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Quantum criticality of the kagome antiferromagnet with Dzyaloshinskii-Moriya interactions

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We investigate the zero-temperature phase diagram of the nearest-neighbor kagome antiferromagnet in the presence of Dzyaloshinskii-Moriya interaction. We develop a theory for the transition between $\mathbb{Z}_2$ spin liquids with bosonic spinons and a phase with antiferromagnetic long-range order. Connections to recent numerical studies and experiments are discussed.

I. INTRODUCTION

The nearest neighbor spin $S = 1/2$ antiferromagnet on the kagome lattice has been the focus of extensive theoretical and experimental study because it is a prime candidate for realizing a ground state without antiferromagnetic order.

On the experimental side, much attention has focused on the $S = 1/2$ compound herbertsmithite ZnCu$_3$(OH)$_6$Cl$_2$. It has $J \approx 170$ K and no observed ordering or structural distortion. However, there is an appreciable amount of substitutional disorder between the Zn and Cu sites (believed to be of the order 5-10 %) which affects the low $T$ behavior. More importantly, there is an upturn in the susceptibility at $T = 75$ K which has been ascribed to the DM interactions.

On the theoretical side, the most recent evidence on the the nearest-neighbor antiferromagnet points consistently to a ground state with a spin gap of 0.05J and valence bond solid (VBS) order. The pattern of the VBS order is quite complex with a large unit cell, but was anticipated by Marston and Zeng by an application of the VBS selection mechanism described in the $1/N$ expansion of the SU($N$) antiferromagnet.

The influence of the DM interactions has also been studied theoretically. Starting with an “algebraic spin liquid” ground state, Hermele et al. argued that the DM coupling, $D$, was a relevant perturbation, implying that an infinitesimal $D$ would induce long-range magnetic order. In a recent exact diagonalization study, Cepas et al. reach a different conclusion: they claim that there is a non-zero critical DM coupling $D_c$ beyond which magnetic order is induced. They estimate $D_c/J \approx 0.1$, quite close to the value measured for ZnCu$_3$(OH)$_6$Cl$_2$ which has $J/D \approx 0.08$. This proximity led Cepas et al. to suggest that the quantum criticality of the DM-induced transition to magnetic order controls the observable properties of this kagome antiferromagnet.

The purpose of this paper is to propose a theory for the quantum critical point discovered by Cepas et al. We will compute various observables of this theory, allowing a potential comparison with numerics and experiments.

II. MEAN FIELD THEORY

The model we consider is a standard Heisenberg Hamiltonian supplemented by an additional DM interaction. It
FIG. 1: Staggered DM interaction from triangle to triangle in z-direction as in Ref. 34. The arrowheads indicate D to come out of the plane, whereas the tails denote D to go into the plane. Note that the triangles are summed clock- and anticlockwise, respectively, indicated by the arrows on the bonds.

assumes the form

$$H = \frac{1}{2} \sum_{i,j} [J_{ij} S_i \cdot S_j + D_{ij} \cdot (S_i \times S_j)] . \quad (1)$$

$S_i$ in this notation denotes the spin operator at site $i$, $J_{ij}$ is assumed to be uniform and of the nearest neighbor type, and $D_{ij} = D_i e_z$ is taken along the z-axis and staggered from triangle to triangle, see Fig. 1. This additional term explicitly breaks the spinrotation symmetry by favoring configurations lying in the x-y plane. Furthermore this term increases the tendency of classical spin ordering. It has been shown in earlier works that Schwinger bosons are ideally suited to describe phase transitions between paramagnetic and magnetically ordered phases in spin models. Following Ref. 27 we introduce $N_u$ as the number of unit cells in the systems and $N_s$ as the number of sites within the unit cell. We can write the mean-field Hamiltonian per flavor and unit cell as

$$H_{MF} = \frac{1}{N_u} \sum_{k} \Psi^*(k) \mathbb{H}(q_{ij}, p_{ij}, \lambda, k) \Psi(k)$$

$$+ \frac{J}{2} \sum_{(ij)'} |q_{ij}|^2 + i D \sum_{(ij)'} (p_{ij} - q_{ij} p_{ij})$$

$$- N_s \lambda (1 + \kappa) \quad (6)$$

where $\sum_{(ij)'}$ denotes the sum over bonds belonging to the unit cell,

$$\Psi^*(k) = (b_{1\uparrow}^*(k), ..., b_{N_\uparrow}^*(k), b_{1\downarrow}^*(-k), ..., b_{N_\downarrow}^*(-k)) , \quad (7)$$

and the matrix

$$\mathbb{H} = \left( \begin{array}{cc} \lambda \mathbb{I} & C^*(k) \\ C(k) & \lambda \mathbb{I} \end{array} \right) \quad (8)$$

with the matrices $\mathbb{I}$ (identity) and $C(k)$ being $N_s \times N_s$ matrices; the explicit form of these matrices is given in Appendix A. As mentioned before, one of the major assets of the Schwinger boson approach is that it can describe magnetically disordered gapped spin liquid phases as well as magnetically ordered states. On a formal level in the large $N$ approach this is achieved by introducing the following notation for the Schwinger bosons

$$b_{i\sigma} = \sqrt{N} x_i, \quad b_{i\sigma}^* = \sqrt{N} \tilde{x}_i$$

where $\tilde{m} = 2, ..., N$ .

The first component is thus a classical field. If $x \neq 0$ it signals condensation which causes long range order to appear. Following Ref. 27 we can integrate out the...
Schwinger bosons and the zero-temperature mean field energy assumes the following form

\[ E_{MF} = \frac{1}{N_{\text{u}}} \sum_{k,\mu=1...N_{\text{s}}} \omega_{\mu}(k) - N_{\text{s}} \lambda (1 + \kappa) + \lambda \sum_{\nu'\sigma} |x_{\nu'\sigma}|^2 \]

\[ + \frac{j}{2} \sum_{(ij)'} \left[ (q_{ij})^2 - (q_{ij} \epsilon_{\sigma'\sigma} x_{i\sigma} x_{j\sigma'}) + \text{h.c.} \right] \]

\[ + \frac{D}{4} \sum_{(ij)'} (p_{ij} q_{ij} - q_{ij} p_{ij}) \]

\[ - \frac{iD}{4} \sum_{(ij)'} (p_{ij} \epsilon_{\sigma'\sigma} x_{i\sigma} x_{j\sigma'} + q_{ij} r_{\sigma'\sigma} x_{i\sigma} x_{j\sigma'}) \]

\[ + \frac{iD}{4} \sum_{(ij)'} (p_{ij} \epsilon_{\sigma'\sigma} x_{i\sigma} x_{j\sigma'} + q_{ij} r_{\sigma'\sigma} x_{i\sigma} x_{j\sigma'}) \]

(10)

where \( \sum_{i'} \) denotes the sum over all sites within one unit cell. In the following we solve the self-consistency equations according to

\[ \kappa = \langle b_{\nu \sigma}^* b_{\nu \sigma} \rangle_{MF} \]

\[ q_{ij} = \langle Q_{ij} \rangle_{MF} \]

\[ p_{ij} = \langle P_{ij} \rangle_{MF} \]

(11)

with the Hamiltonian defined in Eq. (6).

Our solution of the mean-field equations follows previous work\textsuperscript{27,28}, which classified physically different \( Z_2 \) spin liquid solutions without the DM interactions. We found that these solutions have a natural generalization in the presence of DM terms, with values of the \( p_{ij} \) which reflect the symmetries of the \( q_{ij} \). Two stable solutions were found in previous work, with only two possibly distinct values of \( q_{ij} \) as illustrated in Fig. 2. Including the DM interactions, these solutions extended to

(i) \( q_1 = q_2 \) real, \( p_1 = p_2 \) pure imaginary: upon increasing \( \kappa \), the Schwinger bosons condense at \( k = 0 \), with the spins at angles of 120° to each other within the unit cell.

(ii) \( q_1 = -q_2 \) real, \( p_1 = -p_2 \) pure imaginary: upon increasing \( \kappa \), the Schwinger bosons condense at \( k = \pm (2\pi/3, 0) \) into a state which is called the \( \sqrt{3} \times \sqrt{3} \) antiferromagnet, characterized by an enlarged unit cell. Solutions with larger unit cells can be present with additional frustrating interactions\textsuperscript{23}, but we will not consider them here.

A. Phase diagram

Our phase diagram is shown in Fig. 3 as a function of \( \kappa = n_b/N \) (which corresponds to the spin size) and the parameter \( D/J \). Our phase diagram is similar to that obtained recently by Messio \textit{et al.}\textsuperscript{32}. They also considered solutions with a larger unit cell which were stable over some portion of the phase diagram.

FIG. 3: Phase diagram in the \( N \rightarrow \infty \) limit of the Sp(\( N \)) theory. The x-axis shows \( \kappa = 2S/N \) and the y-axis \( D/J \). The phases have long-range magnetic order type (LRO), or gapped \( Z_2 \) spin liquids. The thick line is a first-order transition, while the thin lines are second-order transitions: the transition to the \( k = 0 \) LRO state is described in Section III. The limit of \( D/J \rightarrow 0 \) reduces to the results presented in Ref. 27.

We start with a discussion of the classical limit. While for \( D = 0 \) the long-range ordered state of the \( \sqrt{3} \times \sqrt{3} \) type is generically preferred\textsuperscript{27}, infinitesimal \( D \) favors the so-called \( k = 0 \) state. This is reproduced by our mean-field equations in the large spin limit \( \kappa \rightarrow \infty \). For finite values of \( \kappa \) there is a small slab in which long-range order of the \( \sqrt{3} \times \sqrt{3} \) type is favored over the \( k = 0 \). These states are separated by a first order transition driven by the ratio \( D/J \).

A similar behavior appears for the corresponding spin liquid states at small \( \kappa \). The \( q_1 = -q_2 \) is favored at small \( D/J \), and then undergoes a first order transition to the \( q_1 = q_2 \) state at large \( D/J \).

In exact diagonalization studies of the spin \( S = 1/2 \) kagome antiferromagnet with DM interactions a second order phase transition between a phase with short ranged

\[ \text{FIG. 2: We take a unit cell of three sites, labeled u, v, w. The arrows indicate the values of the oriented variables } q_{ij}. \text{ The links with single arrows have } q_{ij} = q_1, \text{ while those with double arrows have } q_{ij} = q_2. \text{ The } P_{ij} \text{ are unoriented, and take values } p_1 \text{ and } p_2 \text{ on these links respectively.} \]
of Ref. 27): It is clear that this transformation is rotationally invariant, which therefore can be used for a study of critical properties in Section III.

III. QUANTUM CRITICALITY

We will consider only the transition out of the $q_1 = q_2$ spin liquid, because that is what is seen in the numerical studies. The corresponding transition out of the $q_1 = -q_2$ spin liquid can be treated in a similar manner. Throughout this section we will consider the physical SU(2) antiferromagnet directly, and not take the large $N$ limit. The method followed below has been reviewed in a more general context in Ref. 30.

Since we are at $k = 0$, we can write the effective action for the bosons by making the small momentum expansion of the matrix in Eq. (A2). We take 3 sites, $u$, $v$, $w$, in each unit cell (see Fig. 2), and then take the continuum limit of the saddle-point Lagrangian. We write the boson operators on these sites as $b_{u\sigma} = U_\sigma$, $b_{v\sigma} = V_\sigma$ etc., and set $q_1 = q_2 = q$, and $p_1 = p_2 = ip$ with $q$ and $p$ real. Then, we write the final Lagrangian in the form

$$\mathcal{L} = \mathcal{L}_H + \mathcal{L}_{DM}$$

(12)

representing the contributions of the Heisenberg exchange and the DM coupling, respectively.

From Eq. (A2) we obtain the Lagrangian in the absence of a DM term (which describes the $k = 0$ solution of Ref. 27):

$$\mathcal{L}_H = U_\sigma \frac{\partial U_\sigma}{\partial \tau} + V_\sigma \frac{\partial V_\sigma}{\partial \tau} + W_\sigma \frac{\partial W_\sigma}{\partial \tau} + \lambda (|U_\sigma|^2 + |V_\sigma|^2 + |W_\sigma|^2) - J_{Q\sigma} \epsilon_{\sigma\sigma'} (U_\sigma V_{\sigma'} + V_\sigma W_{\sigma'} + W_\sigma U_{\sigma'}) + \text{c.c.} + \frac{J_q}{2} \epsilon_{\sigma\sigma'} (\partial_1 U_\sigma \partial_1 V_{\sigma'} + \partial_2 U_\sigma \partial_2 W_{\sigma'} + \partial_3 W_\sigma \partial_3 U_{\sigma'}) + \text{c.c.}$$

(13)

where $\partial_i$ is the gradient along the direction $e_i$ in Eq. (A1).

We now perform a unitary transformation to new variables $X_\sigma$, $Y_\sigma$, $Z_\sigma$. These are chosen to diagonalize only the non-gradient terms in $\mathcal{L}_H$.

$$\begin{pmatrix} U_\sigma \\ V_\sigma \\ W_\sigma \end{pmatrix} = \frac{Z_\sigma}{\sqrt{6}} \begin{pmatrix} 1 \\ \zeta \\ \zeta^2 \end{pmatrix} + \epsilon_{\sigma\sigma'} \frac{Z_{\sigma'}}{\sqrt{6}} \begin{pmatrix} i \\ i\zeta^2 \\ i\zeta \end{pmatrix} + \frac{Y_\sigma}{\sqrt{6}} \begin{pmatrix} 1 \\ \zeta \\ \zeta^2 \end{pmatrix} + \epsilon_{\sigma\sigma'} \frac{Y_{\sigma'}}{\sqrt{6}} \begin{pmatrix} -i \\ -i\zeta^2 \\ -i\zeta \end{pmatrix} + \frac{X_\sigma}{\sqrt{3}} \begin{pmatrix} 1 \\ 1 \\ 1 \end{pmatrix}.$$  

(14)

where $\zeta = e^{2\pi i/3}$. The tensor structure above makes it clear that this transformation is rotationally invariant, and that $X_\sigma$, $Y_\sigma$, $Z_\sigma$ transform as spinors under SU(2) spin rotations. Inserting Eq. (14) into $\mathcal{L}_H$ we find

$$\mathcal{L}_H = X_\sigma \frac{\partial X_\sigma}{\partial \tau} + Y_\sigma \frac{\partial Y_\sigma}{\partial \tau} + Z_\sigma \frac{\partial Z_\sigma}{\partial \tau} + (\lambda + \sqrt{3}J_q)|Z_\sigma|^2 + (\lambda - \sqrt{3}J_q)|Y_\sigma|^2 + \lambda |X_\sigma|^2 + \frac{J_q \sqrt{3}}{2} (|\partial_1 Z_\sigma|^2 + |\partial_2 Z_\sigma|^2) + \ldots$$  

(15)

The ellipses indicate omitted terms involving spatial gradients in the $X_\sigma$ and $Y_\sigma$ which we will not keep track of. This is because the fields $Y_\sigma$ and $X_\sigma$ are massive relative to $Z_\sigma$ (for $q < 0$ which is the case in our mean-field solution), and so can be integrated out. This yields the effective Lagrangian

$$\mathcal{L}^{\sigma}_{H} = \frac{1}{(\lambda - \sqrt{3}J_q)} (|\partial_1 Z_\sigma|^2 + |\partial_2 Z_\sigma|^2) + (\lambda - \sqrt{3}J_q)|Z_\sigma|^2 + \ldots$$  

(16)

Note that the omitted spatial gradient terms in $X_\sigma$, $Y_\sigma$ do contribute a correction to the spatial gradient term in Eq. (16), and we have not accounted for this. This Lagrangian shows that the mean-field theory has a transition to magnetic order at $\lambda = |\sqrt{3}J_q|$, which agrees with earlier results.

The effective Lagrangian $\mathcal{L}^{\sigma}_{H}$ is almost the complete solution for the critical theory in the system without the DM interactions. However, we also need higher order terms in Eq. (16), which will arise from including the fluctuations of the gapped fields $Q$ and $\lambda$. Rather than computing these from the microscopic Lagrangian, it is more efficient to deduce their structure from symmetry considerations. The representation in Eq. (14), and the connection of the $U$, $V$, $W$ to the lattice degrees of freedom, allow us to deduce the following symmetry transformations of the $X$, $Y$, $Z$:

- Under a global spin rotation by the SU(2) matrix $g_{\sigma\sigma'}$, we have $Z_\sigma \rightarrow g_{\sigma\sigma'} Z_{\sigma'}$, and similarly for $Y$, and $Z$. When DM interactions are included, the global symmetry is reduced to U(1) rotations about the $z$ axis, under which

$$Z_\uparrow \rightarrow e^{i\theta} Z_\uparrow , \quad Z_\downarrow \rightarrow e^{-i\theta} Z_\downarrow$$

$$Y_\uparrow \rightarrow e^{i\theta} Y_\uparrow , \quad Y_\downarrow \rightarrow e^{-i\theta} Y_\downarrow$$

$$X_\uparrow \rightarrow e^{i\theta} X_\uparrow , \quad X_\downarrow \rightarrow e^{-i\theta} X_\downarrow.$$  

(17)

- Under a 120° lattice rotation, we have $U_\sigma \rightarrow V_\sigma$, $V_\sigma \rightarrow W_\sigma, W_\sigma \rightarrow U_\sigma$. From (14), we see that this symmetry is realized by

$$Z_\sigma \rightarrow \zeta Z_\sigma , \quad Y_\sigma \rightarrow \zeta Y_\sigma , \quad X_\sigma \rightarrow X_\sigma.$$  

(18)

Note that this is distinct from the SU(2) rotation because $\text{det}(\zeta) \neq 1$. 

k = 0 correlations (obtained in the pure Heisenberg case) and phase with $k = 0$ long range order was found. Such a transition is also present in our mean-field theory, which therefore can be used for a study of critical properties in Section III.
• Under time-reversal, we have $U_\sigma \rightarrow \epsilon_{\sigma\sigma'}U^*_\sigma$, and similarly for $V_\sigma, W_\sigma$. This is realized in Eq. (14) by

$$Z_\sigma \rightarrow iZ_\sigma, \quad Y_\sigma \rightarrow -iY_\sigma, \quad X_\sigma \rightarrow \epsilon_{\sigma\sigma'}X^*_\sigma.$$  

(19)

In particular, note that $Z_\uparrow$ does not map to $Z_\downarrow$ under time-reversal.

It is easy to verify that Eq. (15) is invariant under all the symmetry operations above. These symmetry operators make it clear that the only allowed quartic term for the Heisenberg Hamiltonian is $(\sum_\sigma |Z_\sigma|^2)^2$: this implies that the $Z_2$ spin liquid to antiferromagnetic order transition of this model is in the universality class of the O(4) model.\[17\]

Let us now include the DM interactions. From Eq. (A2), we see that

$$L_{DM} = \frac{iDq}{2} \tau_{\sigma\sigma'}^{\uparrow\downarrow} (U_\sigma V_{\sigma'} + V_\sigma W_{\sigma'} + W_\sigma U_{\sigma'}) + c.c.$$  

(20)

We have dropped a term proportional to $Dp$ which has the same structure as the terms in Eq. (15), and ignored spatial gradients. In terms of the fields in Eq. (14), this takes the simple form

$$L_{DM} = \frac{Dq}{2} \left( i\tau^{\uparrow\downarrow}_\sigma X_\sigma X_{\sigma'} + c.c. 
- Z^*_\sigma \tau^{\uparrow\downarrow}_\sigma Z_{\sigma'} + Y^*_\sigma \tau^{\uparrow\downarrow}_\sigma Y_{\sigma'} \right).$$  

(21)

and it can be verified that these terms are invariant under Eqs. (17)\[18\]\[19\]. As before, we now integrate out $X_\sigma$ and $Y_\sigma$ from $L_H + L_{DM}$ in Eqs. (15) and (21). We obtain a Lagrangian with the same structure as Eq. (16), but all couplings become dependent upon $\sigma$: in other words, we have 2 separate XY models for $Z_\uparrow$ and $Z_\downarrow$. Performing a careful analysis of allowed higher order terms as restricted by the symmetry constraints discussed above, and after appropriate rescalings of the spatial, temporal, and field scales, we obtain the field theory with the Lagrangian

$$L_Z = |\partial_\tau Z_\uparrow|^2 + |\nabla Z_\uparrow|^2 + s_1 |Z_\downarrow|^2 + u_1 |Z_\uparrow|^4 + |\partial_\tau Z_\downarrow|^2 + |\nabla Z_\downarrow|^2 + s_1 |Z_\downarrow|^4 + u_1 |Z_\downarrow|^4 
+ v |Z_\downarrow|^2 |Z_\uparrow|^2 + w (|Z_\uparrow Z_\downarrow|^6 + (Z_\uparrow^3 Z_\downarrow^3)^6).$$  

(22)

Note that $s_1 \neq s_1$ in general (and similarly for $u_1 \neq u_1$ etc.), and equality is not required by the time-reversal symmetry in Eq (19). Time-reversal symmetry does prohibit a term $\sim (Z_\uparrow Z_\downarrow)^3$ which is allowed by the other symmetries. Thus we expect only one of $Z_\uparrow$ or $Z_\downarrow$ to condense at the quantum critical point: as we will see from the analysis of observables in Section III A, this transition does indeed correspond to the development of spiral magnetic order in the $x$-$y$ plane. The choice between $Z_\uparrow$ and $Z_\downarrow$ is controlled by the sign of $D$.

Eq. (22) also contains terms which couple the two XY models to each other. The lowest allowed term, $v$, couples the energy densities and does not have any important effects. More interesting is the $w$ term, which shows that the global symmetry is not $O(2) \otimes O(2)$ but $O(2) \otimes O(12)$. In the magnetically ordered phase with $\langle Z_\uparrow \rangle \neq 0$ (say), this term will induce a small ordering field $\sim Z_\uparrow^6$ in the XY model for $Z_\downarrow$. However, the action for $Z_\downarrow$ has a ‘mass’ term $s_1$ with a positive co-efficient, and this sixth order term will not immediately induce ordering in $Z_\downarrow$; i.e. a magnetic phase with $\langle Z_\downarrow \rangle \neq 0$ and $\langle Z_\uparrow \rangle = 0$ has a finite range of stability. Thus close to the transition we can neglect the $Z_\downarrow$ field entirely, and transition is in the universality class of the three-dimensional XY model.

The choice above of $Z_\uparrow$ over $Z_\downarrow$ gives the incorrect appearance that we are breaking the spin reflection symmetry $S_\uparrow \rightarrow -S_\downarrow$ of $H$, suggesting the appearance of a net $z$ ferromagnetic moment. However, notice that the theory of $Z_\uparrow$ is relativistic, and so contains both spinons and anti-spinons which carry $S_z = +1/2$ and $S_z = -1/2$ respectively. The spinon of $Z_\downarrow$ also carries $S_z = -1/2$, and this is degenerate with the anti-spinon of $Z_\uparrow$ in the O(4) invariant theory in Eq. (16). It is this latter degeneracy which is lifted by the DM interactions, which induce a vector spin chirality along the $z$ direction (as we will see below). We will also see there is no net ferromagnetic moment, because time-reversal symmetry is preserved.

### A. Observables

To determine the operators corresponding to the ferromagnetic moment, let us couple a uniform external field $h$ to the lattice Hamiltonian. This adds to the continuum Lagrangian the term

$$L_h = -h \cdot \tau_{\sigma\sigma'} (U_{\sigma'}^* U_\sigma + V_{\sigma'}^* V_\sigma + W_{\sigma'}^* W_\sigma)$$  

(23)

Inserting the parameterization in Eq. (14) this becomes

$$L_h = -h \cdot \tau_{\sigma\sigma'} (X_{\sigma'}^* X_\sigma + Y_{\sigma'}^* Y_\sigma + Z_{\sigma'}^* Z_\sigma)$$  

(24)

We now need to integrate out $X_\sigma$ and $Y_\sigma$ in the Lagrangian $L_H + L_{DM} + L_h$ defined by the sum of Eqs. (15), (21), and (24), and collect the terms linear in $h$. Without the DM coupling, we obtain

$$\sim h \cdot \tau_{\sigma\sigma'} \left( Z_{\sigma'}^* \frac{\partial Z_{\sigma'}}{\partial \tau} - \frac{\partial Z_{\sigma}^*}{\partial \tau} Z_{\sigma'} \right)$$  

(25)

Comparing with $L_H$ in Eq. (16) we see that this is just the coupling to the conserved SU(2) charges of the O(4) model: this is the usual term which determines the magnetic susceptibility of the Heisenberg antiferromagnet.\[37\]

Upon including the effects of $L_{DM}$ we find that the essential structure of Eq. (25) does not change: the $\tau$ matrices get multiplied by some $\sigma$-dependent factors $\tau_{\sigma\sigma'} \rightarrow f_\sigma \tau_{\sigma\sigma'} f_{\sigma'}$ which do not modify the scaling considerations. No term with a new structure is generated by the DM coupling. It can now be seen that these expressions have vanishing expectation values under $L_Z$ in
Eq. (22), and so there is no net ferromagnetic moment in the absence of an external field.

We now turn to the antiferromagnetic order parameter; for a coplanar antiferromagnet, this is described by

$$S_i \propto N_1 \cos(Q \cdot r_i) + N_2 \sin(Q \cdot r_i),$$

(26)

where $N_{1,2}$ are 2 orthogonal vectors representing the spiral order, and $Q$ is wavevector at which the spin structure factor is peaked. For our model, we can see that

$$N_1 + iN_2 = S_u + \zeta S_v + \zeta^2 S_w.$$  

(27)

Using Eq. (14), and keeping only the lowest order term, we therefore obtain

$$N_1 + iN_2 = \left( i\frac{Z_1^2 - Z_2^2}{2}, -(Z_1^2 + Z_2^2)/2, -iZ_1Z_2 \right).$$

(28)

in a notation that makes the rotational invariance evident, this relationship is

$$N_1 + iN_2 = \frac{i}{2} \epsilon_{\alpha\beta} \tau_{\beta\alpha} Z_\alpha Z_.$$

(29)

Note that a phase with $\langle Z_1 \rangle \neq 0$ and $\langle Z_1 \rangle = 0$ has spiral order in the $x$-$y$ plane.

To complete the list of operators which are quadratic in the $Z_\alpha$, we consider the vector spin chirality. This is defined here by

$$S_u \times S_v + S_v \times S_w + S_w \times S_u.$$  

(30)

Using Eq. (14) we find that the leading operator mapping to vector spin chirality is (dropping an overall factor of $|Z_1|^2 + |Z_2|^2$)

$$Z_\sigma^\tau \sigma_\alpha^\beta Z_\alpha^\sigma.$$  

(31)

Note that in the presence of the DM term, the couplings in the effective theory imply that the $z$ component of the vector spin chirality is always non-zero.

### B. Critical properties

Let us assume the transition to magnetic order proceeds via the condensation of $Z_\tau$. The transition is in the XY universality class, and the dimension of the antiferromagnetic order parameter is

$$\dim[N_1] = \dim[N_2] = \dim[Z_\tau] = \frac{1 + \eta}{2}.$$  

(32)

The value of the exponent $\eta$ can be read off from results for the three-dimensional XY model and we obtain $\eta \approx 1.474$. The antiferromagnetic susceptibility will diverge at the critical point as $T^{-2-\eta}$. We note the recent work of Ref. [10] in a different context, which also considered a model with an XY critical point at which the physically measurable magnetic order was the square of the XY field.

The behavior of the uniform magnetic susceptibility follows from the scaling dimension of the operators in Eq. (25). For $h$ along the $z$ direction, the magnetization is the just the conserved U(1) charge of the XY model: it has scaling dimension 2, and the susceptibility $\sim T$. For $h$ along the $x$ or $y$ directions, we have to integrate out $Z_1$, and then the lowest dimension operator coupling to the square of the field is $|Z_1|^2$. This means that the susceptibility only has a weak singularity at the quantum critical point given by that in $\langle |Z_1|^2 \rangle$: at the quantum critical point, there is a non-analytic term $\sim T^{3-1/\nu}$, above an analytic background.

### IV. CONCLUSION

We have presented a theory for the quantum critical point between a $Z_2$ spin liquid and an ordered antiferromagnet for the kagomé antiferromagnet in the presence of DM interactions. The critical theory is just the three dimensional XY model. However, the XY order parameter carries a $Z_2$ gauge charge, and so it is not directly observable. In particular, the antiferromagnetic order parameter is the square of the XY order parameter. Specifically, the theory is given by $L_\tau$ in Eq. (22), and its observables are described in Section IIIA.

It is interesting to compare our results with recent observations of quantum critical scaling in $\text{ZnCu}_3(\text{OH})_6\text{Cl}_2$ by Helton et al. Their neutron scattering measurements show an antiferromagnetic susceptibility which scales as $T^{-0.66}$. This is actually in reasonable agreement with our theory, which has a susceptibility $\sim T^{-0.526}$. However, they also observe a similar divergence in measurements of the uniform magnetization, while our theory only predicts a very weak singularity. We suspect that this difference is due to the present of impurities, which can mix the uniform and staggered components. A complete study of impurities near the quantum critical point described above is clearly called for.

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### Appendix A: Microscopic form of the Hamiltonian

We here give explicit expressions for the Hamiltonian introduced in Sec. [1]. We introduce the following set of
unit vectors

$$
e_1 = a \left( \frac{1}{2}, \frac{\sqrt{3}}{2} \right)
$$

$$
e_2 = a \left( \frac{1}{2}, -\frac{\sqrt{3}}{2} \right)
$$

$$
e_3 = a(-1, 0)
$$

which allows to express \( k_i = \mathbf{k} \cdot \mathbf{e}_i \). In the following we concentrate on the states with 3 sites per unit cell. In that case the vector \( \Psi \) introduced in Eq. (7) has 6 components and the matrix \( C \) consequently is a \( 3 \times 3 \) matrix with the following entries:

\[
\begin{align*}
C_{uv} &= \frac{J}{2} q_1^* e^{ik_1} + \frac{J}{2} q_2^* e^{-ik_1} + \frac{iD}{4} p_1^* e^{ik_1} + \frac{iD}{4} q_1^* e^{ik_1} + \frac{iD}{4} p_2^* e^{-ik_1} + \frac{iD}{4} q_2^* e^{-ik_1} \\
C_{uw} &= -\frac{J}{2} q_1^* e^{-ik_3} - \frac{J}{2} q_2^* e^{ik_3} - \frac{iD}{4} p_1^* e^{-ik_3} + \frac{iD}{4} q_1^* e^{-ik_3} - \frac{iD}{4} p_2^* e^{ik_3} + \frac{iD}{4} q_2^* e^{ik_3} \\
C_{vw} &= \frac{J}{2} q_1^* e^{ik_2} + \frac{J}{2} q_2^* e^{-ik_2} + \frac{iD}{4} p_1^* e^{ik_2} + \frac{iD}{4} q_1^* e^{ik_2} + \frac{iD}{4} p_2^* e^{-ik_2} + \frac{iD}{4} q_2^* e^{-ik_2} \\
C_{vu} &= -\frac{J}{2} q_1^* e^{-ik_1} - \frac{J}{2} q_2^* e^{ik_1} - \frac{iD}{4} p_1^* e^{-ik_1} + \frac{iD}{4} q_1^* e^{-ik_1} - \frac{iD}{4} p_2^* e^{ik_1} + \frac{iD}{4} q_2^* e^{ik_1} \\
C_{ww} &= \frac{J}{2} q_1^* e^{ik_3} + \frac{J}{2} q_2^* e^{-ik_3} + \frac{iD}{4} p_1^* e^{ik_3} + \frac{iD}{4} q_1^* e^{ik_3} + \frac{iD}{4} p_2^* e^{-ik_3} + \frac{iD}{4} q_2^* e^{-ik_3}.
\end{align*}
\]

\[\text{(A2)}\]

Appendix B: Dispersion of the lowest excited spinon state

For \( q_1 = q_2 \) and \( D = 0 \), the ground state is doubly degenerate. The degeneracy splits as \( D \) moves away from 0. In all cases, the minimum excitation energy occurs at \( k = 0 \).

Fig. 4 plots the momentum dependence of the energy of the lowest excited spinon at \( D/J = 0.3, \kappa = 0.2 \). There is a finite energy gap at \( k = 0 \) making it a gapped spin liquid. On the other hand, Fig. 5 is the dispersion plot for a case with long-range magnetic order. The energy gap at \( k = 0 \) is closed and condensation occurs at this wave vector.

For \( q_1 = -q_2 \), there is a unique ground state even for \( D = 0 \). Energy minima is at \( k = \pm(2\pi/3, 0) \). Fig. 6 shows the dispersion of the lowest lying state of the spin liquid with \( D/J = 0.03, \kappa = 0.55 \). A case with long range ordering is shown in Fig. 7.
FIG. 5: Dispersion of the lowest excited spinon state for the \( q_1 = q_2 \) state at \( D/J = 0.3, \kappa = 0.4 \). The energy gap closes at \( k = 0 \) and condensation occurs.

FIG. 6: disorder: \( q_1 = -q_2, D/J = 0.05, \kappa = 0.3 \)

FIG. 7: order: \( q_1 = -q_2, D/J = 0.03, \kappa = 0.55 \)

Appended C: Condensation

For the \( q_1 = q_2 \) state Eq. [14] leads to the following parametrization of the condensation of \( Z_\uparrow \) field at \( k = 0 \).

\[
\begin{align*}
\begin{pmatrix}
  x^u_k \\
  x^u_{-k}
\end{pmatrix} &= \ell \begin{pmatrix}
  i \\
  1
\end{pmatrix} \\
\begin{pmatrix}
  x^v_k \\
  x^v_{-k}
\end{pmatrix} &= \ell \begin{pmatrix}
  i\zeta^2 \\
  \zeta
\end{pmatrix} \\
\begin{pmatrix}
  x^w_k \\
  x^w_{-k}
\end{pmatrix} &= \ell \begin{pmatrix}
  i\zeta \\
  \zeta
\end{pmatrix}
\end{align*}
\]

where \( \ell \) is the size of the condensate. Condensation of \( Z_\downarrow \) can be written similarly. For \( D > 0 \), \( Z_\downarrow \) field condensation is energetically favored while the opposite is true for \( D < 0 \). The two condensations are degenerate for \( D = 0 \).

For the \( q_1 = -q_2 \) state, condensation occurs at \( \tilde{k} \equiv \vec{k} = (2\pi/3, 0) \) or \( \vec{k} = -\vec{k} \). The two states have identical energies and the condensation is spontaneously chosen. Similar analysis to Eqs. [13] and [14] gives the eigenvectors corresponding to the lowest lying state. For \( \vec{k} = \vec{\tilde{k}} \) this is \((i, -i, 1, -1, 1)\) while for \( \vec{k} = -\vec{\tilde{k}} \) the corresponding eigenvector is \((-i, i, -1, 1, 1)\). Therefore condensations can be parametrized as

\[
\begin{align*}
\begin{pmatrix}
  x^u_{k \uparrow} \\
  x^u_{-k \downarrow}
\end{pmatrix} &= \ell \begin{pmatrix}
  i \\
  1
\end{pmatrix} \\
\begin{pmatrix}
  x^v_{k \uparrow} \\
  x^v_{-k \downarrow}
\end{pmatrix} &= \ell \begin{pmatrix}
  -i \\
  -1
\end{pmatrix} \\
\begin{pmatrix}
  x^w_{k \uparrow} \\
  x^w_{-k \downarrow}
\end{pmatrix} &= \ell \begin{pmatrix}
  i \\
  1
\end{pmatrix}
\end{align*}
\]  

(C2)

for \( \vec{k} = \vec{\tilde{k}} \), and

\[
\begin{align*}
\begin{pmatrix}
  x^u_{k \uparrow} \\
  x^u_{-k \downarrow}
\end{pmatrix} &= \ell \begin{pmatrix}
  -i \\
  1
\end{pmatrix} \\
\begin{pmatrix}
  x^v_{k \uparrow} \\
  x^v_{-k \downarrow}
\end{pmatrix} &= \ell \begin{pmatrix}
  i \\
  -1
\end{pmatrix} \\
\begin{pmatrix}
  x^w_{k \uparrow} \\
  x^w_{-k \downarrow}
\end{pmatrix} &= \ell \begin{pmatrix}
  -i \\
  1
\end{pmatrix}
\end{align*}
\]  

(C3)

for \( \vec{k} = -\vec{\tilde{k}} \).