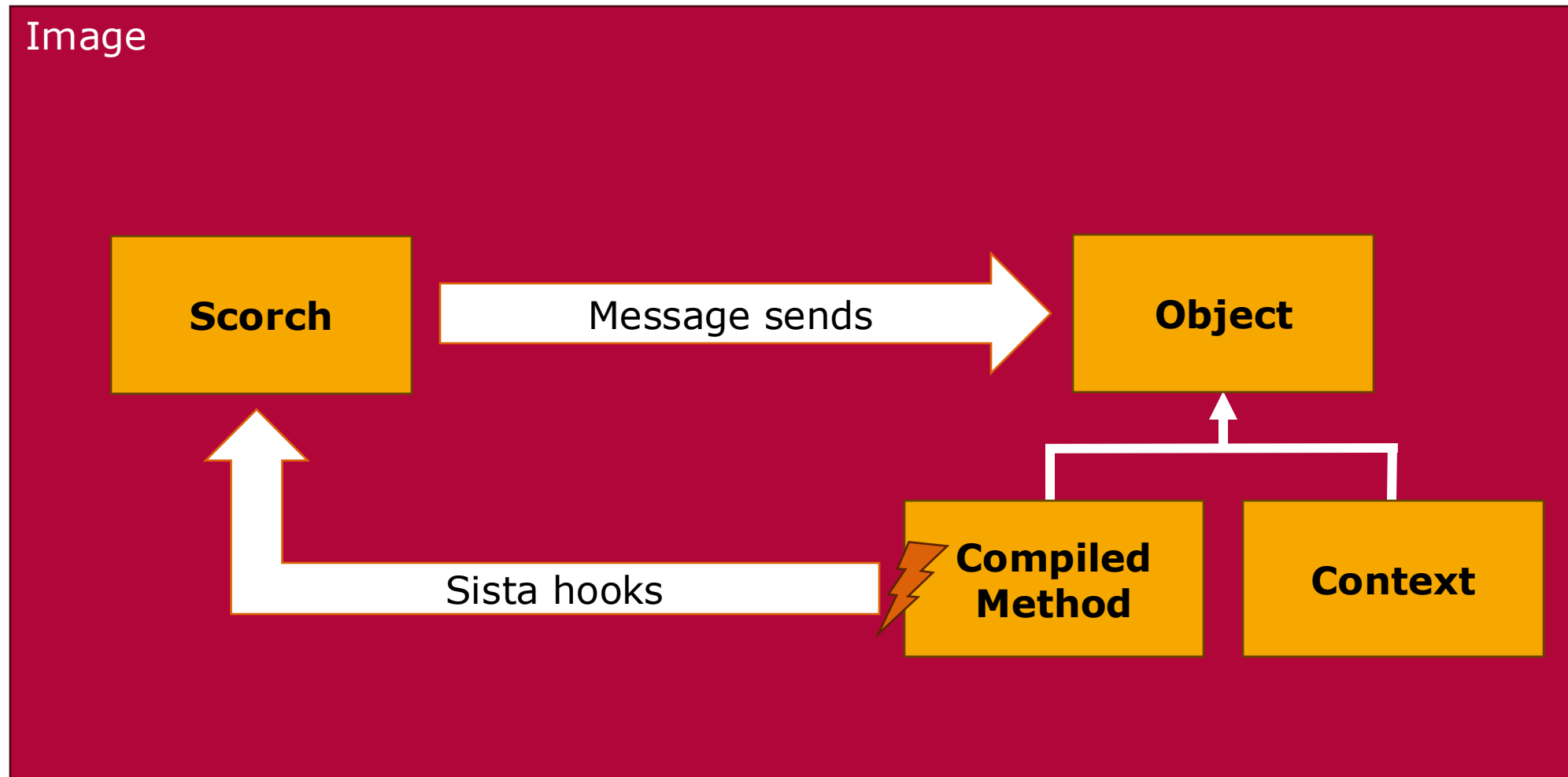


- **Sista VM** (**S**peculative **I**nline **S**mall**T**alk **A**rchitecture) [Bera, 2017a]
  - Optimizes frequent methods with **inlining** and **unsafe bytecodes**
  - Promises **speed-ups of 3x-5x**
  - **Adaptive optimizer** (Scorch) is implemented **in the image** to support live development and interactive debugging [Bera, 2017b]
- **Challenge: Bootstrapping** Sista/Scorch
  - **Frequent VM faults/crashes** impede initial development
- **Opportunity:** Use the **OSVM simulator** to debug the VM in another image [Miranda, 2018]
- **Questions:**
  - How can we run and develop Scorch in the **simulator**?
  - How can we **improve surrounding tooling** for exploratory programming in the simulator?

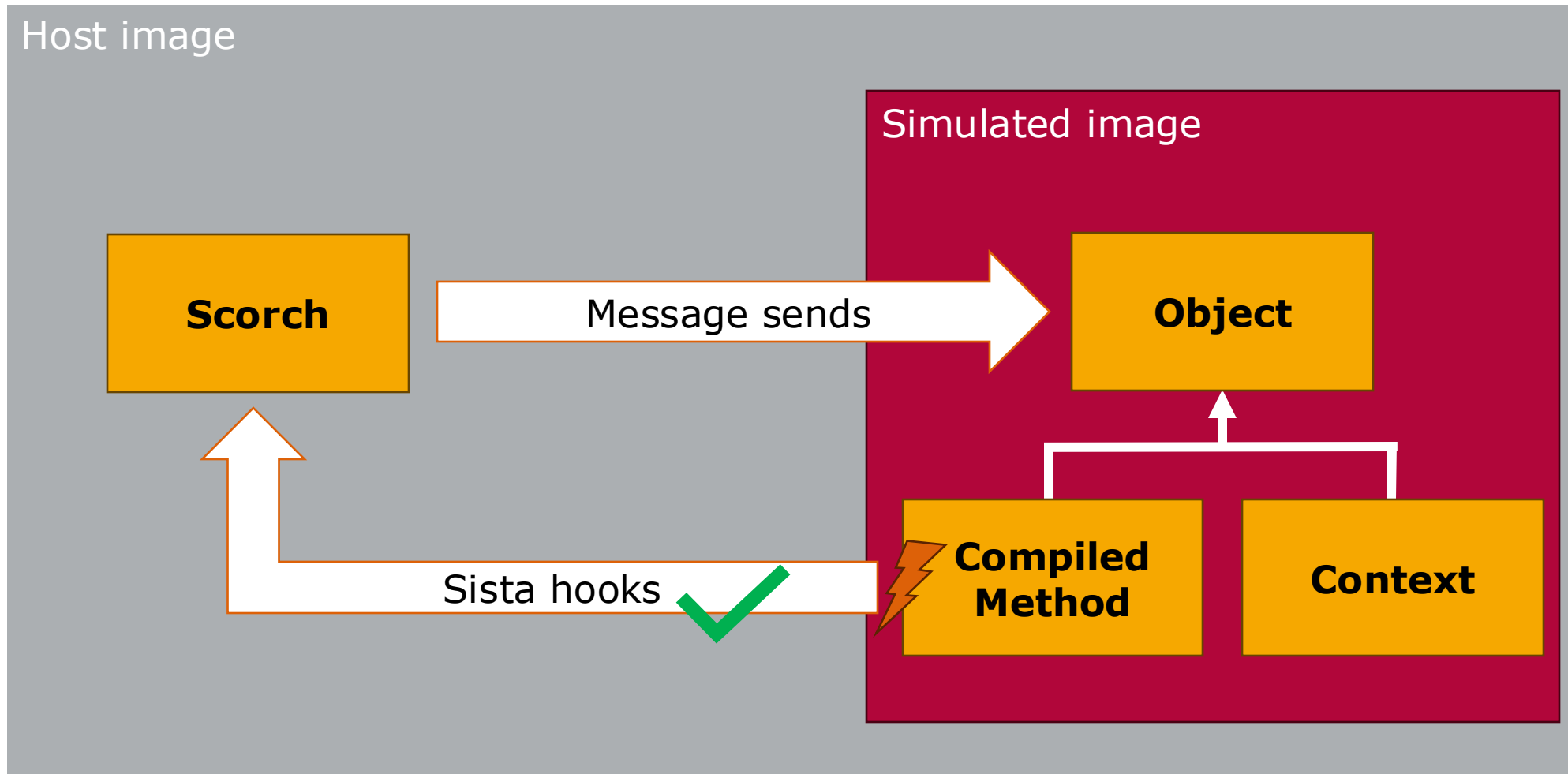
# OSVM: Bootstrapping Scorch

*Current Scorch/Image Interaction: Scorch Runs in Production Image*



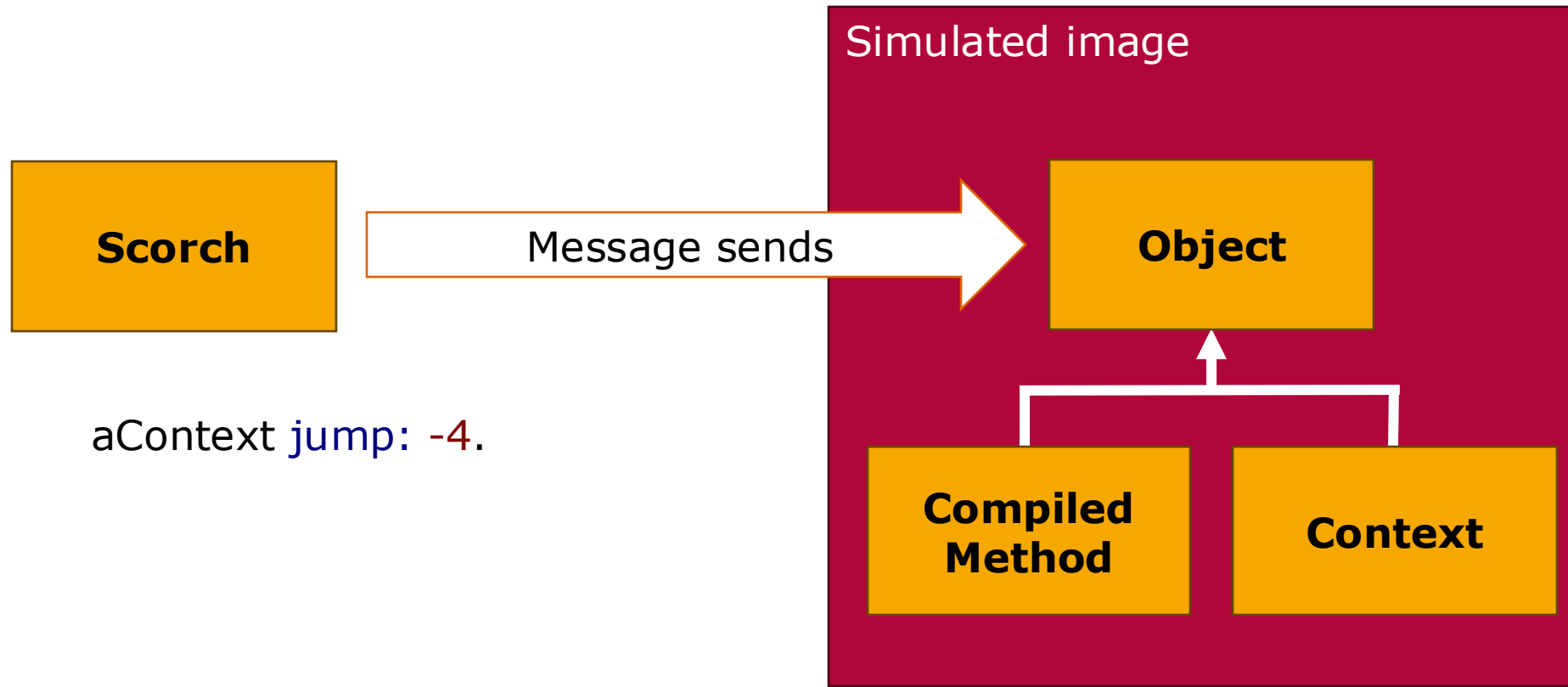
# OSVM: Bootstrapping Scorch

*Intended Scorch/Image Interaction: Develop Scorch Next to Simulated Image*



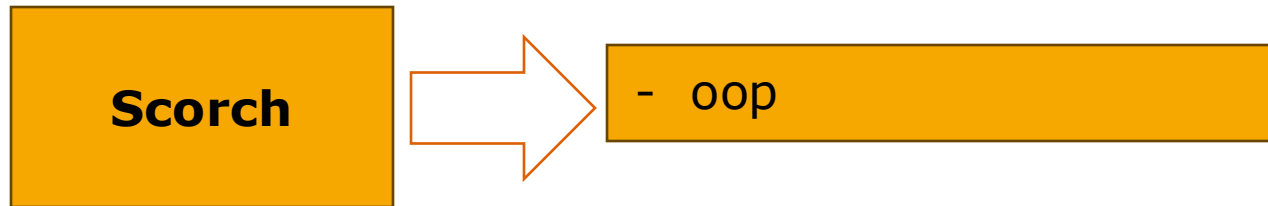
# OSVM: Bootstrapping Scorch

*Intended Scorch/Image Interaction: Develop Scorch Next to Simulated Image*



# OSVM: Bootstrapping Scorch

*Intended Scorch/Image Interaction: Develop Scorch Next to Simulated Image*

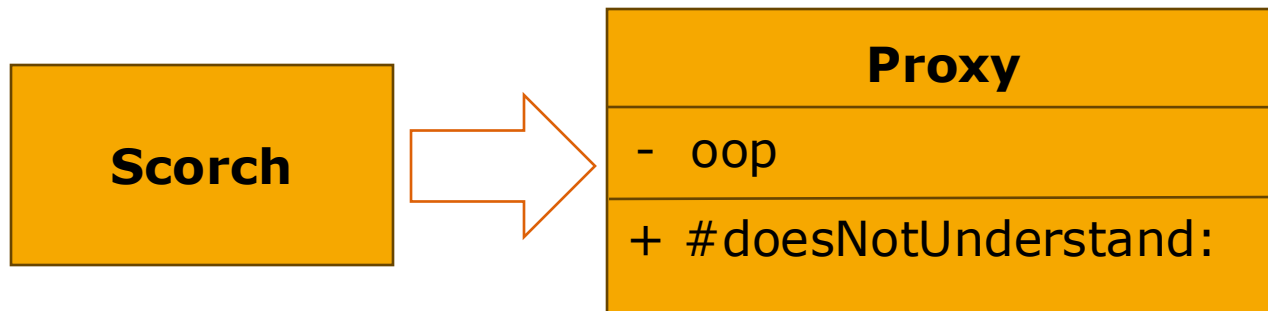


aContext **jump: -4.**

ObjectMemory
- bitmap
+ #fetchPointer:ofObject:
+ #storePointer:ofObject:withValue:

# OSVM: Bootstrapping Scorch

*Implementing a Transparent Proxy Framework*

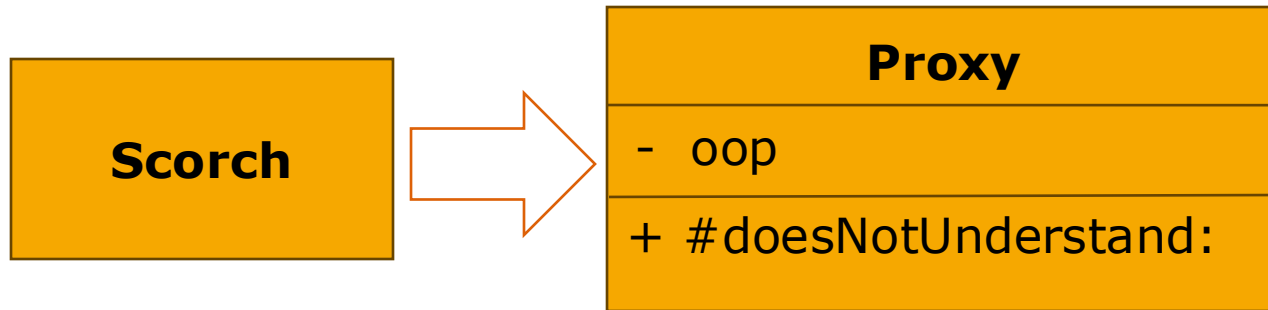


aContextProxy jump: -4.

ObjectMemory
- bitmap
+ #fetchPointer:ofObject:
+ #storePointer:ofObject:withValue:

# OSVM: Bootstrapping Scorch

*Implementing a Transparent Proxy Framework*



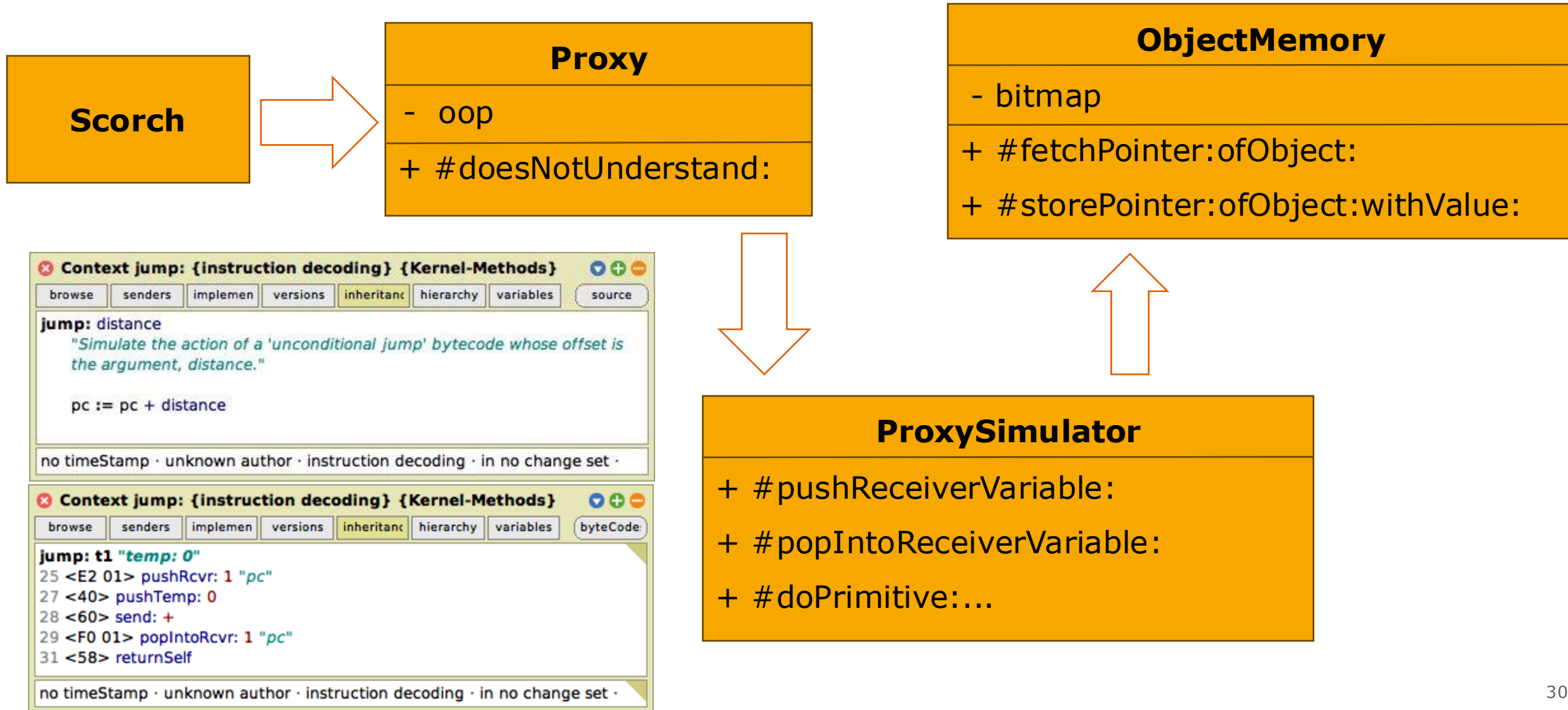
ObjectMemory
- bitmap
+ #fetchPointer:ofObject:
+ #storePointer:ofObject:withValue:

```
Context jump: {instruction decoding} {Kernel-Methods}
jump: distance
  "Simulate the action of a 'unconditional jump' bytecode whose offset is
  the argument, distance."
  pc := pc + distance
no timeStamp · unknown author · instruction decoding · in no change set ·

Context jump: {instruction decoding} {Kernel-Methods}
jump: t1 "temp: 0"
25 <E2 01> pushRcvr: 1 "pc"
27 <40> pushTemp: 0
28 <60> send: +
29 <F0 01> popIntoRcvr: 1 "pc"
31 <58> returnSelf
no timeStamp · unknown author · instruction decoding · in no change set ·
```

# OSVM: Bootstrapping Scorch

*Implementing a Transparent Proxy Framework*





# OSVM:

## Bootstrapping Scorch

*Running Benchmarks*

Simulation of spurreader-64-4.1.image

Projects Tools Apps Do Extras Windows Help HomeProject Search or evaluate... 01:40:35

snapshot

**Transcript**

```
---QUIT---{21 July 2025 . 1:40:35 am} spurreader-64-4.1.image priorSource: 7550601
Smalltalk specialObjectsArray at: 59 put: nil

Transcript showIn: [10000 timesRepeat:
  [(JsonParser with: "Carpe Squeak") read; readStringInternal]]
  timeToRunWithoutGC

13
Smalltalk specialObjectsArray at: 59 put: #conditionalBranchCounterTrippedOn:

Transcript showIn: [10000 timesRepeat:
  [(JsonParser with: "Carpe Squeak") read; readStringInternal]]
  timeToRunWithoutGC

9
```

counter tripped in  
16r2BEDB0 M ByteString class(String class)>new: 16rD6FED8: a(n) ByteString

counter tripped in  
16r2BEE20 M ByteString(String)>= 16r755F48: a(n) ByteString

counter tripped in  
16r2BEDE8 M String class>with: 16rD700B8: a(n) String

counter tripped in  
16r2BEDA8 M ByteString class(String class)>new: 16rD6FED8: a(n) ByteString

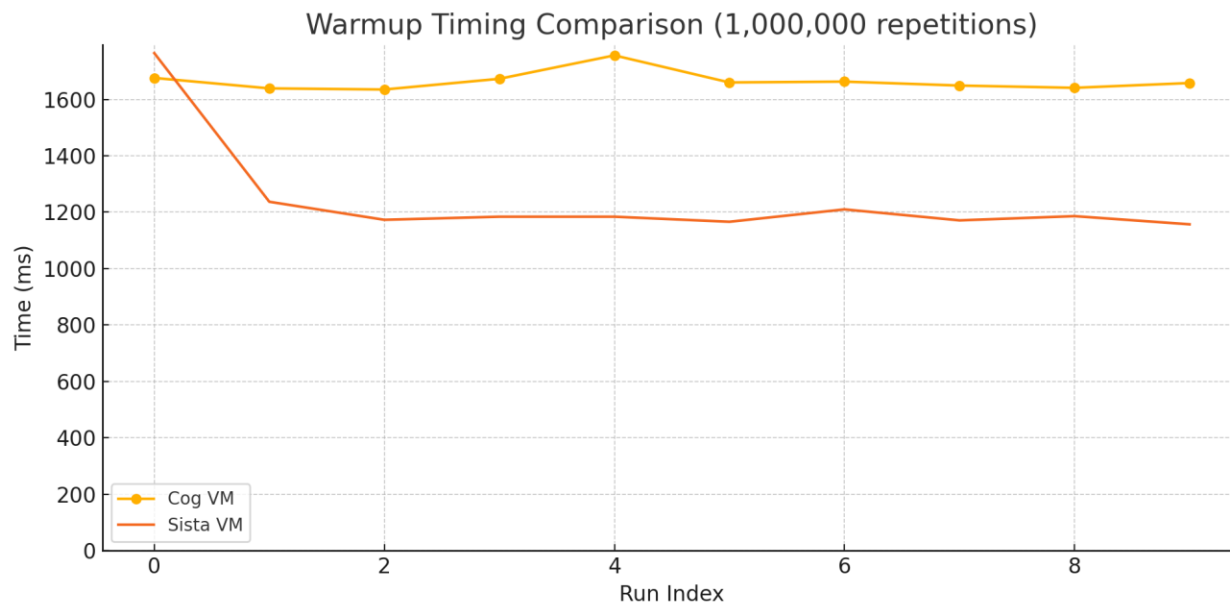
3,079,585/26,970

# OSVM: Bootstrapping Scorch

## Running Benchmarks



```
[1000000 timesRepeat:  
  [(JsonParser with: "'Carpe Squeak'") read; readStringInternal]]  
timeToRunWithoutGC
```



  
**1.4x faster**

	Cog	Sista
Avg	1 665 ms	1 243 ms
Min	1 635 ms	1 157 ms
Max	1 756 ms	1 764 ms
Total	16 650 ms	12 432 ms

*Benchmark Specs*  
i5-6267U @ 2.9 GHz x 4, 6  
GB RAM, Ubuntu 18.04

# OSVM: Improving Exploratory Programming in the Simulator

## *Object Inspection*



State of the art: **Low-level, non-interactive text output**

```
disassemble method/trampoline...
disassemble method/trampoline at pc
disassemble ext head frame method
print oop...
long print oop...
print context...
symbolic method...
inspect object memory
```

```
squeak> 16r872020: a(n) JsonObject
      16r11 =2 (16r2)    16r872038 an Array
16r872038: a(n) Array
      16rA0CE08 nil      16rA0CE08 nil      16r872260 an Association #level -> 16r00
      16rA0CE08 nil
```

**Transcript output of simulator**

# OSVM: Improving Exploratory Programming in the Simulator



## Object Inspection

✖ (vm)16r2043788: a CompiledMethod

self

vm address

vm header

vm generated method

source code

decompiled

all bytecodes

header

literal1

literal2

literal3

33

34

35

(ReadStream>>#next "(vm)16r2043788: a  
CompiledMethod")

Evaluate expressions on inspected object

explore

## Inspectors on method proxies

Reuse rich, domain-specific tools to inspect and modify objects of from simulated image

# OSVM: Improving Exploratory Programming in the Simulator



## Object Inspection

✖ (vm)16r2043788: a CompiledMethod

self

vm address

vm header

vm generated method

source code

decompiled

all bytecodes

header

literal1

literal2

literal3

33

34

35

"(vm)16rEA3348: class ReadStream"

next

<primitive: 65> "0"

position >= readLimit

ifTrue: [^ nil].

^ collection at: (position := position + 1)

Evaluate expressions on inspected object

explore

## Inspectors on method proxies

Reuse rich, domain-specific tools to inspect and modify objects of from simulated image

# OSVM: Improving Exploratory Programming in the Simulator



## Object Inspection

✖ (vm)16r2043788: a CompiledMethod

self

vm address

vm header

vm generated method

source code

decompiled

all bytecodes

header

literal1

literal2

literal3

33

34

35

-1152921504606781437

"primitive: 65

numArgs: 0

numTemps: 0

numLiterals: 3

frameSize: 16

bytecodeSet: SistaV1"

Evaluate expressions on inspected object

explore

## Inspectors on method proxies

Reuse rich, domain-specific tools to inspect and modify objects of from simulated image

# OSVM: Improving Exploratory Programming in the Simulator



## Object Inspection

✕ (vm)16r2043788: a CompiledMethod

self  
vm address  
vm header  
vm generated method  
source code  
decompiled  
all bytecodes  
header  
literal1  
literal2  
literal3  
33  
34  
35

(vm)16rBED5F0: #ifTrue:ifFalse:

Evaluate expressions on inspected object

explore

## Inspectors on method proxies

Reuse rich, domain-specific tools to inspect and modify objects of from simulated image

# OSVM: Improving Exploratory Programming in the Simulator



## Object Inspection

The image shows a software interface for inspecting a simulated object. The window title is **(vm)16r2043788: a CompiledMethod**. On the left, a list of attributes is shown: *self*, *vm address*, *vm header*, *vm generated method*, *source code*, *decompiled*, *all bytecodes*, *header*, *literal1*, *literal2* (highlighted), *literal3*, *33*, *34*, and *35*. The right pane displays the value of the selected attribute: *(vm)16r20A0200: an AdditionalMethodState*. At the bottom, there is a text input field with the placeholder text "Evaluate expressions on inspected object" and a button labeled "explore".

## Inspectors on method proxies

Reuse rich, domain-specific tools to inspect and modify objects of from simulated image



# OSVM: Improving Exploratory Programming in the Simulator



## Object Inspection

✕ (vm)16r2043788: a CompiledMethod

self

vm address

vm header

vm generated method

source code

decompiled

all bytecodes

header

literal1

literal2

literal3

33

34

35

(vm)16rE86060: a ClassBinding #ReadStream ->  
16r00EA3348

Evaluate expressions on inspected object

explore

## Inspectors on method proxies

Reuse rich, domain-specific tools to inspect and modify objects of from simulated image

# OSVM: Improving Exploratory Programming in the Simulator



## Object Inspection

✖ (vm)16r2043788: a CompiledMethod

self

vm address

vm header

vm generated method

source code

decompiled

all bytecodes

header

literal1

literal2

literal3

33

34

35

248

Evaluate expressions on inspected object

explore

## Inspectors on method proxies

Reuse rich, domain-specific tools to inspect and modify objects of from simulated image

# OSVM: Improving Exploratory Programming in the Simulator

## Object Inspection



✖ (vm)16r2043788: a CompiledMethod

self

vm address

vm header

vm generated method

source code

decompiled

all bytecodes

header

literal1

literal2

literal3

33

34

35

<primitive: 65>

33 <F8 41 00> callPrimitive: 65

36 <01> pushRcvr: 1 "position"

37 <02> pushRcvr: 2 "readLimit"

38 <65> send: >= [inline cache SmallInteger => SmallInteger>>#>=]

39 <C0> jumpFalse: 41 [branch taken 7% (4358/65535)]

40 <5B> return: nil

41 <00> pushRcvr: 0 "collection"

42 <01> pushRcvr: 1 "position"

43 <51> pushConstant: 1

44 <60> send: +

45 <F3 01> storeIntoRcvr: 1 "position"

47 <70> send: at: [polymorphic inline cache Array =>

Evaluate expressions on inspected object

explore

Advanced bytecode printer with **Sista** branch counters and syntax highlighting

# OSVM: Improving Exploratory Programming in the Simulator

## Object Inspection



✖ (vm)16r2043788: a CompiledMethod

self

vm address

vm header

vm generated method

source code

decompiled

all bytecodes

header

literal1

literal2

literal3

33

34

35

16r2043788 (is in old space)

Evaluate expressions on inspected object

explore

Additional VM-specific inspection fields

# OSVM: Improving Exploratory Programming in the Simulator

## Object Inspection



✖ (vm)16r2043788: a CompiledMethod

self

vm address

vm header

vm generated method

source code

decompiled

all bytecodes

header

literal1

literal2

literal3

33

34

35

16r71F32941C000468

0: 00000111 numSlots=16r7 (7)

8: 00 isMarked=false unused=true

10: 0111110011001010010100 identityHash=2044564

32: 000 isGrey=false isPinned=false isRemembered=false

35: 11100 format=28

40: 00 isImmutable=false unused=0

42: 0000000000010001101000 classIndex=16r468

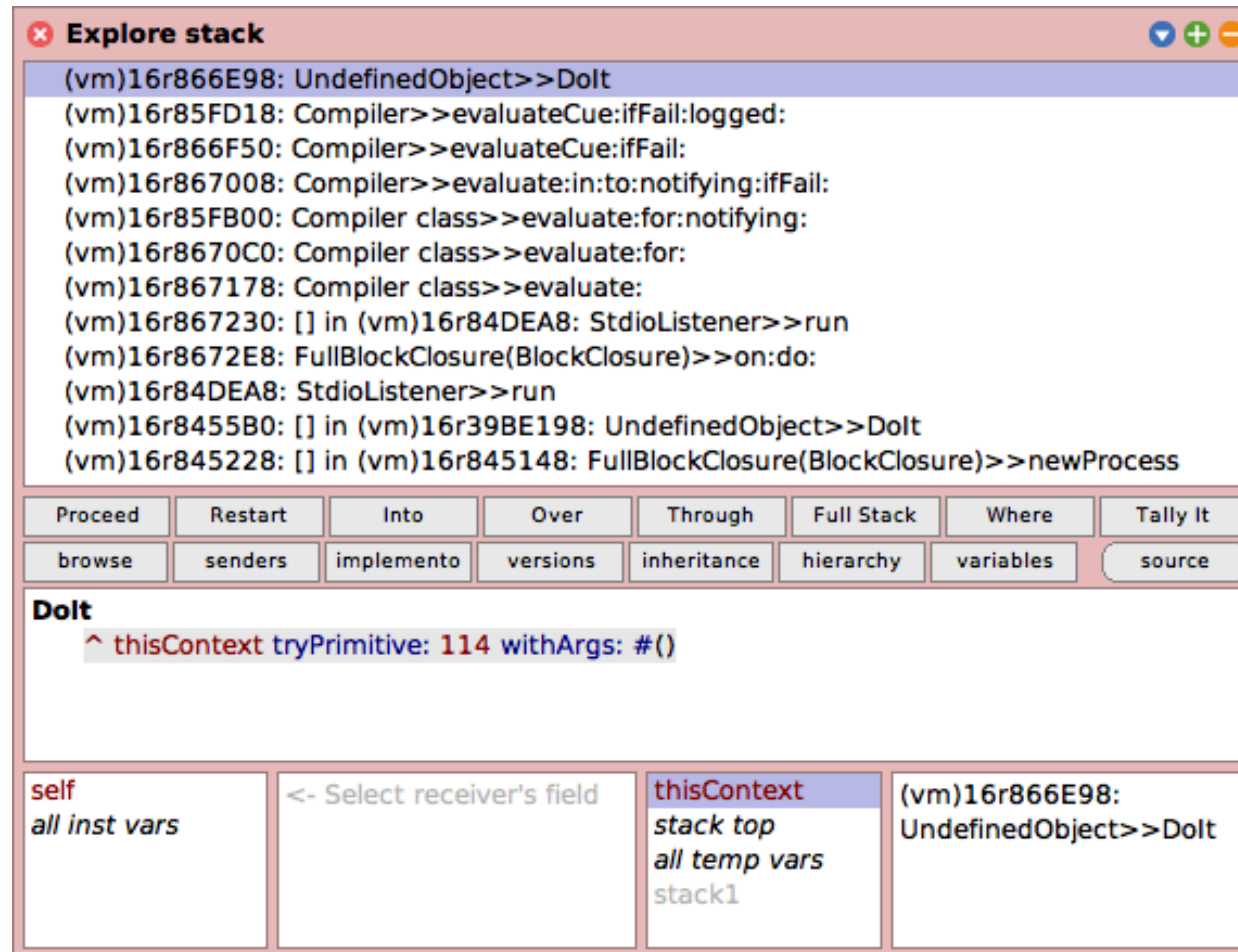
Evaluate expressions on inspected object

explore

Additional VM-specific inspection fields

# OSVM: Improving Exploratory Programming in the Simulator

## Debugging

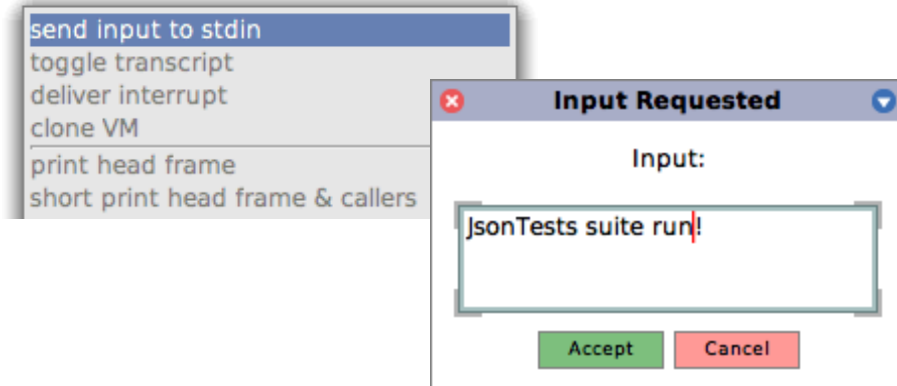


**Debuggers on  
context proxies  
(currently read-only)**

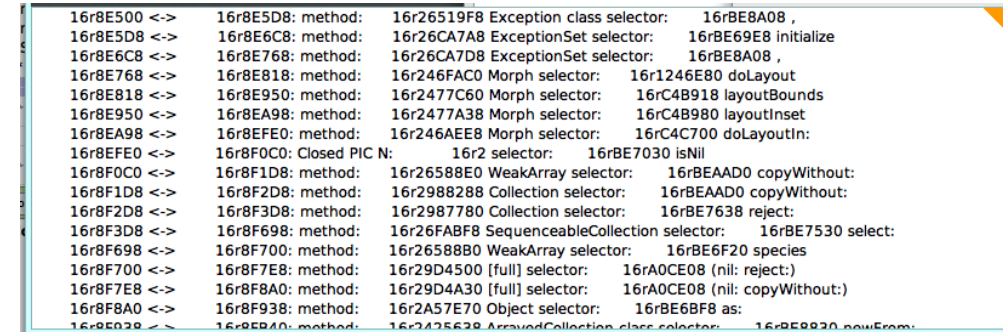
(Process forContext: aContextProxy)  
debugWithTitle: 'Explore stack'

# OSVM: Improving Exploratory Programming in the Simulator

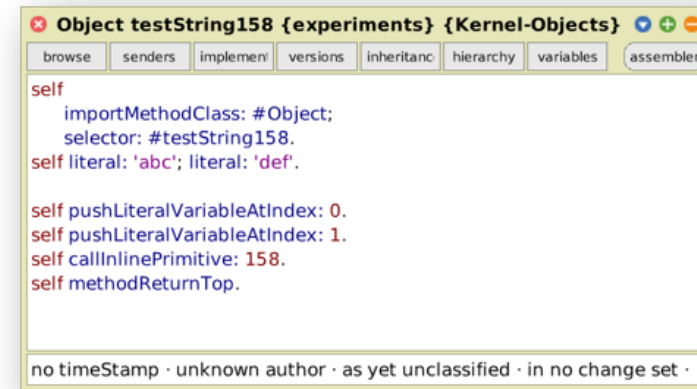
## Other Contributions



## Added non-modal REPL interface



## Improved Transcript performance



## New bytecode editor



## Improved build chain & documentation

- **The road ahead for Sista/Scorch**
  - **Iteratively extend Sista/Scorch** with new unsafe bytecodes and optimizations using our proxy framework
  - **Harden and test** the new VM for a release
- **Open todos for our proxy framework**
  - Implement **missing edge cases** for context proxies
    - **Manipulation of top contexts** for external debugging
    - Complete trap support for **Scorch deoptimization**
  - **Accelerate** the proxy accesses by using **bytecode rewriting** instead of context simulation
- How could we further **improve program exploration** in the simulator?
  - Introduce **additional VM inspectors** for (unmarried) frames, stack pages, immediate values, ...?
  - Build an interactive, graphical **debugger for machine code?**



- [Bera, 2017a] Clément Béra, Eliot Miranda, Tim Felgentreff, Marcus Denker, and Stéphane Ducasse. 2017. **Sista: Saving Optimized Code in Snapshots for Fast Start-Up**. In *Managed Languages and Runtimes (ManLang 2017)*. 11. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3132190.3132201>
- [Bera, 2017b] Clément Béra. 2017. **Sista: A Metacircular Architecture for Runtime Optimisation Persistence**. Programming Languages [cs.PL]. Dissertation, Université de Lille 1. <https://theses.hal.science/tel-01634137>
- [Miranda, 2018] Eliot Miranda, Clément Béra, Elisa Gonzalez Boix, and Dan Ingalls. 2018. **Two Decades of Smalltalk VM Development: Live VM Development through Simulation Tools**. In *Proceedings of the 10th ACM SIGPLAN International Workshop on Virtual Machines and Intermediate Languages (VMIL '18)*, November 4, 2018, Boston, MA, USA. ACM, New York, NY, USA, 10 pages. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3281287.3281295>
- [Niephaus, 2022] Fabio Niephaus. 2022. **Exploratory Tool-building Platforms for Polyglot Virtual Machines**. Dissertation, Potsdam, Universität Potsdam. <https://publishup.uni-potsdam.de/frontdoor/index/index/docId/57177>
- [Würthinger, 2013] Thomas Würthinger et al. **One VM To Rule Them All**. In *Proceedings of the 2013 ACM International Symposium on New Ideas, New Paradigms, and Reflections on Programming & Software*. 2013. <https://dl.acm.org/doi/10.1145/2509578.2509581>



# OOPSIE: Object Oriented PointerS Interaction Engine



Inspectors on proxies

Syntax highlighting for jitted assembler methods

feat. Yaros-JavaScript bindings

Production VM

VM-Simulator

Scorch

Proxy

Access via SimulationStudio

Object

Compiled Method

Context

Our Sista hooks in VM Simulator



Bytecode editor: Write your own instructions!

Morphic across simulation boundaries

Non-modal REPL

Would you like to debug a proxy context?

Testing proxy methods in a debugger

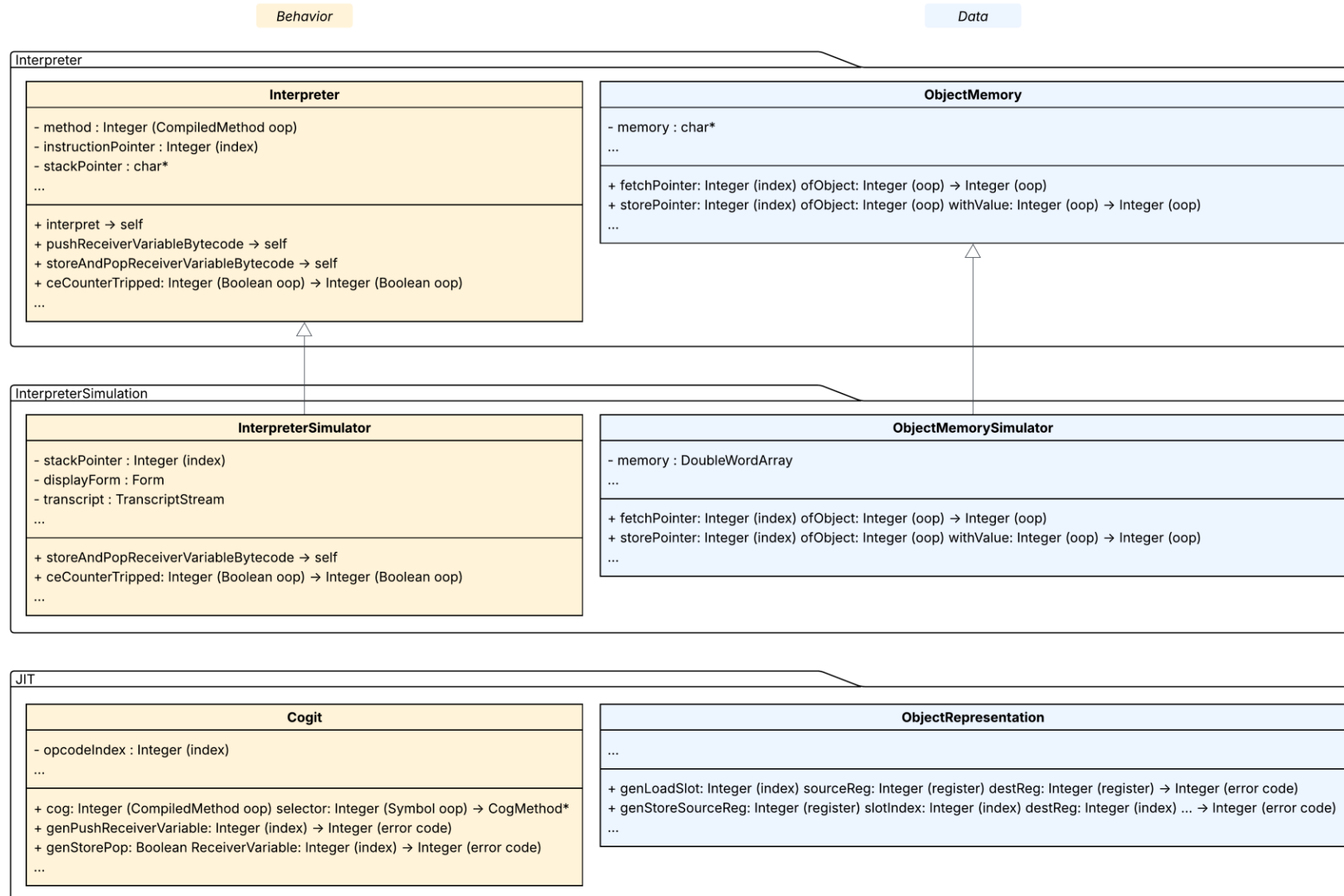
Faster transcript

# PROXIES ALL THE WAY DOWN

- **Scorch:** We ported the core of Scorch from Pharo to Squeak 6.1Alpha, made it compatible with our proxy simulator, and improved support for context simulation.
- **Squeak Trunk:**
  - **Transparent Proxy Support**
    - [resolveProxy.3.cs](#): Proposes a general pattern for resolving transparent proxies in primitive methods.
    - [Kernel-ct.1604](#): Fixes Boolean support in ObjectViewer (which currently functions as the de-facto reference implementation of transparent proxies in Squeak).
    - [Debugger step unexpected message sends.1.cs](#): Fixes stepping over ifTrue:/iffalse: sends to Boolean proxies in the debugger.
  - **Bytecode Representation and Execution**
    - [Kernel-ct.1599](#): Fixes and revises CompiledCode constructors for SistaV1 bytecode set.
    - [Kernel-ct.1600](#): Extends support for serializing CompiledCodes as storeStrings.
    - [Kernel-ct.1601](#): Implements and documents the rare bytecode pushActiveProcess.
    - [Kernel-ct.1605](#): Handles unusedBytecode trap from the VM by simulating unknown instructions in the context simulator.
    - [Kernel-ct.1606](#): Adds context simulation of primitiveExitToDebugger.
  - **Instruction Printing**
    - [InstructionPrinter with style.3.cs](#): Adds text styling to all instruction printers in the Trunk and VMMaker.
- Depends on:
  - [Collections-ct.1087](#): Adds Stream>>#isTextStream.
  - [addAttributesBack.7.cs](#): Adds reverse-ordered attribute accessors on Text and optimizes streaming of formatted texts to a lower complexity class.
- **VMMaker**
  - [VMMaker.oscog-mad.3558](#), [VMMaker.oscog-mad.3559](#): Fixes for sendAndBranchData (primitiveSistaMethodPICAndCounterData).
  - [VMMaker.oscog-ct.3562](#): Adds breakpoint in simulator when encountering an unknown instruction.
  - [VMMaker.oscog-ct.3541](#): Fixes and improves UI layout of VMMakerTool.
  - [VMMaker.oscog-ct.3556](#), [VMMaker.oscog-mad.3557](#), [VMMaker.oscog-ct.3563](#), [Simulator-byteCountHelp.1.cs](#): Miscellaneous minor fixes and documentation improvements.
- **OpenSmalltalk VM**
  - [OpenSmalltalk/opensmalltalk-vm#716](#): Revise installation instructions for Ubuntu
  - [OpenSmalltalk/opensmalltalk-vm#719](#): Add support for clang>=16 [v2]
  - [OpenSmalltalk/opensmalltalk-vm#725](#): Add build files for linux64x64/squeak.sista.spur
  - [OpenSmalltalk/opensmalltalk-vm#728](#): [ci] add squeak.sista.spur build for linux64x64

# OSVM: VMMaker Architecture

*Simplified significantly, overview of most important classes only*



# OSVM: Scorch Architecture

*Simplified significantly, overview of most important classes for optimization only*

