Binary Analysis for Missed Vectorization Opportunities Detection

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1 INTRODUCTION

Modern compilers are often able to automatically vectorize code using SIMD instructions. Take, as an example, the following code snippet:

```
void copy(long *restrict a, long *restrict b, unsigned long n) {
    for (unsigned long i = 0ul; i < n; i++) {
        a[i] = b[i];
    }
}
```

Listing 1. copy.c

We can compile it with the following set of compiler flags

- `-O3`: tells the compiler to use the highest level of optimization available.
- `-fno-tree-loop-distribute-patterns`: prevents replacing the loop with a call to `memcpy`
- `-fno-tree-vectorize`: prevents vectorization

Which will produce the following assembly code:

```
.L3:
    movq  (%rsi,%rax,8), %rcx
    movq  %rcx, (%rdi,%rax,8)
    addq  $1, %rax
    cmpq  %rax, %rdx
    jne   .L3
```

Listing 2. copy.c compiled with vectorizations disabled

However, by compiling without the `-fno-tree-vectorize` flag, the compiler will produce the following vectorized code (note the use of wider instructions and registers):

```
.L4:
    movdqu  (%rsi,%rax), %xmm0
    movups  %xmm0, (%rdi,%rax)
    addq    $16, %rax
    cmpq    %rcx, %rax
    jne     .L4
```

Listing 3. copy.c compiled with vectorizations enabled

The main goal of this project is to develop a method for identifying missed opportunities for vectorization in existing code. That is, given an existing binary, we want to identify loops that could be vectorized but are not.

2 RELATED WORK

Autovectorization is *difficult*, compilers tend to miss many optimizations (as shown by Feng et al. [2]) , and more than often vectorizing a small piece of code requires large changes to the whole code base (as was done for example by Chen et al. [1]).

Compilers have been shown to widely miss out on vectorization opportunities. As an example, Maleki et al. [3] report that in their research only 45-71% of the loops in a benchmark they developed

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and only a few loops from the real applications are vectorized by the compilers they evaluated, which include widely popular compilers such as `GCC` (version 4.7.0).

Auto-vectorization is still an open field of research: attempts have been made at "fixing" the compiler work by post-processing compiled code (Porpodas and Ratnalikar [5]) or by applying Machine Learning to produce improved vectorization schemes (Mendis et al. [4]).

3 APPROACH

3.1 Dataflow Analysis

Let's look at Listing 2: there, we can realize that the`load` and `store` instructions are completely independent (from other instructions of the same type) and could, theoretically, be computed in parallel, therefore vectorized. This can be concluded by simply looking at the dataflow, an example on how a dataflow graph could look like is given on Figure 1.

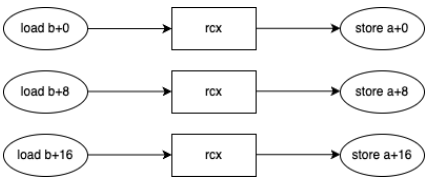

Fig. 1. Example of dataflow graph for `copy.c`

Since all the necessary data to build a dataflow graph can be obtained from the trace of the program, the idea is to use a dynamic analysis framework (such as `Intel Pin`[1], `DynamoRIO`[2] or `angr`[3]) to perform a dynamic analysis that traces an execution and identifies vectorizable code. Given the trace of execution of a program (instructions and memory accesses), we can perform a dataflow analysis to identify "parallel" computations and thus, vectorization opportunities.

3.2 Test Inputs

To test our results, we will use an already existing autovectorization benchmark such as `TSVC`[4]. Other random program generators such `YARPGen`[5] could be used to generate more, less specific, test inputs.

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