

**ANYTHING YOU CAN DO, I CAN DO  
WORSE WITH macro\_rules!**

AURORANS SOLIS

any/any

 AuroransSolis  
 AuroransSolis  
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# **QUICK REFRESHER**

# EASING INTO IT

---

A few quick things:

# EASING INTO IT

A few quick things:

- @something in a macro invocation isn't special syntax.

# EASING INTO IT

A few quick things:

- @something in a macro invocation isn't special syntax.
- We use recursion a lot in macros because an individual rule itself cannot be recursive, ambiguous, or violate Rust's parsing ambiguity rules.

# HOLD ON, THAT'S A LOT

1. A rule cannot be recursive?

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- ▶ Rules only have regex-like repetition specifiers: ?, \*, and +.  
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## 3. A rule cannot violate Rust's parsing ambiguity rules?

- ▶ You cannot have unpaired ( ), [ ], or { }.
- ▶ You cannot have certain token types come before anything except certain allowed tokens (follow set ambiguity)

(:



???



macro\_rules!

!!!

crime crime crime crime crime crime crime

crime crime crime crime crime crime crime

(:<

---

It's not snacktime anymore. It's crimetype.  
We're going to define traits using XML and declarative macros.

# **THE HORRORS**

**START OF THE EVIL ARC**

(:<

We're going to take this trait:

```
1 pub trait Foo<const BAR: usize>: Baz {
2     type Baq: Qux;
3     const QUUX: Self::Baq;
4     fn corge<Grault, Garply>(waldo: Grault) → Garply;
5 }
```

(:<

And turn it into this XML:

```
1 <trait>
2   <name>Foo</name>
3   <vis>pub</vis>
4   <bounds>
5     <const>
6       <name>BAR</name>
7       <type>usize</type>
8     </const>
9     <req>Baz</req>
10   </bounds>
11   <assoctype>
12     <name>Baq</name>
13     <bounds>
14       <req>Qux</req>
15     </bounds>
16   </assoctype>
17   <assocconst>
18     <name>QUUX</name>
19     <type>Self::Baq</type>
20   </assocconst>
```

```
21   <assocfn>
22     <name>corge</name>
23     <bounds>
24       <type>
25         <name>Grault</name>
26       </type>
27       <type>
28         <name>Garply</name>
29       </type>
30     </bounds>
31     <args>
32       <arg>
33         <name>waldo</name>
34         <type>Grault</type>
35       </arg>
36     </args>
37     <ret>Garply</ret>
38   </assocfn>
39 </trait>
```

(:<

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5     <const>
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8     </const>
9     <req>Baz</req>
10   </bounds>
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12     <name>Baq</name>
13     <bounds>
14       <req>Qux</req>
15     </bounds>
16   </assoctype>
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18     <name>QUUX</name>
19     <type>Self::Baq</type>
20   </assocconst>
```

```
21   <assocfn>
22     <name>corge</name>
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35       </arg>
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If you're asking, "Why? Why would you do this to us?" you're asking an excellent question.

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38   </assocfn>
39 </trait>
```

If you're asking, "Why? Why would you do this to us?" you're asking an excellent question. I will not answer it.

# **THE HORRORS**

**WHAT**

AURO NO PLEASE STOP

---

See the better question is, “Ooh, how does that work?”

# AURO NO PLEASE STOP

---

See the better question is, “Ooh, how does that work?”

Let's look at a very simple example.

# IM BEGGING YOU DONT DO THIS

```
trait_xml! {  
    <trait>  
        <name>Foo</name>  
        <vis>pub</vis>  
        <unsafe/>  
    </trait>  
}
```

# IM BEGGING YOU DONT DO THIS

```
trait_xml_inner! {  
    @parse {  
        input: [  
            <trait>  
                <name>Foo</name>  
                <vis>pub</vis>  
                <unsafe/>  
            </trait>  
        ],  
    }  
}
```

# IM BEGGING YOU DONT DO THIS

```
trait_xml_inner! {
    @parsetrait {
        input: [
            <name>Foo</name>
            <vis>pub</vis>
            <unsafe/>
            </trait>
        ],
        output: [],
    }
}
```

# IM BEGGING YOU DONT DO THIS

```
trait_xml_parse_name_ident! {  
    @parse {  
        input: [  
            Foo</name>  
            <vis>pub</vis>  
            <unsafe/>  
            </trait>  
        ],  
        name: ,  
        callback: [  
            name: trait_xml_inner,  
            rule: [@namecallback],  
            args: [  
                output: [],  
            ],  
        ],  
    }  
}
```

# IM BEGGING YOU DONT DO THIS

```
trait_xml_parse_name_ident! {
    @parseend {
        input: [
            </name>
            <vis>pub</vis>
            <unsafe/>
            </trait>
        ],
        name: Foo,
        callback: [
            name: trait_xml_inner,
            rule: [@namecallback],
            args: [
                output: [],
            ],
        ],
    },
}
```

# IM BEGGING YOU DONT DO THIS

```
trait_xml_inner! {  
    @namecallback {  
        input: [  
            <vis>pub</vis>  
            <unsafe/>  
        </trait>  
    ],  
    output: [],  
    name: Foo,  
}  
}
```

# IM BEGGING YOU DONT DO THIS

```
trait_xml_inner! {  
    @parsetrait {  
        input: [  
            <vis>pub</vis>  
            <unsafe/>  
            </trait>  
        ],  
        output: [[name Foo]],  
    }  
}
```

# IM BEGGING YOU DONT DO THIS

```
trait_xml_parse_vis! {  
    @parse {  
        input: [  
            pub</vis>  
            <unsafe/>  
            </trait>  
        ],  
        callback: [  
            name: trait_xml_inner,  
            rule: [@viscallback],  
            args: [  
                output: [[name Foo]],  
            ],  
        ],  
    }  
}
```

# IM BEGGING YOU DONT DO THIS

```
trait_xml_inner! {  
    @viscallback {  
        input: [  
            <unsafe/>  
            </trait>  
        ],  
        output: [[name Foo]],  
        vis: [pub],  
    }  
}
```

# IM BEGGING YOU DONT DO THIS

```
trait_xml_inner! {
    @parsetrait {
        input: [
            <unsafe/>
            </trait>
        ],
        output: [[name Foo] [vis pub]],
    }
}
```

# IM BEGGING YOU DONT DO THIS

```
trait_xml_inner! {  
    @parsetrait {  
        input: [</trait>],  
        output: [[name Foo] [vis pub] [unsafe]],  
    }  
}
```

# IM BEGGING YOU DONT DO THIS

```
trait_xml_inner! {
    @expand {
        output: [[name Foo] [vis pub] [unsafe]],
        vis: [],
        unsafe: ,
        name: ,
        gparams: [],
        tpbs: [],
        wc: [],
        assoc types: [],
        assoc consts: [],
        fns: [],
    }
}
```

# IM BEGGING YOU DONT DO THIS

```
trait_xml_inner! {
    @expand {
        output: [[vis pub] [unsafe]],
        vis: [],
        unsafe: ,
        name: Foo,
        gparams: [],
        tpbs: [],
        wc: [],
        assoc types: [],
        assoc consts: [],
        fns: [],
    }
}
```

# IM BEGGING YOU DONT DO THIS

```
trait_xml_inner! {
    @expand {
        output: [unsafe],
        vis: [pub],
        unsafe: ,
        name: Foo,
        gparams: [],
        tpbs: [],
        wc: [],
        assoc types: [],
        assoc consts: [],
        fns: [],
    }
}
```

# IM BEGGING YOU DONT DO THIS

```
trait_xml_inner! {
    @expand {
        output: [],
        vis: [pub],
        unsafe: unsafe,
        name: Foo,
        gparams: [],
        tpbs: [],
        wc: [],
        assoc types: [],
        assoc consts: [],
        fns: [],
    }
}
```

# IM BEGGING YOU DONT DO THIS

```
pub unsafe trait Foo {}
```

# THE HORRORS

WHY???

# I WILL NOT APOLOGISE

---

There's a few points I'm trying to make here.

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1. Declarative macros are capable of a whole lot, actually

# I WILL NOT APOLOGISE

There's a few points I'm trying to make here.

1. Declarative macros are capable of a whole lot, actually
2. You don't always need a proc macro
  - ▶ Simplify projects (don't need a separate crate)
  - ▶ Reduce dependencies and sometimes compile times (no syn and quote)

# **REVIEW OF macro\_rules!**

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**WHY MACROS?**

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Turns out that metaprogramming is pretty cool actually

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Turns out that metaprogramming is pretty cool actually

- Repeat lots of similar but not quite identical things
- Define new grammars that get expanded to valid Rust
- Confuse everyone (including yourself!)

# **REVIEW OF macro\_rules!**

**WHAT IS A macro\_rules!?**

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Declarative macros (the ones we care about for this presentation) are sort of like functions on the AST.

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Declarative macros (the ones we care about for this presentation) are sort of like functions on the AST.

We try to match on certain AST patterns (rules) against the input.

Rules are tried in order from top to bottom. This is the arbiter between ambiguous rules. Both `(foo bar)` and `(foo $next:tt)` match `foo bar`, but which one is chosen depends on their order in the macro def.

# **REVIEW OF `macro_rules!`!**

**WHAT ARE OUR AST NODE TYPES, A.K.A. FRAGMENT SPECIFIERS?**

# FRAGMENT SPECIFIER TYPES

Rust has these fragment specifier types:

:item	:block	:stmt	:pat_param
:pat	:expr	:ty	:ident
:path	♥:tt♥	:meta	:lifetime
		:vis	:literal

Each of these, except `:tt`, are subject to regular Rust parsing rules. Plus regex-like repetitions with `$( )?`, `$( )*`, and `$( )+`.

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Each of these, except `:tt`, are subject to regular Rust parsing rules. Plus regex-like repetitions with `$( )?`, `$( )*`, and `$( )+`.

There are also some limitations on what can come after certain fragment specifiers – follow set ambiguity restrictions

- `:expr` and `:stmt` can only be followed by `=>`, `,`, or `;`
- `:pat_param` can only be followed by `=>`, `,`, `=`, `|`, `if`, or `in`
- etc.

# **REVIEW OF macro\_rules!**

## **FRAGMENT SPECIFIER COMPOSITION**

# COMPOSITION

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The reverse is **NOT** true.

<code>:ident, :expr =&gt; :stmt</code>	= ✓
<code>:stmt =&gt; :ident, :expr</code>	= ✗

# COMPOSITION

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<code>:ident, :expr =&gt; :stmt</code>	= ✓
<code>:stmt =&gt; :ident, :expr</code>	= ✗

However, `:tt` tends to be the most flexible option for these sorts of operations.

# COMPOSITION

```
1 macro_rules! me_reaping {
2     ($let:tt $lhs:tt $equal:tt $rhs:tt) => {
3         // compose `:tt`s into a `:stmt`
4         me_reaping!(@matchstmt $let $lhs $equal $rhs)
5     };
6     (@matchstmt $stmt:stmt) => {
7         $stmt
8     };
9 }
10
11 macro_rules! me_sowing {
12     ($stmt:stmt) => {
13         // attempt to break a `:stmt` back into component `:tt`s
14         me_reaping!($stmt);
15     }
16 }
17
18 fn main() {
19     me_reaping!(let haha = "yes!!!");
20     println!("{}haha{}");  

21     me_sowing!(let well_this = "sucks ):");
22     println!("{}well_this{}");
23 }
```

# COMPOSITION

That gives the following error message:

```
error: unexpected end of macro invocation
--> src/main.rs:14:26
  |
1 | macro_rules! me_reaping {
  | ----- when calling this macro
...
14|     me_reaping!($stmt);
  |           ^ missing tokens in macro arguments
  |
note: while trying to match meta-variable `'$lhs:tt`
--> src/main.rs:2:14
  |
2 |     ($let:tt $lhs:tt $equal:tt $rhs:tt) => {
  |           ^^^^^^
```

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--> src/main.rs:2:14
  |
2 |     ($let:tt $lhs:tt $equal:tt $rhs:tt) => {
  |           ^^^^^^
```

This is definitely all the magic stuff we will do with token composition (lies!)

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These are doable with proc macros, but those aren't the topic of today's talk.

# **MAIN USEFUL PATTERNS**

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## **OVERVIEW**

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- Callbacks
  - ▶ workaround to let you pass the expansion of one macro as input to another\*

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- You're going to hear and see, "You've seen this already in this presentation!" a lot.
- Yes, these patterns (in combination) will let you parse just about anything. **STOP STOP STOP**
- Recursion is **THE** building block for macros using the aforementioned patterns, so for big inputs you may end up needing #![recursion\_limit = "a very big number"].

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- ~~Yes, these patterns (in combination) will let you parse just about anything.~~ **STOP STOP STOP**
- Recursion is **THE** building block for macros using the aforementioned patterns, so for big inputs you may end up needing `#![recursion_limit = "a very big number"]`. And a long time to compile. And a lot of memory.

# OVERVIEW

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- All that said, these patterns can be leveraged to simplify some things quite a lot.

# OVERVIEW

Let's look at each of these in turn, but first, disclaimers.

- Declarative macros can be (and often are) very difficult to debug.
- Maintenance of big macros is... oh boy.
- All that said, these patterns can be leveraged to simplify some things quite a lot.
- This talk is mostly going to be showing how some pretty cursed stuff works, but at the end of the talk I'll give you a few ways to help “debug” macros and make writing them more manageable.

# **MAIN USEFUL PATTERNS**

## **RECURSION**

# RECURSION MY BELOVED

You've seen this already in this presentation!

This is the tool that every other pattern mentioned uses to work.

```
macro_rules! some_macro {  
    /* pattern */ => {  
        some_macro!(/* ... */)  
    };  
}
```

In function-like syntax, this is roughly equivalent to:

```
fn some_macro(input: Ast) -> Ast {  
    match input {  
        /* pattern */ => some_macro(/* ... */)  
    }  
}
```

# **MAIN USEFUL PATTERNS**

## **INTERNAL RULES**

# INTERNAL RULES MY BELOVED

You've seen this already in this presentation! Two slides prior, even!

As said previously, you generally don't want users calling these rules. Usually they're used as a helper to grab new kinds of tokens or to specify a certain mode of parsing.

```
macro_rules! some_macro {  
    /* other rules */  
    (@internalrule /* finish pattern */) => {  
        /* expansion */  
    };  
}
```

Full examples:

- fragments-demo/src/main.rs:[4,6]
- all-unique/src/main.rs:[5,9,12,15]
- reverse-tokens/src/main.rs:[2,7]

# INTERNAL RULES MY BELOVED

Not all internal rules start with `@something!` Internal rules are just any rules that users are not expected to call but are used at some intermediate stage in macro expansion.

Useful in a couple ways

- Help avoid polluting crate namespace
  - ▶ Each internal rule could be its own macro, but those would also have to be marked with `#[macro_export]`
- Can be used to set “modes”
  - ▶ Useful for parsing context-sensitive things

# **MAIN USEFUL PATTERNS**

## **INCREMENTAL TT MUNCHERS**

# INCREMENTAL TT MUNCHERS MY BELOVED

You haven't seen this one already in this presentation! Surprise!

With these you typically look to grab an expected pattern including some inputs.

```
macro_rules! some_macro {  
    () => { /* expansion */ };  
    ($first:tt $($rest:tt)*) => {  
        do_something_with!($first);  
        /* expansion */  
        some_macro!($($rest)*);  
    };  
}
```

As a function, this kinda looks like:

```
fn some_macro(input: Ast) -> Ast {  
    if input.is_empty() {  
        /* expansion */  
    } else {  
        do_something_with(input[0]);  
        /* expansion */  
        some_macro(input[1..])  
    }  
}
```

# INCREMENTAL TT MUNCHERS MY BELOVED

Full examples of incremental TT munchers:

- all-unique/src/main.rs:[1-18]
- muncher-demo/src/main.rs:[1-9]

# **MAIN USEFUL PATTERNS**

## **PUSH-DOWN ACCUMULATION**

# PUSH-DOWN ACCUMULATION MY BELOVED

This one hasn't been shown in this presentation yet!

Macros have to expand to a complete syntax element.

Push-down accumulation is how you can allow for incomplete intermediate expansions that eventually form a complete expansion. For example:

```
macro_rules! some_macro {
    /* other rules */
    ([${name:id} ${($t:ty)+}]) => {
        pub struct ${name}(${($t),+});
    }
}
```

Full example: reverse-tokens/src/main.rs:[2,4,7,12]

# **MAIN USEFUL PATTERNS**

## **TT BUNDLING**

# TT BUNDLING MY BELOVED

This one hasn't shown up yet either!

TT bundling is a sort of special case for composition, except this time we *can* actually reverse it!

Multiple tokens  $\Rightarrow$  [ ]-list (:tt)

```
macro_rules! bundle_and_unbundle {
    ($name:ident, $type:ty, $value:expr) => {
        bundle_and_unbundle! {
            @bundled [$name, $type, $value]
        }
    };
    (@bundled $bundle:tt) => {
        const _: &str = stringify!($bundle);
        bundle_and_unbundle! {
            @unbundle $bundle
        }
    };
    (@unbundle [$name:ident, $type:ty, $value:expr]) => {
        let $name: $type = $value;
    };
}
```

# **MAIN USEFUL PATTERNS**

## **CALLBACKS**

# CALLBACKS MY BELOVED

Very very generally, a callback looks something like this:

```
macro_rules! callback {
    ($callback:ident( $($args:tt)* )) => {
        $callback!( $($args)* )
    };
}
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- Reuse one macro in multiple places
- Form something like a call stack
- **Recursively** pass the expansion of one macro as input to another

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# **DEBUGGING**

THAT'S THE NEAT PART



# KINDA, AT LEAST

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What do when no `println!` ?

Introducing your new best friend:

```
const _: &str = stringify!($token);
// also
const _: &str = concat!($stringify($tokens)), *);
```

## PRETEND PRINTLN

You can see some residue from me debugging things and creating examples for documentation in `trait_xml_macro.rs`:

```
361     // End of trait definition
362     (
363         @parsetrait {
364             input: ["/<trait>"],
365             output: $outtoks:tt,
366         }
367     ) => {
368         // const _: &str = stringify!($outtoks);
369         $crate::trait_xml_inner! {
370             @expand {
371                 output: $outtoks,
372                 vis: [],
373                 unsafe: ,
374                 name: ,
375                 gparams: [],
376                 tpbs: [],
377                 wc: [],
378                 assoc_types: [],
379                 assoc_consts: [],
380                 fns: [],
381             }
382         }
383     };
}
```

# NO RULES EXPECTED THE TOKEN...

“But Auro! My macro just plain doesn’t work! I can’t use `const _`.”

Yes you can.

```
macro_rules! this_fails_somewhere {
    // a bunch of rules up here...
    // ...and then at the end:
    ($($all:tt)*) => {
        const _: &str = concat!($stringify!($all)),*);
    };
}
```

This shows you the input as a string so you can try and figure out what’s going wrong.

It’s also only matched if no other branch matches. But...

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It's also only matched if no other branch matches. But...You still have to figure out why it's not matching.

## BUT HOW DID IT GET THERE???

Sometimes it's hard to figure out just how a macro ended up expanding the way it did. Well, thankfully, we have a tool for that too! It's not super good, but it does its job.

This new acquaintance is the unstable flag `-Z trace_macros`.

# BUT HOW DID IT GET THERE???

Remember `bundle_and_unbundle!` from earlier? Let's cargo check that with `-Z trace_macros`.

```
note: trace_macro
--> src/main.rs:19:2
19 |     bundle_and_unbundle! {
20 |         foo, u8, 0
21 |     }
22 |
= note: expanding `bundle_and_unbundle! { foo, u8, 0 }`  

= note: to `bundle_and_unbundle! { @ bundled [foo, u8, 0] }`  

= note: expanding `bundle_and_unbundle! { @ bundled [foo, u8, 0] }`  

= note: to `const _ : & str = stringify! ([foo, u8, 0]) ; bundle_and_unbundle!
          { @ unbundle [foo, u8, 0] }`  

= note: expanding `bundle_and_unbundle! { @ unbundle [foo, u8, 0] }`  

= note: to `let foo : u8 = 0 ;`
```

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Another thing you can do to keep **error**: no rules expected the token from coming up is by just... making rules that expect the token/those tokens.

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My XML parsing macros do this a bunch - if you give them an invalid input, a lot of the time it'll expand to a `compile_error!`, e.g. in `lifetime.rs`:

```
342     (
343         @parse {
344             input: ['$unx:tt$($rest:tt)*'],
345             lifetime: '$($lt:lifetime)?',
346             bounds: '$boundstoks:tt',
347             callback: [
348                 name: '$callback:path',
349                 rule: '$ruletoks:tt',
350                 args: '$argstok:tt',
351             ],
352         }
353     ) => {
354         compile_error!(
```

## OTHER THINGS

Some other suggestions to help you on your way (that sound a lot like general programming advice):

- Use descriptive names for rules, helper tokens, and fragments
- Don't worry about excessive complexity in a single rule – just try to keep the depth of recursion down if you can
- Don't be afraid to make another macro, especially if it can be reused in other places
- If you need more steps to finish parsing, add them. Nobody needs to see all your internal rules but you (:

**THAT'S ALL!**

# MATERIALS

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The materials for this talk are available on GitHub and GitLab at [AuroransSolis/rustconf-2023](https://auroranssolis/rustconf-2023).