

# The Uniqueness of Meromorphic Functions Sharing Small Functions Dealing with Multiple Values

Yang TAN<sup>1</sup>, Yinying KONG<sup>2,\*</sup>

1. School of Applied Mathematics, Beijing Normal University, Zhuhai, Guangdong 519085, P. R. China;
2. Research Institute of Innovation Competitiveness of Guangdong, HongKong and Macao Bay Area, Guangdong University of Finance and Economics, Guangdong 510320, P. R. China

**Abstract** In this paper, we investigate two meromorphic functions which share small functions dealing with multiple values. By constructing auxiliary functions, especially by the deep analysis of counting functions we obtain some results which extend the existing results of some scholars.

**Keywords** meromorphic function; small function; uniqueness; multiple value

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## 1. Introduction

In this paper, we use  $\mathbb{C}$  to denote the complex plane,  $\bar{\mathbb{C}}$  to denote the extended complex plane. We adopt the standard notations of the Nevanlinna theory [1, 2]. Let  $f(z)$  be a nonconstant meromorphic function in the complex  $\mathbb{C}$ . A meromorphic function  $a(z)$  in  $\mathbb{C}$  is called a small function with respect to  $f(z)$  if  $T(r, a(z)) = o(T(r, f(z)))$  as  $r \rightarrow \infty$ , possibly outside a set  $E$  of  $r$  of finite linear measure. We use  $S(f)$  to denote the set of meromorphic functions in  $\mathbb{C}$  which are small functions with respect to  $f(z)$ . Obviously,  $S(f)$  is a field and contains  $\mathbb{C}$ .

Let  $f(z)$  be a nonconstant meromorphic function in the complex  $\mathbb{C}$ ,  $a(z) \in S(f) \cup \{\infty\}$  and  $k$  be a positive integer or  $\infty$ , we use  $\bar{N}_k(r, \frac{1}{f-a})$  and  $\bar{N}_{(k+1)}(r, \frac{1}{f-a})$  to denote the counting function of zeros of  $f(z) - a(z)$  with multiplicities  $\leq k$  and  $\geq k + 1$  (ignoring multiplicities);  $\bar{E}_k(a, f)$  denotes the set of distinct zeros of  $f(z) - a(z)$  with multiplicities  $\leq k$ . Let  $f(z)$  and  $g(z)$  be two nonconstant meromorphic functions in the complex  $\mathbb{C}$  and  $a(z) \in \{S(f) \cap S(g)\} \cup \{\infty\}$ , we use  $\bar{N}_0(r, a, f, g)$  to denote the counting function of common zeros of  $f(z) - a(z)$  and  $g(z) - a(z)$  ignoring multiplicities. Let

$$\bar{N}_{12}(r, a, f, g) = \bar{N}(r, \frac{1}{f-a}) + \bar{N}(r, \frac{1}{g-a}) - 2\bar{N}_0(r, a, f, g). \quad (1.1)$$

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\* Corresponding author

E-mail address: shutongtan@sina.com (Yang TAN); kongcoco@hotmail.com (Yinying KONG)

By (1.1) we know that  $\overline{N}_{12}(r, a, f, g)$  denotes the counting function of different zeros of  $f(z) - a(z)$  and  $g(z) - a(z)$  ignoring multiplicities. If  $\overline{N}(r, \frac{1}{f-a}) - \overline{N}_0(r, a, f, g) = 0$  and  $\overline{N}(r, \frac{1}{g-a}) - \overline{N}_0(r, a, f, g) = 0$ , then we say that  $f(z)$  and  $g(z)$  share  $a(z)$  IM; if  $\overline{N}(r, \frac{1}{f-a}) - \overline{N}_0(r, a, f, g) = S(r, f)$  and  $\overline{N}(r, \frac{1}{g-a}) - \overline{N}_0(r, a, f, g) = S(r, g)$ , then we say that  $f(z)$  and  $g(z)$  share  $a(z)$  “IM”.

In 1929, Nevanlinna proved the following well-known theorems:

**Theorem 1.1** ([3]) *Let  $f(z)$  and  $g(z)$  be two nonconstant meromorphic functions in the complex  $\mathbb{C}$ . If they share five distinct values  $a_j \in \overline{\mathbb{C}}$  ( $j = 1, 2, \dots, 5$ ) IM in the whole complex plane  $\mathbb{C}$ , then  $f(z) \equiv g(z)$ .*

**Question 1** Does Theorem 1.1 hold if  $a_j$  ( $j = 1, 2, \dots, 5$ ) instead of five distinct elements in  $\{S(f) \cap S(g)\} \cup \{\infty\}$ ?

Dealing with this question, many mathematicians came into the study of this subject [4-7]. In 2000, Yuhua Li and Jianyong Qiao obtained the following theorem:

**Theorem 1.2** ([8]) *Let  $f(z)$  and  $g(z)$  be two nonconstant meromorphic functions in the complex  $\mathbb{C}$ . If they share five distinct elements  $a_j(z) \in (S(f) \cup S(g)) \cup \{\infty\}$  ( $j = 1, 2, \dots, 5$ ) IM in the whole complex plane  $\mathbb{C}$ , then  $f(z) \equiv g(z)$ .*

In this paper, we will investigate the uniqueness of meromorphic functions sharing small functions dealing with multiple values. We obtain some results which extend Theorem 1.2.

## 2. Lemmas

Now we will give some Lemmas of this paper as follows.

**Lemma 2.1** ([9]) *Let  $f(z)$  be a nonconstant meromorphic function and  $a_j(z)$  ( $j = 1, 2, \dots, 5$ ) be five distinct elements in  $S(f) \cup \{\infty\}$ . Then we have*

$$(3 - \varepsilon)T(r, f) \leq \sum_{j=1}^5 \overline{N}(r, \frac{1}{f - a_j}) + S(r, f),$$

where  $\varepsilon$  is a sufficiently small positive number.

**Lemma 2.2** *Let  $f(z)$  be a nonconstant meromorphic function and  $a_j(z)$  ( $j = 1, 2, \dots, 5$ ) be five distinct elements in  $S(f) \cup \{\infty\}$ ,  $k_j$  ( $j = 1, 2, \dots, 5$ ) be five positive integers. Then we obtain*

$$\sum_{j=1}^5 \overline{N}_{(k_j+1)}(r, \frac{1}{f - a_j}) \leq \sum_{j=1}^5 \frac{1}{k_j + 1} T(r, f) + S(r, f).$$

**Proof** We notice that

$$(k_j + 1)\overline{N}_{(k_j+1)}(r, \frac{1}{f - a_j}) \leq N(r, \frac{1}{f - a_j}) \leq T(r, f) + S(r, f), \quad j = 1, 2, \dots, 5.$$

That is

$$\overline{N}_{(k_j+1)}(r, \frac{1}{f - a_j}) \leq \frac{1}{k_j + 1} T(r, f) + S(r, f).$$

So we have

$$\sum_{j=1}^5 \bar{N}_{(k_j+1)}(r, \frac{1}{f-a_j}) \leq \sum_{j=1}^5 \frac{1}{k_j+1} T(r, f) + S(r, f).$$

Then we prove this Lemma.  $\square$

**Lemma 2.3** *Let  $f(z)$  be a nonconstant meromorphic function and  $a(z) \in S(f)$  and  $a(z) \neq 0$ . Then we have*

$$m(r, \frac{a'f - af'}{f-a}) = S(r, f), \quad m(r, \frac{a'f - af'}{f(f-a)}) = S(r, f).$$

**Proof** We notice that

$$\frac{a'f - af'}{f-a} = a' - \frac{a(f' - a')}{f-a}, \quad \frac{a'f - af'}{f(f-a)} = \frac{f'}{f} - \frac{f' - a'}{f-a}.$$

By the lemma of the logarithmic derivative we can prove Lemma 2.3.  $\square$

### 3. Main results

In this section, we will give the main results of this paper.

**Theorem 3.1** *Let  $f(z)$  and  $g(z)$  be two nonconstant meromorphic functions and  $a_j$  ( $j = 1, 2, \dots, 5$ ) be five distinct elements in  $\{S(f) \cap S(g)\} \cup \{\infty\}$ . If  $f(z) \neq g(z)$ , then we have*

$$(\frac{1}{3} - \varepsilon)[T(r, f) + T(r, g)] \leq \sum_{j=1}^5 \bar{N}_{12}(r, a_j, f, g) + S(r, f) + S(r, g).$$

**Proof** Firstly, we will prove the following

$$\bar{N}_0(r, a_5, f, g) \leq \sum_{j=1}^4 \bar{N}_{12}(r, a_j, f, g) + S(r, f) + S(r, g). \tag{3.1}$$

If  $\bar{N}_0(r, a_5, f, g) = S(r, f) + S(r, g)$ , obviously, (3.1) holds. So we suppose that

$$\bar{N}_0(r, a_5, f, g) \neq S(r, f) + S(r, g). \tag{3.2}$$

Set

$$L(\omega) = \frac{\omega - a_1}{\omega - a_2} \cdot \frac{a_3 - a_2}{a_3 - a_1}. \tag{3.3}$$

Let  $F(z) = L(f(z))$ ,  $G(z) = L(g(z))$ ,  $b_j = L(a_j)$  ( $j = 1, 2, 3$ ),  $a = L(a_4)$ ,  $b = L(a_5)$ . Then from (3.3) we know that  $b_1 = 0$ ,  $b_2 = \infty$ ,  $b_3 = 1$

$$T(r, F) = T(r, f) + S(r, f), \quad T(r, G) = T(r, g) + S(r, g). \tag{3.4}$$

Since  $a_j$  ( $j = 1, 2, \dots, 5$ ) are five distinct elements in  $\{S(f) \cap S(g)\} \cup \{\infty\}$ , we have that  $b_j$  ( $j = 1, 2, 3$ ),  $a$  and  $b$  are five distinct elements in  $\{S(F) \cap S(G)\} \cup \{\infty\}$ ,  $a, b \neq 0, 1, \infty$  and  $a \neq b$ . Noticing that  $f(z) \neq g(z)$ , we have

$$F(z) \neq G(z). \tag{3.5}$$

By (3.2) and (3.4) we obtain

$$\overline{N}_0(r, b, F, G) \neq S(r, F) + S(r, G). \tag{3.6}$$

Set

$$H = \frac{F'(a'G - aG')(F - G)}{F(F - 1)G(G - a)} - \frac{G'(a'F - aF')(F - G)}{G(G - 1)F(F - a)}. \tag{3.7}$$

Then we have

$$H = \frac{(F - G)Q}{F(F - 1)(F - a)G(G - 1)(G - a)}, \tag{3.8}$$

where

$$Q = F'(F - a)(a'G - aG')(G - 1) - (a'F - aF')(F - 1)G'(G - a). \tag{3.9}$$

If  $H \equiv 0$ , by (3.5) and (3.7) we have

$$\frac{F'(a'G - aG')}{(F - 1)(G - a)} \equiv \frac{G'(a'F - aF')}{(G - 1)(F - a)}. \tag{3.10}$$

If  $a$  is a constant, we notice that  $a \neq 1$ , then from (3.10) we obtain  $F(z) \equiv G(z)$ . This contradicts (3.5). So  $a$  is not a constant. Then by (3.10) we have

$$\frac{F'(a'G - aG')}{G'(a'F - aF')} - 1 \equiv \frac{(F - 1)(G - a)}{(G - 1)(F - a)} - 1.$$

This is

$$\frac{a'[(F' - G')G - (F - G)G']}{G'(a'F - aF')} \equiv \frac{(1 - a)(F - G)}{(G - 1)(F - a)}.$$

Then we obtain

$$\frac{F' - G'}{F - G} \equiv \frac{(1 - a)G'(a'F - aF')}{a'G(F - a)(G - 1)} + \frac{G'}{G}. \tag{3.11}$$

From (3.6) we know that there is  $z_0$  which is a common zero of  $F - b$  and  $G - b$  but neither zero nor pole of  $a, a', b, b - 1, b - a$ . Obviously, from (3.10) we know that  $z_0$  is a pole of the left of (3.10) but not a pole of the right of (3.10). This is a contradiction. So it must be

$$H \neq 0. \tag{3.12}$$

If  $z_1$  is a common zero of  $F - b$  and  $G - b$  but neither zero nor pole of  $a, b, b - 1, b - a$ . Obviously,  $z_1$  is a zero of  $F - G$  and  $z_1$  is not a pole of

$$\frac{Q}{F(F - 1)(F - a)G(G - 1)(G - a)}.$$

From (3.8) we know that  $z_1$  is a zero of  $H$ . By (3.11) we have

$$\begin{aligned} \overline{N}_0(r, b, F, G) &\leq N(r, \frac{1}{H}) + S(r, F) + S(r, G) \\ &\leq m(r, H) + N(r, H) + S(r, F) + S(r, G). \end{aligned} \tag{3.13}$$

By (3.7) we obtain

$$H = \frac{F'}{F - 1} \cdot \frac{a'G - aG'}{G(G - a)} - \left( \frac{F'}{F - 1} - \frac{F'}{F} \right) \cdot \frac{a'G - aG'}{G - a} -$$

$$\left(\frac{G'}{G-1} - \frac{G'}{G}\right) \cdot \frac{a'F - aF'}{F-a} + \frac{G'}{G-1} \cdot \frac{a'F - aF'}{F(F-a)}. \tag{3.14}$$

From (3.14) and Lemma 2.3 we have

$$m(r, H) = S(r, F) + S(r, G). \tag{3.15}$$

By (3.13) and (3.15) we obtain

$$\overline{N}_0(r, b, F, G) \leq N(r, H) + S(r, F) + S(r, G). \tag{3.16}$$

From (3.7) we know that the poles of  $H$  only possibly come from the zeros of  $F, G, F - 1, G - 1, F - a$  and  $G - a$ , the poles of  $F, G, a$ . Let  $S_0$  be the set of all zeros of  $a, a - 1$  and all poles of  $a$ . Set

$$A_j = \{z | F(z) - b_j(z) = 0\} \setminus S_0, \quad B_j = \{z | G(z) - b_j(z) = 0\} \setminus S_0,$$

where  $b_1 = 0, b_2 = \infty, b_3 = 1, b_4 = a$ . Then we know that the poles of  $H$  possibly only come from the set

$$\bigcup_{1 \leq p \leq 4} A_p \bigcup_{1 \leq q \leq 4} B_q \bigcup S_0.$$

Let

$$\begin{aligned} S_1 &= \bigcup_{1 \leq p \leq 4} \{A_p \cap B_p\}, \\ S_2 &= \left\{ \bigcup_{1 \leq p \leq 4} A_p \right\} \setminus \left\{ \bigcup_{1 \leq q \leq 4} B_q \right\}, \\ S_3 &= \left\{ \bigcup_{1 \leq q \leq 4} B_q \right\} \setminus \left\{ \bigcup_{1 \leq p \leq 4} A_p \right\}, \\ S_4 &= \bigcup_{\substack{1 \leq p \leq 4 \\ 1 \leq q \leq 4 \\ p \neq q}} \{A_p \cap B_q\}. \end{aligned}$$

So we have

$$\bigcup_{1 \leq j \leq 4} S_j = \bigcup_{1 \leq p \leq 4} A_p \bigcup_{1 \leq q \leq 4} B_q.$$

Then the poles of  $H$  possibly only come from the set  $\bigcup_{1 \leq j \leq 4} S_j \cup S_0$ . Since  $b_1, b_2, b_3, b_4$  are four distinct elements in  $\{S(F) \cap S(G)\} \cup \{\infty\}$ , the contribution of  $S_0$  to  $N(r, H)$  is at most  $S(r, F) + S(r, G)$ . So we only need to investigate the sets of  $S_j$  ( $j = 1, 2, 3, 4$ ) which contribute to  $N(r, H)$ . Now we will divide four steps to estimate  $N(r, H)$ .

Case 1. Let  $z_{11}$  be a zero of  $F$  of order  $p_1$  and  $G$  of order  $q_1$  but neither a zero of  $a, a - 1$  nor a pole of  $a$ . By (3.9) we know that  $z_{11}$  is a zero of  $Q$  of order at least  $p_1 + q_1 - 1$ . From (3.8) we know that  $z_{11}$  is not a pole of  $H$ . Let  $z_{12}$  be a pole of  $F$  and  $G$ ,  $z_{13}$  be a zero of  $F - 1$  and  $G - 1$ ,  $z_{14}$  be a zero of  $F - a$  and  $G - a$  but them be neither zeros of  $a, a - 1$  nor poles of  $a$ . Similarly, we also obtain that they are not poles of  $H$ .

Case 2. Let  $z_{21}$  be a zero of  $F$  but neither zero of  $G, G - 1, G - a, a, a - 1$  nor pole of  $G, a$ . Then from (3.7) we know that  $z_{21}$  is a pole of  $H$  of order at most 1. Let  $z_{22}$  be a pole of  $F$ ,  $z_{23}$

be a zero of  $F - 1$ ,  $z_{24}$  be a zero of  $F - a$  but them be neither zeros of  $G, G - 1, G - a, a, a - 1$  nor poles of  $G, a$ . Similarly, from (3.7) we know that they are poles of  $H$  of order at most 1.

Case 3. Let  $z_{31}$  be a zero of  $G$  but neither zero of  $F, F - 1, F - a, a, a - 1$  nor pole of  $F, a$ . Then from (3.7) we know that  $z_{31}$  is a pole of  $H$  of order at most 1. Let  $z_{32}$  be a pole of  $G$ ,  $z_{33}$  be a zero of  $G - 1$ ,  $z_{34}$  be a zero of  $G - a$  but them be neither zeros of  $F, F - 1, F - a, a, a - 1$  nor poles of  $F, a$ . Similarly, from (3.7) we know that they are poles of  $H$  of order at most 1.

Case 4. Let  $z_{41}$  be a zero of  $F$  and a pole of  $G$  or a zero of  $G - 1$  or  $G - a$  but neither a zero of  $a, a - 1$  nor a pole of  $a$ , by Lemma 2.3 and (3.7) we know that  $z_{41}$  is a pole of  $H$  of order at most 2. Let  $z_{42}$  be a pole of  $F$  and a zero of  $G$  or  $G - 1$  or  $G - a$ ,  $z_{43}$  be a zero of  $F - 1$  and a zero of  $G$  or  $G - a$  or a pole of  $G$ ,  $z_{44}$  be a zero of  $F - a$  and a zero of  $G$  or  $G - 1$  or a pole of  $G$  but them be neither zeros of  $a, a - 1$  nor poles of  $a$ . Similarly, we know that they are poles of  $H$  of order at most 2.

In summary, from Case 1 to Case 4 we have

$$N(r, H) \leq \sum_{j=1}^4 \bar{N}_{12}(r, b_j, F, G) + S(r, F) + S(r, G). \tag{3.17}$$

By (3.16) and (3.17) we obtain

$$\bar{N}_0(r, b, F, G) \leq \sum_{j=1}^4 \bar{N}_{12}(r, b_j, F, G) + S(r, F) + S(r, G).$$

That is

$$\bar{N}_0(r, a_5, f, g) \leq \sum_{j=1}^4 \bar{N}_{12}(r, a_j, f, g) + S(r, f) + S(r, g). \tag{3.18}$$

We notice that

$$\bar{N}\left(r, \frac{1}{f - a_5}\right) + \bar{N}\left(r, \frac{1}{g - a_5}\right) = 2\bar{N}_0(r, a_5, f, g) + \bar{N}_{12}(r, a_5, f, g). \tag{3.19}$$

By (3.18) and (3.19) we have

$$\begin{aligned} & \bar{N}\left(r, \frac{1}{f - a_5}\right) + \bar{N}\left(r, \frac{1}{g - a_5}\right) \\ & \leq 2 \sum_{j=1}^5 \bar{N}_{12}(r, a_j, f, g) - \bar{N}_{12}(r, a_5, f, g) + S(r, f) + S(r, g). \end{aligned} \tag{3.20}$$

Similarly, we obtain

$$\begin{aligned} & \bar{N}\left(r, \frac{1}{f - a_j}\right) + \bar{N}\left(r, \frac{1}{g - a_j}\right) \\ & \leq 2 \sum_{j=1}^5 \bar{N}_{12}(r, a_j, f, g) - \bar{N}_{12}(r, a_j, f, g) + S(r, f) + S(r, g), \quad j = 1, 2, 3, 4. \end{aligned} \tag{3.21}$$

By Lemma 2.1 we have

$$(3 - \varepsilon)T(r, f) + (3 - \varepsilon)T(r, g)$$

$$\leq \sum_{j=1}^5 \bar{N}\left(r, \frac{1}{f-a_j}\right) + \sum_{j=1}^5 \bar{N}\left(r, \frac{1}{g-a_j}\right) + S(r, f) + S(r, g). \tag{3.22}$$

By (3.20) - (3.22) we obtain

$$\left(\frac{1}{3} - \varepsilon\right)[T(r, f) + T(r, g)] \leq \sum_{j=1}^5 \bar{N}_{12}(r, a_j, f, g) + S(r, f) + S(r, g) \tag{3.23}$$

where  $\varepsilon$  is a sufficiently small positive number, which may be different at different places.  $\square$

**Theorem 3.2** *Let  $f(z)$  and  $g(z)$  be two nonconstant meromorphic functions and  $a_j$  ( $j = 1, 2, \dots, 5$ ) be five distinct elements in  $\{S(f) \cap S(g)\} \cup \{\infty\}$ ,  $k_j$  ( $j = 1, 2, \dots, 5$ ) be five positive integers or  $\infty$  and satisfying  $k_1 \geq k_2 \geq \dots \geq k_5$ . If*

$$\bar{E}_{k_j}(a_j, f) = \bar{E}_{k_j}(a_j, g), \quad j = 1, 2, \dots, 5$$

and

$$\sum_{j=1}^5 \frac{1}{k_j + 1} < \frac{1}{3}, \tag{3.24}$$

then we have  $f(z) \equiv g(z)$ .

**Proof** Firstly, we suppose that  $f(z) \not\equiv g(z)$ . If  $k_1 = k_2 = \dots = k_5 = \infty$ , then we have  $\bar{E}(a_j, f) = \bar{E}(a_j, g)$  ( $j = 1, 2, \dots, 5$ ). So we obtain

$$\bar{N}_{12}(r, a_j, f, g) = 0, \quad j = 1, 2, \dots, 5. \tag{3.25}$$

By (3.23) and (3.25) we have

$$\left(\frac{1}{3} - \varepsilon\right)[T(r, f) + T(r, g)] = S(r, f) + S(r, g).$$

This is a contradiction. So we suppose that  $k_j$  ( $j = 1, 2, \dots, 5$ ) are five positive integers. By  $\bar{E}_{k_j}(a_j, f) = \bar{E}_{k_j}(a_j, g)$  ( $j = 1, 2, \dots, 5$ ), we can obtain

$$\begin{aligned} \bar{N}_{12}(r, a_j, f, g) &\leq \bar{N}_{(k_j+1)}\left(r, \frac{1}{f-a_j}\right) + \bar{N}_{(k_j+1)}\left(r, \frac{1}{g-a_j}\right) + \\ &S(r, f) + S(r, g), \quad j = 1, 2, \dots, 5. \end{aligned} \tag{3.26}$$

By (3.23) and (3.26) we have

$$\begin{aligned} \left(\frac{1}{3} - \varepsilon\right)[T(r, f) + T(r, g)] &\leq \sum_{j=1}^5 \bar{N}_{(k_j+1)}\left(r, \frac{1}{f-a_j}\right) + \sum_{j=1}^5 \bar{N}_{(k_j+1)}\left(r, \frac{1}{g-a_j}\right) + \\ &S(r, f) + S(r, g). \end{aligned} \tag{3.27}$$

By Lemma 2.2 we obtain

$$\sum_{j=1}^5 \bar{N}_{(k_j+1)}\left(r, \frac{1}{f-a_j}\right) \leq \sum_{j=1}^5 \frac{1}{k_j + 1} T(r, f) + S(r, f), \tag{3.28}$$

$$\sum_{j=1}^5 \bar{N}_{(k_j+1)}\left(r, \frac{1}{g-a_j}\right) \leq \sum_{j=1}^5 \frac{1}{k_j + 1} T(r, g) + S(r, g). \tag{3.29}$$

By (3.27)–(3.29) we have

$$\begin{aligned} \left(\frac{1}{3} - \varepsilon\right)[T(r, f) + T(r, g)] &\leq \sum_{j=1}^5 \frac{1}{k_j + 1} T(r, f) + \sum_{j=1}^5 \frac{1}{k_j + 1} T(r, g) + \\ &S(r, f) + S(r, g). \end{aligned}$$

This is

$$\left(\frac{1}{3} - \sum_{j=1}^5 \frac{1}{k_j + 1} - \varepsilon\right)[T(r, f) + T(r, g)] \leq S(r, f) + S(r, g)$$

where  $\varepsilon$  is a sufficiently small positive number, which may be different at different places. By the assumption (3.24) we have  $f(z) \equiv g(z)$ .  $\square$

**Corollary 3.3** *Let  $f(z)$  and  $g(z)$  be two nonconstant meromorphic functions and  $a_j$  ( $j = 1, 2, \dots, 5$ ) be five distinct elements in  $\{S(f) \cap S(g)\} \cup \{\infty\}$ . If they share  $a_j$  ( $j = 1, 2, \dots, 5$ ) IM, then  $f(z) \equiv g(z)$ .*

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