

A C_2 -EQUIVARIANT ANALOG OF MAHOWALD'S THOM SPECTRUM THEOREM

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ABSTRACT. We prove that the C_2 -equivariant Eilenberg-MacLane spectrum associated with the constant Mackey functor $\underline{\mathbb{F}}_2$ is equivalent to a Thom spectrum over $\Omega^\rho S^{\rho+1}$.

1. INTRODUCTION

Let μ be the Möbius bundle over S^1 , regarded as a virtual bundle of dimension 0. The mod 2 Moore spectrum is the Thom spectrum

$$M(2) \simeq (S^1)^\mu.$$

The classifying map for μ extends to a double loop map

$$\tilde{\mu} : \Omega^2 S^3 \rightarrow BO.$$

Mahowald proved the following theorem [Mah77]:

Theorem 1.1 (Mahowald). *There is an equivalence of spectra*

$$(\Omega^2 S^3)^{\tilde{\mu}} \simeq H\underline{\mathbb{F}}_2.$$

The bundle μ may also be regarded C_2 -equivariant virtual bundle over S^1 , by endowing both S^1 and the bundle with the trivial action. Since $B_{C_2}O$ is an equivariant infinite loop space [Ati68], the classifying map for μ extends to an Ω^ρ -loop map

$$\tilde{\mu} : \Omega^\rho S^{\rho+1} \rightarrow B_{C_2}O.$$

Here, ρ is the regular representation of C_2 . The purpose of this paper is to prove the following.

Theorem 1.2. *There is an equivalence of C_2 -spectra*

$$(\Omega^\rho S^{\rho+1})^{\tilde{\mu}} \simeq H\underline{\mathbb{F}}_2.$$

(Here, $\underline{\mathbb{F}}_2$ denotes the constant Mackey functor with value \mathbb{F}_2 .)

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Conventions. Equivariant objects in this paper either live in Top^{C_2} , the category of C_2 -spaces, or Sp^{C_2} , the category of genuine C_2 -spectra. In both of these categories, the equivalences are those equivariant maps which induce equivalences on both C_2 -fixed points and underlying fixed points. We let \underline{H} denote the Eilenberg-MacLane spectrum $H\underline{\mathbb{F}}_2$, with underlying spectrum $H := H\mathbb{F}_2$. We use \underline{H}_* and $\pi_*^{C_2}$ to denote $RO(C_2)$ -graded homology and homotopy *groups* (i.e. *not* the Mackey functors) of C_2 -equivariant spaces and spectra, and H_* and π_* to denote the ordinary homology and homotopy groups of non-equivariant spaces and spectra. We let σ denote the sign representation of C_2 , and let $\rho = 1 + \sigma$ denote the regular representation. For a representation V , $S(V)$ denotes the unit sphere in V , and S^V denotes its one point compactification, and $|V|$ denotes its dimension.

2. EQUIVARIANT PRELIMINARIES

Euler class. Let a denote the Euler class in $\pi_{-\sigma}^{C_2} S$, given geometrically by the inclusion

$$S^0 \hookrightarrow S^\sigma.$$

There is a cofiber sequence

$$(2.1) \quad C_{2+} \rightarrow S^0 \hookrightarrow S^\sigma$$

so the cofiber of a is stably given by

$$(2.2) \quad Ca \simeq \Sigma^{1-\sigma} C_{2+}.$$

The transfer induces a map

$$u : S^{1-\sigma} \xrightarrow{tr} \Sigma^{1-\sigma} C_{2+} \simeq Ca$$

which serves as a Thom class for the representation σ :

$$u : S^1 \rightarrow Ca \wedge S^\sigma.$$

For $X \in \text{Sp}^{C_2}$, we have

$$\begin{aligned} \pi_k^{C_2}(X) &\cong \pi_k(X^{C_2}), \\ \pi_V^{C_2}(X \wedge Ca) &\cong \pi_{|V|}(X^e). \end{aligned}$$

Said differently,

$$(2.3) \quad \pi_*^{C_2} X \wedge Ca \cong \pi_* X^e[u^\pm].$$

Tate square. We will let

$$\begin{aligned} X^h &:= F(EC_{2+}, X), \\ X^\Phi &:= X \wedge \widetilde{EC}_2 \end{aligned}$$

denote the homotopy completion and geometric localization of X , respectively. The fixed points of X^h are the homotopy fixed points of X , and the fixed points of X^Φ

are the geometric fixed points of X . X is recovered from these approximations by the pullback (“Tate square”) [GM95]

$$\begin{array}{ccc} X & \longrightarrow & X^\Phi \\ \downarrow & & \downarrow \\ X^h & \longrightarrow & X^t \end{array}$$

where the spectrum X^t is the equivariant Tate spectrum

$$X^t := (X^h)^\Phi.$$

Note that a generalization of the argument establishing (2.2) yields an equivalence

$$\Sigma^{k\sigma-1}C(a^k) \simeq S(k\sigma)_+.$$

Taking a colimit, we see that we have

$$\begin{aligned} \operatorname{hocolim}_k \Sigma^{k\sigma-1}C(a^k) &\simeq EC_{2+}, \\ \operatorname{hocolim}_k S^{k\sigma} &\simeq \widetilde{EC}_2. \end{aligned}$$

It follows that homotopy completion and geometric localization can be reinterpreted as a -completion and a -localization:

$$\begin{aligned} X^h &\simeq X_a^\wedge, \\ X^\Phi &\simeq X[a^{-1}]. \end{aligned}$$

In this manner, the Tate square is equivalent to the “ a -arithmetic square”

$$\begin{array}{ccc} X & \longrightarrow & X[a^{-1}] \\ \downarrow & & \downarrow \\ X_a^\wedge & \longrightarrow & X_a^\wedge[a^{-1}] \end{array}$$

Using (2.3), the a -Bockstein spectral sequence takes the form

$$\pi_*(X^e)[u^\pm, a] \Rightarrow \pi_*^{C_2}(X^h).$$

The a -Bockstein spectral sequence can be regarded as an $RO(C_2)$ -graded version of the homotopy fixed point spectral sequence (see [HM17, Lem. 4.8]).

The mod 2 Eilenberg-MacLane spectrum. We have [HK01]

$$\pi_*^{C_2} \underline{H} = \mathbb{F}_2[a, u] \oplus \frac{\mathbb{F}_2[a, u]}{(a^\infty, u^\infty)} \{\theta\}$$

where

$$\begin{aligned} |u| &= 1 - \sigma, \\ |\theta| &= 2\sigma - 2. \end{aligned}$$

The a - u divisible factor in $\pi_* \underline{H}$ is best understood from the Tate square, using

$$\begin{aligned} \pi_*^{C_2} \underline{H}^h &\cong \mathbb{F}_2[a, u^\pm], \\ \pi_*^{C_2} \underline{H}^\Phi &\cong \mathbb{F}_2[a^\pm, u]. \end{aligned}$$

Actually, the second isomorphism lifts to an equivalence

$$\underline{H}^{\Phi C_2} \simeq H[a^{-1}u] := \bigvee_{i \geq 0} \Sigma^i H$$

so we have

$$\underline{H}_*^{\Phi} X \cong H_*(X^{\Phi C_2})[a^{\pm}, u]$$

and, restricting the grading to trivial representations, we get

$$(2.4) \quad \underline{H}_*^{\Phi} X \cong H_*(X^{\Phi C_2})[a^{-1}u].$$

By applying $\pi_V^{C_2}$ to the map

$$\underline{H} \wedge X \rightarrow \underline{H} \wedge X \wedge Ca$$

we get a homomorphism

$$(2.5) \quad \Phi^e : \underline{H}_V(X) \rightarrow H_{|V|}(X^e).$$

Taking geometric fixed points of a map

$$S^V \rightarrow \underline{H} \wedge X$$

gives a map

$$S^{V^{C_2}} \rightarrow \underline{H}^{\Phi C_2} \wedge X^{\Phi C_2}$$

Using (2.4) and passing to the quotient by the ideal generated by $a^{-1}u$, we get a homomorphism

$$(2.6) \quad \Phi^{C_2} : \underline{H}_V(X) \rightarrow H_{|V^{C_2}|}(X^{\Phi C_2}).$$

A useful lemma. Our main computational lemma is the following.

Lemma 2.7. *Suppose that $X \in \text{Sp}^{C_2}$ and suppose that $\{b_i\}$ is a set of elements of $H_*(X)$ such that*

- (1) $\{\Phi^e(b_i)\}$ is a basis of $H_*(X^e)$, and
- (2) $\{\Phi^{C_2}(b_i)\}$ is a basis of $H_*(X^{\Phi C_2})$.

Then $H_(X)$ is free over H_* , and $\{b_i\}$ is a basis.*

Proof. The set $\{b_i\}$ corresponds to a map

$$\underline{H} \wedge \bigvee S^{|b_i|} \rightarrow \underline{H} \wedge X.$$

Assumption (1) implies this map is an equivalence upon applying Φ^e , while assumption (2) implies this map is an equivalence upon applying Φ^{C_2} . The result follows. \square

3. HOMOLOGY OF ρ -LOOP SPACES

We spell out some specific algebraic structure carried by the equivariant homology of a ρ -loop space. A more detailed and general study of this algebraic structure will appear in [Hil].

Products. Suppose $X = \Omega^\rho Y \in \text{Top}^{C_2}$ is a ρ -loop space. Then X is in particular a 1-loop space, and is therefore an equivariant H -space with product

$$m : X \times X \rightarrow X.$$

However, the σ -loop space structure also endows X with a twisted product related to the transfer. Namely, let

$$S^\sigma \rightarrow S^\sigma/S^0 \approx C_{2+} \wedge S^1$$

be the pinch map. This gives rise to a twisted product

$$\tilde{m} : N^\times \Omega Y \rightarrow \Omega^\sigma Y$$

where

$$N^\times Z := \text{Map}(C_2, Z) = Z \times_{\vec{C}_2} Z$$

is the norm (with respect to Cartesian product). In particular, there is a map

$$(3.1) \quad \tilde{m} : N^\times \Omega^2 Y \rightarrow X.$$

Upon applying fixed points to the map (3.1), we get an additive transfer

$$(3.2) \quad t : X^e \rightarrow X^{C_2}.$$

In homology, the H -space structure give rise to a product

$$m : \underline{H}_V X \otimes \underline{H}_W X \rightarrow \underline{H}_{V+W} X.$$

Using the equivariant commutative ring spectrum structure of \underline{H} [Ull13], the twisted product \tilde{m} gives rise to a “norm map” (see [BH15, Thm. 7.2])

$$n : H_k X^e \rightarrow \underline{H}_{k\rho} X.$$

Dyer-Lashof operations. X has even more structure: X is an E_ρ -algebra [GM17]. Specifically, regard $S(\rho)$ as a $C_2 \times \Sigma_2$ -space where C_2 acts on ρ and Σ_2 acts antipodally. Then the E_ρ -structure gives a map

$$S(\rho) \times_{\Sigma_2} X^{\times 2} \rightarrow X.$$

Note that \underline{H} is itself an E_ρ -ring spectrum, because it is actually an equivariant commutative ring spectrum, so $\underline{H} \wedge X_+$ is an E_ρ -ring in \underline{H} -modules. Given $x \in \underline{H}_V(X)$, represented by a map

$$x : S^V \rightarrow \underline{H} \wedge X_+,$$

there is an induced composite

$$\begin{aligned} \underline{H} \wedge S(\rho)_+ \wedge_{\Sigma_2} S^{2V} &\xrightarrow{1 \wedge 1 \wedge x \wedge x} \underline{H} \wedge S(\rho)_+ \wedge_{\Sigma_2} (\underline{H} \wedge X_+)^{\wedge 2} \\ &\rightarrow \underline{H} \wedge \underline{H} \wedge X_+ \\ &\rightarrow \underline{H} \wedge X_+ \end{aligned}$$

(where the unlabeled maps come from the E_ρ -ring and \underline{H} -module structure of $\underline{H} \wedge X_+$). Applying $\pi_\star^{C_2}$, we get a total power operation

$$\mathcal{P}(x) : \tilde{\underline{H}}_\star(S(\rho)_+ \wedge_{\Sigma_2} S^{2V}) \rightarrow \underline{H}_\star X.$$

For the purposes of this paper we will be only concerned with the case of $V = k\rho - \sigma$.

We will need the following lemma.

Lemma 3.3. *We have the following identification of the C_2 -fixed point space of the extended power:*

$$(S(\rho)_+ \wedge_{\Sigma_2} S^{2(k\rho-\sigma)})^{C_2} \approx S^{2k-1} \vee S^{2k}.$$

Proof. The extended power can be identified with the Thom complex of the equivariant vector bundle

$$S(\rho) \times_{\Sigma_2} \mathbb{R}^{2(k\rho-\sigma)} \rightarrow S(\rho)/\Sigma_2.$$

The fixed points is the Thom complex of the fixed point bundle. Thinking of $S(\rho)$ as the unit circle in \mathbb{C} , with C_2 acting by conjugation, the fixed points of the base are given by

$$[S(\rho)/\Sigma_2]^{C_2} = \{[1], [i]\}.$$

The bundle has fiber $\mathbb{R}^{2(k\rho-\sigma)}$ over $[1]$, and because Σ_2 acts with the antipodal action mixed with the interchange action, the fiber over $[i]$ is given by

$$\mathbb{R}^{\rho(k\rho-\sigma)} = \mathbb{R}^{(2k-1)\rho}.$$

The result follows. \square

Proposition 3.4. *We have*

$$\tilde{H}_\star S(\rho)_+ \wedge_{\Sigma_2} S^{2(k\rho-\sigma)} \cong \underline{H}_\star \{e_{2k\rho-\sigma-1}, e_{2k\rho-\sigma}\}.$$

Proof. Theorem 2.15 of [Wil17] implies there is a cofiber sequence

$$S^{2k\rho-2\sigma} \rightarrow S(\rho)_+ \wedge_{\Sigma_2} S^{2(k\rho-\sigma)} \rightarrow S^{2k\rho-1}.$$

There are two possibilities for the long exact sequence in \underline{H}_\star : either (a) the connecting homomorphism sends $\iota_{2k\rho-1}$ to zero, or (b) the connecting homomorphism sends it to $\theta\iota_{2k\rho-2\sigma}$. Only possibility (b) is compatible with Lemma 3.3 from geometric fixed point considerations. The result follows. \square

Thus we get a pair of Dyer-Lashof operations

$$\begin{aligned} Q^{k\rho} &: \underline{H}_{k\rho-\sigma} X \rightarrow \underline{H}_{2k\rho-\sigma} X, \\ Q^{k\rho-1} &: \underline{H}_{k\rho-\sigma} X \rightarrow \underline{H}_{2k\rho-\sigma-1} X \end{aligned}$$

given by the formulas

$$\begin{aligned} Q^{k\rho}(x) &:= \mathcal{P}(x)(e_{2k\rho-\sigma}), \\ Q^{k\rho-1}(x) &:= \mathcal{P}(x)(e_{2k\rho-\sigma-1}). \end{aligned}$$

Remark 3.5. If X is actually an equivariant infinite loop space, then $\underline{H}_\star X$ has an action by equivariant Dyer-Lashof operations [Wil17], and these operations agree with those defined in that paper.

Compatibility with fixed points. The compatibility of all this structure with the maps Φ^ϵ and Φ^{C_2} of (2.5) and (2.6) is summarized as follows.

Products: Note that X^e is an E_2 -algebra, and X^{C_2} is an E_1 -algebra. The maps Φ^ϵ and Φ^{C_2} are algebra homomorphisms.

Norms: The following diagram commutes:

$$\begin{array}{ccccc}
 & & H_k X^e & & \\
 & \swarrow t & \downarrow n & \searrow \text{Sq} & \\
 H_k X^{C_2} & \xleftarrow{\Phi^{C_2}} & \underline{H}_{k\rho} X & \xrightarrow{\Phi^\epsilon} & H_{2k} X^e
 \end{array}$$

Here t is the transfer (3.2) and Sq is the squaring map.

Dyer-Lashof operations: The following diagrams commute, where $\epsilon = 0, 1$:

$$\begin{array}{ccc}
 \underline{H}_{k\rho-\sigma} X & \xrightarrow{\Phi^\epsilon} & H_{2k-1} X^e \\
 Q^{k\rho-\epsilon} \downarrow & & \downarrow Q^{2k-\epsilon} \\
 \underline{H}_{2k\rho-\sigma-\epsilon} X & \xrightarrow{\Phi^\epsilon} & H_{4k-1-\epsilon} X^e
 \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{ccc}
 \underline{H}_{k\rho-\sigma} X & \xrightarrow{\Phi^{C_2}} & H_k X^{C_2} \\
 Q^{k\rho} \downarrow & & \downarrow \text{Sq} \\
 \underline{H}_{2k\rho-\sigma} X & \xrightarrow{\Phi^{C_2}} & H_{2k} X^{C_2}
 \end{array}$$

4. HOMOLOGY OF $\Omega^\rho S^{\rho+1}$

Theorem 4.1. *There is an additive isomorphism (of \underline{H}_* -modules)*

$$\underline{H}_* \Omega^\rho S^{\rho+1} \cong \underline{H}_* \otimes E[t_0, t_1, \dots] \otimes P[e_1, e_2, \dots]$$

with

$$\begin{aligned}
 |t_i| &= 2^i \rho - \sigma, \\
 |e_i| &= (2^i - 1)\rho.
 \end{aligned}$$

Proof. Note that we have

$$H_* \Omega^2 S^3 = \mathbb{F}_2[x_1, x_2, \dots]$$

with

$$|x_i| = 2^i - 1.$$

Here x_1 is the fundamental class ι_1 , and

$$x_i := Q^{2^i} Q^{2^{i-1}} \dots Q^2 x_1.$$

Define $t_0 \in \underline{H}_1 \Omega^\rho S^{\rho+1}$ to be the fundamental class, and define the other “generators” e_i and t_i by

$$\begin{aligned} e_i &:= n(x_i), \\ t_i &:= Q^{2^i \rho} Q^{2^{i-1} \rho} \dots Q^\rho t_0. \end{aligned}$$

Consider the product

$$t^\epsilon e^k := t_0^{\epsilon_0} t_1^{\epsilon_1} \dots e_1^{k_1} e_2^{k_2} \dots \in \underline{H}_\star(\Omega^\rho S^{\rho+1})$$

with $\epsilon_i \in \{0, 1\}$ and $k_i \geq 0$. We compute

$$\Phi^e(t^\epsilon e^k) = x_1^{2k_1 + \epsilon_0} x_2^{2k_2 + \epsilon_1} \dots$$

Mapping out of the cofiber sequence (2.1) gives a fiber sequence

$$\Omega N^\times \Omega S^{\rho+1} \rightarrow \Omega^\rho S^{\rho+1} \rightarrow \Omega S^{\rho+1} \xrightarrow{\Delta} N^\times \Omega S^{\rho+1}.$$

Upon taking fixed points we get a fiber sequence

$$\Omega^2 S^3 \xrightarrow{t} (\Omega^\rho S^{\rho+1})^{C_2} \rightarrow \Omega S^2 \xrightarrow{\text{null}} \Omega S^3$$

In particular there is an equivalence

$$(\Omega^\rho S^{\rho+1})^{C_2} \simeq \Omega S^2 \times \Omega^2 S^3.$$

and we have

$$H_\star(\Omega^\rho S^{\rho+1})^{C_2} \cong P[y] \otimes P[t(x_1), t(x_2), \dots]$$

where y is the image of the fundamental class under the map

$$S^1 \rightarrow (\Omega^\rho S^{\rho+1})^{C_2}.$$

It follows that

$$\Phi^{C_2}(t^\epsilon e^k) = y^{\epsilon_0 + 2\epsilon_1 + 4\epsilon_2 + \dots} t(x_1)^{k_1} t(x_2)^{k_2} \dots$$

Thus the set

$$\{t^\epsilon e^k\} \subset \underline{H}_\star X$$

satisfies the hypotheses of Lemma 2.7, and the result follows. \square

5. THE EQUIVARIANT MAHOWALD THEOREM

In order to prove Theorem 1.2 we will need to establish a Thom isomorphism

$$\underline{H}_\star(\Omega^\rho S^{\rho+1})^{\tilde{\mu}} \cong \underline{H}_\star \Omega^\rho S^{\rho+1}.$$

We will do so in two steps. Recall that an E_0 -algebra is just a spectrum X equipped with a map $S^0 \rightarrow X$. Let $\text{Free}_{E_\rho}^* : \text{Alg}_{E_0}(\text{Sp}^{C_2}) \rightarrow \text{Alg}_{E_\rho}(\text{Sp}^{C_2})$ denote a homotopical left adjoint to the forgetful functor. An explicit model for this functor is the homotopy pushout of E_ρ -algebras:

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \text{Free}_{E_\rho}(S^0) & \longrightarrow & \text{Free}_{E_\rho}(X) \\ \downarrow & & \downarrow \\ S^0 & \longrightarrow & \text{Free}_{E_\rho}^*(X) \end{array}$$

We will need the following theorem.

Theorem 5.1. *Let $f : X \rightarrow B_{C_2}O$ classify a virtual bundle of dimension zero and denote by $\tilde{f} : \Omega^\rho \Sigma^\rho X \rightarrow B_{C_2}O$ the associated Ω^ρ -map. Then there is a canonical equivalence of E_ρ -algebras in Sp^{C_2}*

$$\mathrm{Free}_{E_\rho}^*(X^f) \cong (\Omega^\rho \Sigma^\rho X)^{\tilde{f}}.$$

Proof. Combine the equivariant approximation theorem [GM17, RS00] with Theorem IX.7.1 and Remark X.6.4 of [LMSM86]. \square

Remark 5.2. The non-equivariant version of Theorem 5.1 was first observed by Mark Mahowald, and then proven by Lewis. A nice modern account in the non-equivariant setting via universal properties can be found in [AB14].

Proposition 5.3. *There is a Thom isomorphism*

$$\underline{H}_\star(\Omega^\rho S^{\rho+1})^{\tilde{\mu}} \cong \underline{H}_\star \Omega^\rho S^{\rho+1}.$$

Proof. Let $\mathrm{Free}_{E_\rho, \underline{H}}^* : \mathrm{Alg}_{E_0}(\mathrm{Mod}_{\underline{H}}) \rightarrow \mathrm{Alg}_{E_\rho}(\mathrm{Mod}_{\underline{H}})$ denote a homotopical left adjoint to the forgetful functor. Along with the previous theorem, we will need two facts:

- (1) $\underline{H} \wedge (-) : \mathrm{Sp}^{C_2} \rightarrow \mathrm{Mod}_{\underline{H}}$ is symmetric monoidal.
- (2) There is a Thom isomorphism $\underline{H} \wedge (S^1)^\mu \cong \underline{H} \wedge S_+^1$.

The proposition is now proved by the following string of equivalences:

$$\begin{aligned} \underline{H} \wedge (\Omega^\rho \Sigma^\rho S^1)^{\tilde{\mu}} &\cong \underline{H} \wedge \mathrm{Free}_{E_\rho}^*((S^1)^\mu) && \text{by Theorem 5.1} \\ &\cong \mathrm{Free}_{E_\rho, \underline{H}}^*(\underline{H} \wedge (S^1)^\mu) && \text{by (1)} \\ &\cong \mathrm{Free}_{E_\rho, \underline{H}}^*(\underline{H} \wedge S_+^1) && \text{by (2)} \\ &\cong \underline{H} \wedge \mathrm{Free}_{E_\rho}^*(S_+^1) && \text{by (1)} \\ &\cong \underline{H} \wedge \Omega^\rho \Sigma^\rho S_+^1. \end{aligned}$$

\square

Proof of Theorem 1.2. The Thom class is represented by a map

$$(\Omega^\rho S^{\rho+1})^{\tilde{\mu}} \rightarrow \underline{H}.$$

We wish to show this map is an isomorphism on \underline{H}_\star . The homology of \underline{H} is the C_2 -equivariant Steenrod algebra, computed in [HK01] to be

$$\underline{H}_\star \underline{H} = \underline{H}_\star[\tau_0, \tau_1, \dots, \xi_1, \xi_2, \dots] / (\tau_i^2 = (u + a\tau_0)\xi_{i+1} + a\tau_{i+1})$$

with

$$\begin{aligned} |\tau_i| &= 2^i \rho - \sigma, \\ |\xi_i| &= (2^i - 1)\rho. \end{aligned}$$

It suffices to show it is surjective, since the two homologies are abstractly isomorphic and of finite type. Observe that the composite

$$M(2) \simeq (S^1)^\mu \rightarrow (\Omega^\rho S^{\rho+1})^{\tilde{\mu}} \rightarrow \underline{H}$$

hits τ_0 . Everything is hit then, by [Wil17, Thm. 5.4]. \square

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