distinct points  $z_1, \dots, z_m \in X_Z^0 = \mathbb{P}(\mathcal{E})$ .

We have the following:

**Lemma 2.9**  *$m$  being fixed, for  $k$  sufficiently large, for a fixed choice of distinct points  $z_1, \dots, z_m \in \mathbb{P}(\mathcal{E})$ , for any choice of integers  $n_1, \dots, n_m \in \mathbb{Z}$ , any linear system  $L$  on the surface  $X'_Z$  which is  $\mathbb{P}(\mathcal{E})$  blown-up at  $z_1, \dots, z_m$ , of class*

$$c_1(L) = \gamma = [\Gamma_k] + l[C] - \sum_i n_i[E_i], \quad l = \frac{1}{2} \sum_i n_i$$

*satisfies  $h^0(X'_Z, L) \leq N + 1 - g$ , and when equality holds, the generic member of this linear system is smooth.*

Assuming this lemma, it follows that for each  $\gamma$  as above, the dimension of the space of divisors in  $X'_Z$  of class  $\gamma$  has dimension  $\leq N$ . Thus the dimension of the space of divisors of class  $\gamma$  passing through  $N$  generically chosen points is 0. Furthermore, when equality holds, the finitely many divisors of class  $\gamma$  passing through  $N$  generically chosen points are smooth. It follows that the stable maps  $f : \Gamma_1 \rightarrow X'_Z$  of class  $f_*[\Gamma_1]_{fund} = \gamma$  passing through  $N$  generically chosen points have finitely many possible images which are smooth curves of genus  $g$ . Thus each of these  $f$ 's must be an isomorphism, and there are also finitely many such stable maps  $f$ . It follows that  $GW_{g, \gamma}^{X'_Z}(\underbrace{[pt], \dots, [pt]}_N) \geq 0$ . The proof of Theorem 2.4 is thus finished, modulo the proof of lemma 2.9. ■

**Proof of lemma 2.9.** Note that if  $n_i \leq 0$ ,  $n_i E_i$  is contained in the fixed part of  $|L|$ . Thus it suffices to prove the result assuming  $n_i \geq 0$ , and  $l \leq \frac{1}{2} \sum_i n_i$ . Next, note that because  $\gamma \cdot [C] = 1$ , any section of  $L$  vanishing to order  $n_i$  at  $z_i$  vanishes to order  $n_i - 1$  along the fiber  $C_{z_i}$  passing through  $z_i$ . This way, we are now reduced to the case where  $n_i = 0$  or  $n_i = 1$ , and  $l \leq \frac{1}{2} \sum_i n_i$ . Notice that, in both reduction steps, if either one of the  $n_i < 0$  or  $n_i \geq 2$ , the inequality becomes a strict inequality.

We have thus to show that for  $k$  large enough, for any choice of  $s$  points  $z_{i_1}, \dots, z_{i_s}$  among  $z_1, \dots, z_m$ , for  $L \in \text{Pic } X'_Z$ , with

$$c_1(L) = [\Gamma] + k[C] + l[C] - \sum_{j \leq s} [E_{i_j}], \quad l \leq \frac{s}{2},$$

we have  $h^0(X'_Z, L) \leq N + 1 - g$ , while for  $l \leq \frac{s}{2}$ , we have  $h^0(X'_Z, L) < N + 1 - g$ . Note that for  $l = 0, s = 0$ , we can take for  $L$  the line bundle  $\mathcal{O}_{X_Z}(\Gamma_k)$  which has  $N + 1 - g$  sections.

The points  $z_{i_j} \in \mathbb{P}(\mathcal{E})$  determine a vector bundle  $\mathcal{E}'$  on  $Z$ , defined as the kernel of the evaluation map  $p_* \mathcal{O}_{\mathbb{P}(\mathcal{E})}(1) = \mathcal{E} \rightarrow \bigoplus \mathcal{O}(1)|_{z_{i_j}}$ . Then sections of  $L$  on  $X'_Z$  identify via  $p_*$  to sections of  $\mathcal{E}'(D)$  on  $Z$ , for some  $D \in \text{Pic}^{k+l}(Z)$ . There are finitely many bundles  $\mathcal{E}'$ , and thus for  $k$  large enough, and any  $l \geq 0$ ,  $\text{deg } D = k + l$ , we have  $H^1(Z, \mathcal{E}'(D)) = 0$ . As  $\text{deg } \mathcal{E}' = \text{deg } \mathcal{E} - s$ , it follows that

$$h^0(Z, \mathcal{E}'(D)) = \chi(Z, \mathcal{E}'(D)) = \text{deg } \mathcal{E}'(D) + 2 - 2g$$

$$= \text{deg } \mathcal{E} - s + 2k + 2l + 2 - 2g \leq \text{deg } \mathcal{E} + 2 - 2g + 2k = h^0(X_Z, \Gamma_k) = N + 1 - g,$$

with equality only when  $2l = s$ .

When equality holds, we have seen that all the  $n_i$  must be equal to 0 or 1, and the fact that the generic curve of class  $\gamma$  is smooth is deduced from the fact that with the notation above, the bundle  $\mathcal{E}'(D)$  is generated by sections, for  $D \in \text{Pic}^{k+l}(Z)$ . ■

### 3 Proofs of the main results

**Proof of Proposition 0.9.** Here  $\psi : X \cong Y$  is a symplectomorphism with respect to some taming symplectic forms  $\alpha, \beta$  on  $X$ , resp.  $Y$ . We assume that the conclusion of proposition 0.8 holds, but furthermore the rational map  $\phi : X \dashrightarrow \Sigma$  is well-defined, and that either  $\phi$  does not contract a divisor, or  $\Sigma$  is smooth. We can thus apply the conclusion of Theorem 2.4. This tells us that there exist integers  $g < r$ , cohomology classes  $A_1, \dots, A_N \in H^4(X, \mathbb{Z})$  and a homology class  $[C'] \in H_2(X, \mathbb{Z})$  not proportional to  $[C]$  such that

$$GW_{g, [C']}^X(\underbrace{[C], \dots, [C]}_r, A_1, \dots, A_N) \neq 0.$$

It follows that the curve class  $[D'] = \psi_*[C']$  and the cohomology classes  $A_i := \psi_* A_i \in H^*(Y)$  satisfy:

$$GW_{g, [D']}^Y(\underbrace{[D], \dots, [D]}_r, A'_1, \dots, A'_N) \neq 0.$$



But then this means that there exist a curve  $D'$  of genus  $g$  in  $Y$ , of class not proportional to  $[D]$ , meeting  $r$  generic fibers  $D_1, \dots, D_r$  of  $\phi'$ . This implies that the surface  $\Sigma'$  contains genus  $g$  curves  $D'' := \phi'(D')$  passing through  $r$  generic points, with  $r > g$ .

**Lemma 3.1** *If  $\Sigma'$  satisfies this property, the Kodaira dimension of  $\Sigma'$  is  $-\infty$ .*

**Proof.** Indeed, the generic curve  $D''$  above has genus  $g$  and satisfies  $h^0(N_{D''/\Sigma'}) \geq r$ . It follows that  $D''$  contains at least one moving irreducible component  $D''_0$  which has genus  $g_0$ , and satisfies  $h_0(D''_0, N_{D''/\Sigma'}) \geq r_0$ , with  $r_0 > g_0$ . If  $D''_0$  is rational,  $\Sigma'$  is uniruled. Otherwise, as  $D''_0$  is irreducible, we always have

$$h^0(N_{D''_0/\Sigma'}) \leq \deg N_{D''_0/\Sigma'}.$$

Thus we conclude that

$$\deg N_{D''_0/\Sigma'} \geq r_0 > g_0.$$

By adjunction, it follows that

$$K_{\Sigma'} \cdot D''_0 < 0.$$

This implies that  $h^0(\Sigma', K_{\Sigma'}^{\otimes l}|_{D''_0}) = 0, \forall l > 0$ , and as  $D''_0$  is moving, this implies that  $h^0(\Sigma', K_{\Sigma'}^{\otimes l}) = 0, \forall l > 0$ . ■

Thus we conclude in this case that  $\Sigma'$  is (birationally) a ruled surface, and we conclude that the basis of the rationally connected fibration of  $Y$  has dimension  $\leq 1$ . By lemma 1.4,  $Y$  is rationally connected. ■

**Proof of theorem 0.10.** We assume that  $X$  and  $Y$  are symplectically equivalent and that, either  $X$  is Fano, or  $X$  is rationally connected with  $b_2(X) \leq 0$ . Thus there exists a chain of compact Kähler manifold

$$X = X_0, X'_0, X_1, X'_1, \dots, X_n, X'_n \cong Y,$$

where  $X'_i$  is a Kähler deformation of  $X_i$  and  $X'_i$  is symplectomorphic to  $X_{i+1}$  with respect to some taming symplectic forms. Let us denote  $\psi : X'_{n-1} \cong X_n$  the symplectomorphism between  $X'_{n-1}$  endowed with a Kähler form  $\alpha$  and  $X_n$  endowed with a Kähler form  $\beta$ . We will argue by induction on the length  $n$  of the chain. Thus we may assume that  $X'_{n-1}$  is rationally connected.

We want to show that  $Y = X'_n$  is rationally connected. Note that it suffices to show that  $X_n$  is rationally connected because this property is invariant by deformation.

We argue by contradiction, and assume that  $X_n$  is not rationally connected. Applying lemma 1.3, we find that there is a curve class  $[D]$  on  $X_n$ , satisfying the following properties:

1.  $c_1(K_{X_n}) \cdot [D] = -2$ .
2.  $GW_{0,[D]}^{X_n}([y]) = 1$ .
3.  $D$  has minimal degree with respect to  $\beta$  among those curves satisfying property 2.

Furthermore, as proved in proposition 1.2, the varieties  $X'_{n-1}$  and  $X_n$  are in this case almost conic bundles with fiber  $D$ , resp.  $C$  of class  $[D]$ , resp.  $[C]$  where  $[D] = \psi_*[C]$ . Let us denote by  $\phi : X'_{n-1} \dashrightarrow \Sigma$ , and  $\phi' : X_n \dashrightarrow \Sigma'$  the almost conic bundle structures on  $X'_{n-1}$  and  $X_n$  respectively.

Consider first the case where  $b_2(X) = 2$ . Then we also have  $b_2(X'_{n-1}) = 2$  and we can apply to  $X'_{n-1}$  the corollary 2.2, because  $X'_{n-1}$  is an almost conic bundle with fiber  $C$ . Thus we conclude, with the notations of this section, that the morphism  $\phi : X'_{n-1} \dashrightarrow \Sigma$  with fiber  $C$  is well-defined, unless there exists a curve class  $[C']$  not proportional to  $[C]$  such that for some cohomology classes  $A_1, \dots, A_r \in H^*(X'_{n-1})$ ,

$$GW_{0,[C']}^{X'_{n-1}}([C], A_1, \dots, A_r) \neq 0.$$

However, in the later case, we conclude, by denoting  $[D'] = \psi_*[D]$ ,  $A'_i = \psi_*A_i$ , that

$$GW_{0,[D']}^{X_n}([D], A'_1, \dots, A'_r) \neq 0.$$

It follows that there exists a rational curve of class  $[D']$  which meets a generic curve  $D \subset Y'$  and as  $[D']$  is not proportional to  $D$ , we conclude that  $\phi'(D')$  is not a point. Hence it follows that the surface  $\Sigma'$  is swept-out by rational curves and the basis of the rationally connected fibration of  $X_n$  has dimension  $\leq 1$ , which implies by lemma 1.4 that  $X_n$  is rationally connected, a contradiction.

Thus the morphism  $\phi : X'_{n-1} \rightarrow \Sigma$  with fiber  $C$  is well-defined. Furthermore, by remark 2.3, we may assume that  $\phi$  does not contract a divisor to a point. By proposition 0.9,  $X_n$  is then rationally connected, which is a contradiction.

We consider next the case where  $X$  is Fano. The proof is almost the same except for one supplementary step.

As  $X$  is symplectically equivalent to  $X_n$ , we have

$$GW_{[C],0}^X([x]) = GW_{0,[D]}^{X_n}([y]) = 1, \quad (3.2)$$

where the class  $[C] \in H_2(X, \mathbb{Z})$  is obtained from  $\psi_*^{-1}[D] \in H_2(X_n, \mathbb{Z})$  by flat transportation along deformations from  $X_i$  to  $X'_i$  and pull-back maps associated to symplectomorphisms between  $X'_i$  and  $X_{i+1}$ .

It follows from (3.2) that  $X$  is swept out by curves in the class  $[C]$ . We claim that  $X$  also has the structure of an almost conic bundle.

To prove this, note that by adjunction, any moving irreducible rational curve  $C' \rightarrow X$  satisfies  $K_X \cdot C' \leq -2$ . As we have  $GW_{[C],0}^X([x]) \neq 0$ ,  $X$  is swept out by curves in the class  $[C]$ . The generic curve in such covering family certainly contains a moving irreducible part  $C'$ . By the above, we have  $K_X \cdot C' \leq -2$ . On the other hand, we have  $[C] = [C'] + [C'']$  where  $C''$  is effective, and furthermore  $K_X \cdot C = -2$ . As  $X$  is Fano, we have  $K_X \cdot C'' \leq 0$  with equality if and only if  $C''$  is empty. Combining these inequalities, we finally conclude that  $C''$  is empty, and that the generic  $C$  is in fact irreducible in  $X$ . As  $GW_{0,[C]}^X([x]) = 1$  and  $K_X \cdot C = -2$ , we conclude exactly as in the proof of proposition 1.2 that  $X$  has the structure of an almost conic bundle with fiber we will denote again  $C$ .

The end of the proof is now essentially the same as before. As  $X$  is Fano, we can thus apply to  $X$  the results of the previous section. Namely, because we are in the Fano case, corollary 2.2 (together with remark 2.3) tells us that there is a well-defined morphism  $\phi : X \rightarrow \Sigma$  with fiber  $C$  which furthermore satisfies the condition

that  $\phi$  does not contract a divisor. Then theorem 2.4 allows to conclude that there exist integers  $g < r$ , cohomology classes  $A_1, \dots, A_N \in H^4(X, \mathbb{Z})$  and a homology class  $[C'] \in H_2(X, \mathbb{Z})$  not proportional to  $[C]$  such that

$$GW_{g, [C']}^X(\underbrace{[C], \dots, [C]}_r, A_1, \dots, A_N) \neq 0.$$

Following the classes  $[C], [C'], \dots, A_1, \dots, A_N$  along the Kähler deformations or symplectomorphisms from  $X$  to  $X_n$ , we conclude that we have as well

$$GW_{g, [D']}^{X_n}(\underbrace{[D], \dots, [D]}_r, A'_1, \dots, A'_N) \neq 0.$$

We then conclude as in the proof of proposition 0.9, using lemma 3.1, that the surface  $\Sigma'$  is uniruled, hence that  $X_n$  is rationally connected, which is a contradiction. ■

**Proof of Theorem 0.13.** As symplectic equivalence is generated by Kähler deformations and symplectomorphisms (between Kähler manifolds), it suffices to show, assuming conjecture 0.12, that rational connectedness for threefolds is a property invariant by Kähler deformations and symplectomorphisms (between Kähler manifolds). For the deformations, this is well known. So let us consider the case of symplectomorphisms.

Let  $\psi : X \cong Y$  be a symplectomorphism with respect to some taming symplectic forms  $\alpha$  on  $X$ , resp.  $\beta$  on  $Y$ , where  $X$  is rationally connected. By proposition 0.8, we know that  $Y$  is rationally connected unless  $X$  and  $Y$  admit almost holomorphic rational maps

$$\phi : X \dashrightarrow \Sigma, \phi' : Y \dashrightarrow \Sigma'$$

to a surface, with rational fibers  $C$ , resp.  $D$ , with  $[D] = \psi_*[C]$ . We will show:

**Lemma 3.2** *Assume conjecture 0.12. Then the conclusion of theorem 2.4 is true if we only assume that  $\phi$  is almost holomorphic.*

Assuming this lemma, we conclude exactly as in the proof of Proposition 0.9, because we have then non trivial Gromov-Witten invariants

$$GW_{g, [D']}^Y(\underbrace{[D], \dots, [D]}_r, A'_1, \dots, A'_N) \neq 0,$$

with  $r > g$ , and  $[D']$  not proportional to  $[D]$ . We then conclude by lemma 3.1 that  $\Sigma'$  is uniruled and then that  $Y$  is rationally connected. ■

**Proof of lemma 3.2.** There exists a surface  $\Sigma_0$  birationally equivalent to  $\Sigma$ , and a birational model of  $X$ ,  $\tau : \tilde{X} \rightarrow X$ , obtained by successive blow-ups of  $X$  along smooth centers, such that the rational map  $\tilde{\phi} : \tilde{X} \rightarrow \Sigma_0$  is well-defined, and  $\phi : X \dashrightarrow \Sigma_0$  does not contract any divisor to a point.

Now we start from a very free smooth rational curve  $\Gamma_0$  in  $X$ . If  $\Gamma_0$  is chosen generically, it does not meet the indeterminacy locus of  $\phi$ . Furthermore, by the second property above, the curve  $\phi(\Gamma_0)$  does not meet  $Sing \Sigma_0$  and the singularities of  $\phi(\Gamma_0)$  are away of the curve  $B \subset \Sigma_0$  defined as  $B = \tilde{\phi}(F) \cup B'$ , where  $F$  is the exceptional divisor of  $\tau$  and  $B' \subset \Sigma_0$  is the locus of singular fibers of  $\tilde{\phi}$ . As  $\Gamma_0$  is

also a very free rational curve in  $\tilde{X}$ , and  $\tilde{\phi}$  is well-defined, we apply to  $\tilde{X}, \tilde{\phi}, \Gamma_0$  the same method as in the proof of theorem 2.4. Namely we first of all deform  $\phi(\Gamma_0)$  (or a multiple) to a smooth curve  $Z \subset \Sigma_0$  and inside the smooth surface  $\tilde{X}_Z$ , we choose a section  $\Gamma$  of  $\tilde{\phi} : \tilde{X}_Z \rightarrow Z$ . Now we observe that because we assumed that the singular points of  $\phi(\Gamma_0)$  are away from the bad curve  $B$ , the curve  $\Gamma$  can be chosen to be a deformation in  $\tilde{X}_Z$  of the union of  $\Gamma_0$  together with fibers of  $\tilde{\phi}$ . Thus the class of  $\Gamma$  and thus also the class  $[\Gamma_k] = [\Gamma] + k[C] \in H^4(\tilde{X}, \mathbb{Z})$  are in fact pulled-back from classes in  $H^4(X, \mathbb{Z})$ , say  $[\Gamma_k] = \tau^* \gamma$ .

The proof of theorem 2.4 then tells us that there are non zero Gromov-Witten invariants on  $\tilde{X}$  of the form

$$GW_{g, [\Gamma_k]}^{\tilde{X}}(\underbrace{[C], \dots, [C]}_r, A_1, \dots, A_N),$$

with  $r > g$ , and  $[\Gamma_k]$  not proportional to  $[C]$ , where we may assume that the  $A_i$  are pulled-back from  $X$ ,  $A_i = \tau^* A'_i$ . If conjecture 0.12 is true, it follows that we have as well

$$GW_{g, [\gamma]}^X(\underbrace{[C], \dots, [C]}_r, A'_1, \dots, A'_N) \neq 0,$$

with  $r > g$ , and  $[\gamma]$  not proportional to  $[C]$ . ■

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