

Formalization and Implementation of Safe Destination Passing in Pure Functional Programming Settings

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PhD Defense – November 14th, 2025



Programming languages

- ▶ Imperative languages: instructions step-by-step
how? | mutability | untracked side-effects
- ▶ Functional languages: compose expressions
what? | immutability | purity | first-class functions

Functional languages – why?

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Memory managed automatically: unpredictable overhead / hard to tune

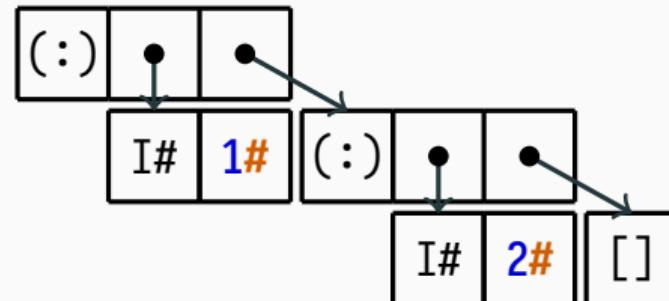
Functional data structures

Data structures are heap-allocated; made of **linked** heap objects:

- ▶ a pointer to the **info table** (static struct describing the constructor)
- ▶ for each field, a pointer to this field's value (except for primitive types)

[1, 2]
a.k.a.
(:) 1 ((:) 2 [])

~~~



(:) is list “cons” constructor

[] is list “nil” constructor

I# is constructor for boxed integers

1# is the primitive/unboxed integer “one”

## Building order in functional languages – current

Data structures: immutable, thus built from the leaves up to the root.

- ▶ The value of a field must be an existing, fully constructed structure

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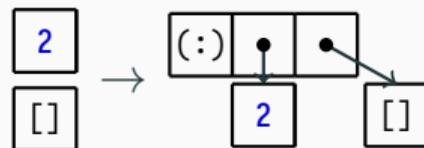
2

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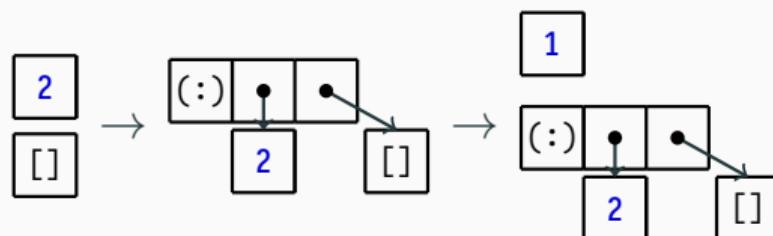
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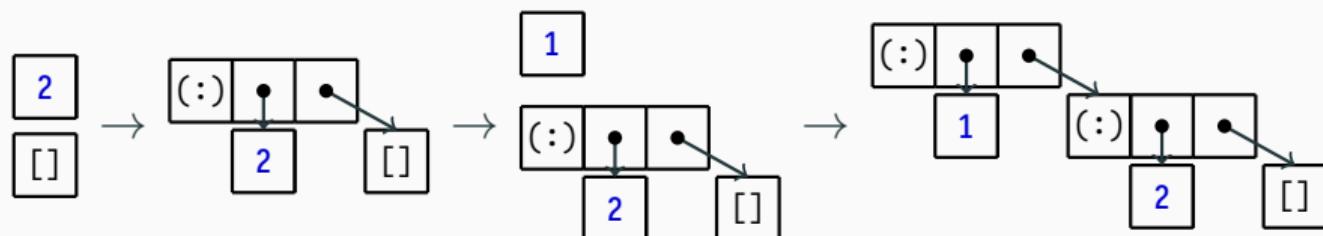
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## Building order in functional languages – current

Data structures: immutable, thus built from the leaves up to the root.

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- ▶ Forces us to build structures in an order that might not be the most natural one.

## Building order in functional languages – goal

What about lifting this limitation?

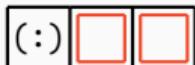
- ▶ Allowing pieces of data structures to be connected like Lego bricks in **any order**  
*pioneered by “A Functional Representation of Data Structures with a Hole”, Minamide (1998)*

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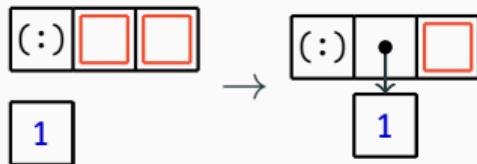


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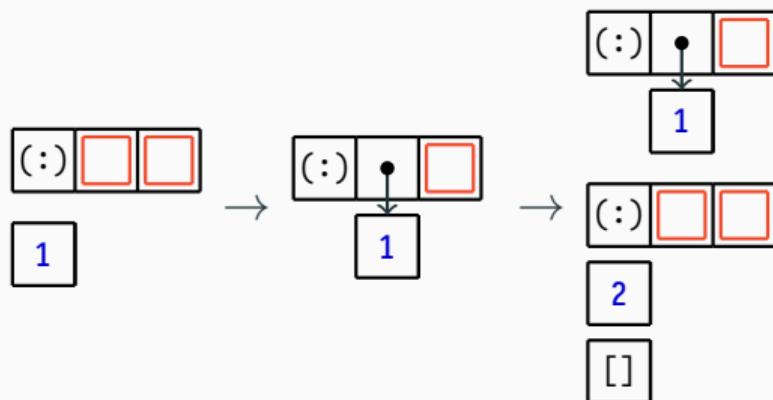


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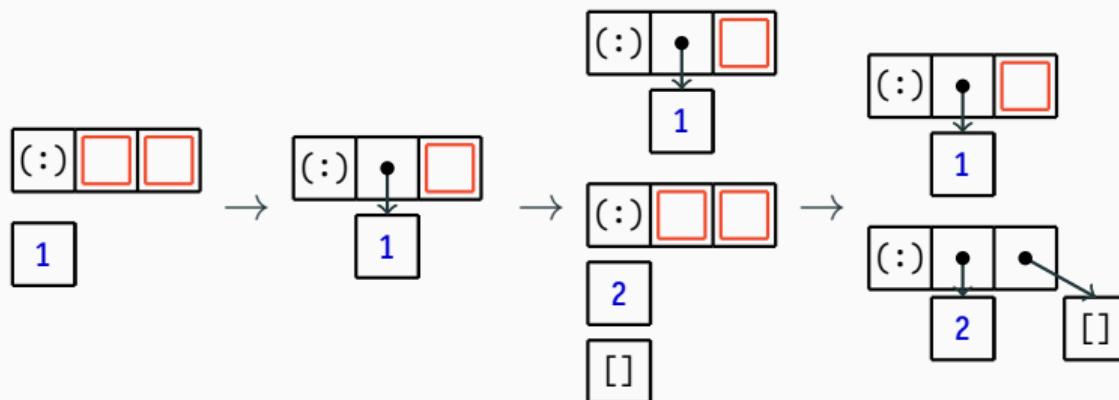


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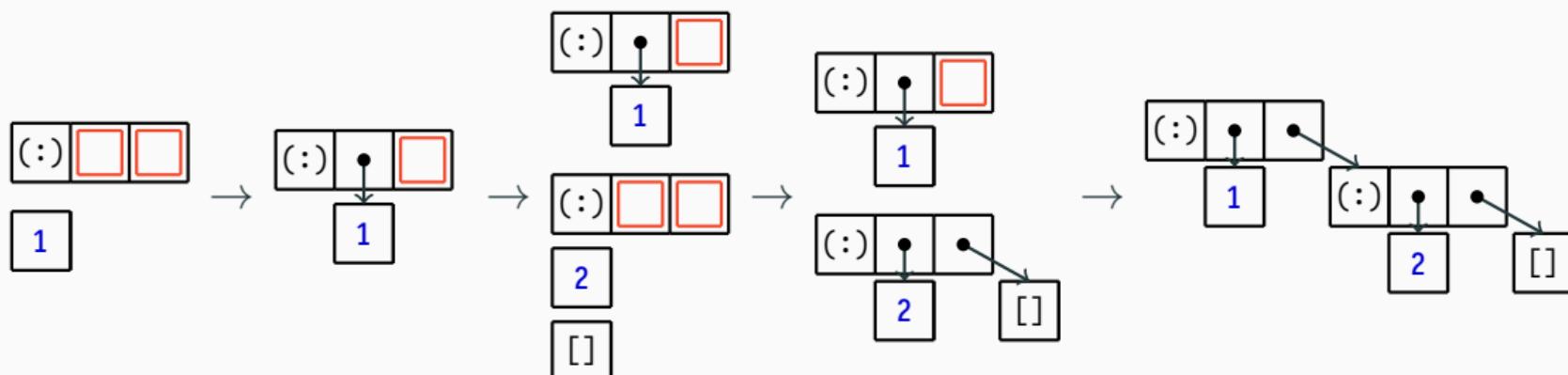


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## Challenges

Uninitialized memory/**holes**:

- ▶ implies future **mutability**
- ▶ no read safety (risk of segfault)

Need proper functional abstraction to manipulate incomplete structures.

# Destination passing

(1<sup>st</sup> article)

Safety concerns for functional DPS

(1<sup>st</sup> article)

Linear types

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Safe yet?

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Avoiding scope escape in Haskell

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A more general solution: age control

(2<sup>nd</sup> article)

Formalization and proofs in Rocq

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## Here comes destination passing style (DPS)

Coming from old C days:

### Traditional style

```
1 MyStruct * fooTrad() {  
2     MyStruct *res = malloc(sizeof(MyStruct));  
3     res->f1 = 1; res->f2 = 2;  
4     return res;  
5 }
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### DPS style

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1 void fooDps(MyStruct *dest) {  
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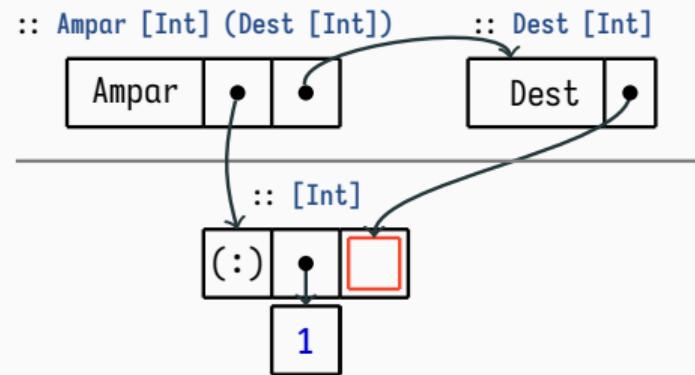
Caller is responsible for allocation in destination-passing-style function `fooDps`. More flexible:

- ▶ can allocate several slots at once
- ▶ can allocate on the stack (no `malloc`)

## Functional DPS API – Types (1/2)

**Dest**ination: first-class typed wrapper for a raw pointer to a **hole**

- ▶ *breaks from Minamide's approach*
- ▶ only way to refer to and act on a hole (of an incomplete structure)



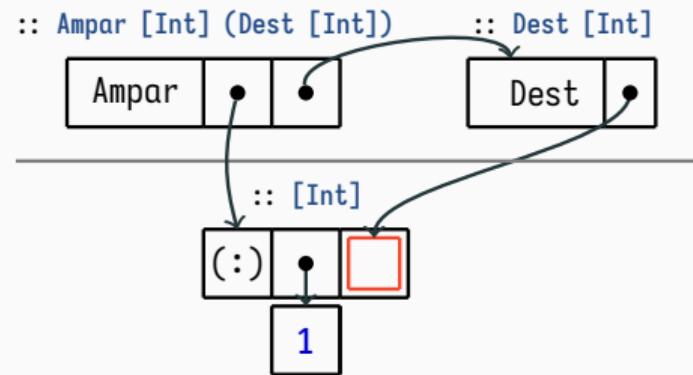
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**Ampar**: first-class opaque wrapper for an **incomplete structure** and its destinations

- ▶ prevents reading incomplete structure and its holes
- ▶ only way to refer to and act on an incomplete structure



## Functional DPS API – Types (2/2)

Every operation is done through **Ampar** and **Dest** types.

```
data Ampar s t = Ampar s t  (opaque)
```

- ▶ **s** is the type of the incomplete structure
- ▶ **t** is arbitrary structure carrying all the destinations to holes of **s**

E.g. **Ampar [Int] (Dest Int, Dest Int)**: list of ints with two missing values

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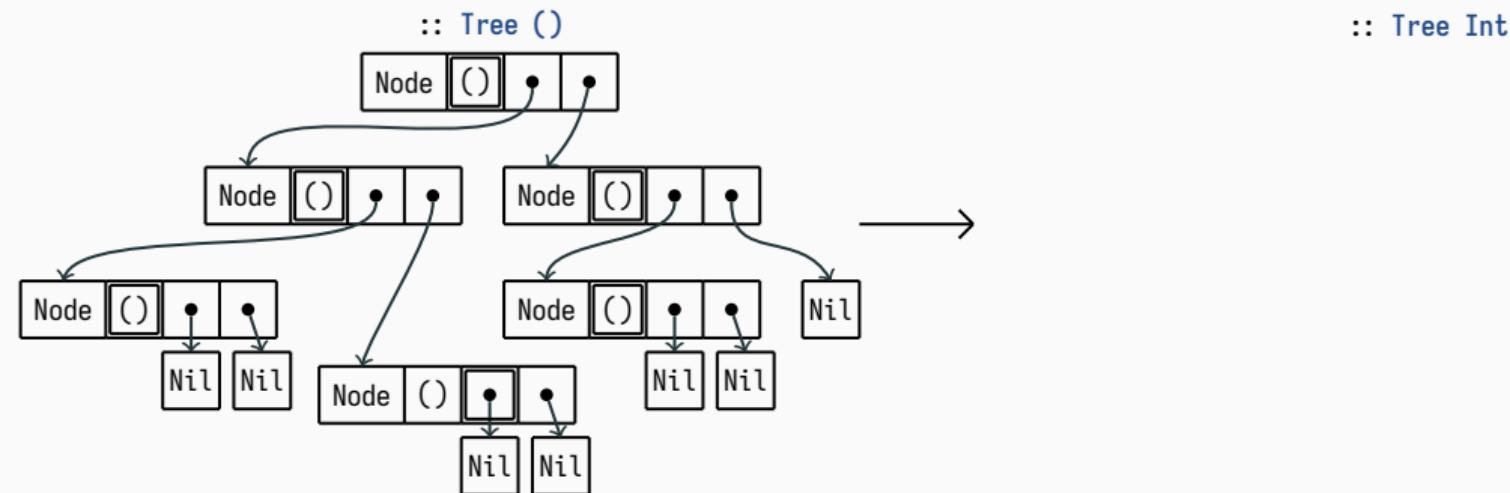
E.g. **Ampar [Int] (Dest Int, Dest Int)**: list of ints with two missing values

```
data Dest t = Dest Addr#  (opaque)
```

- ▶ **t** is the type of the hole that the destination references

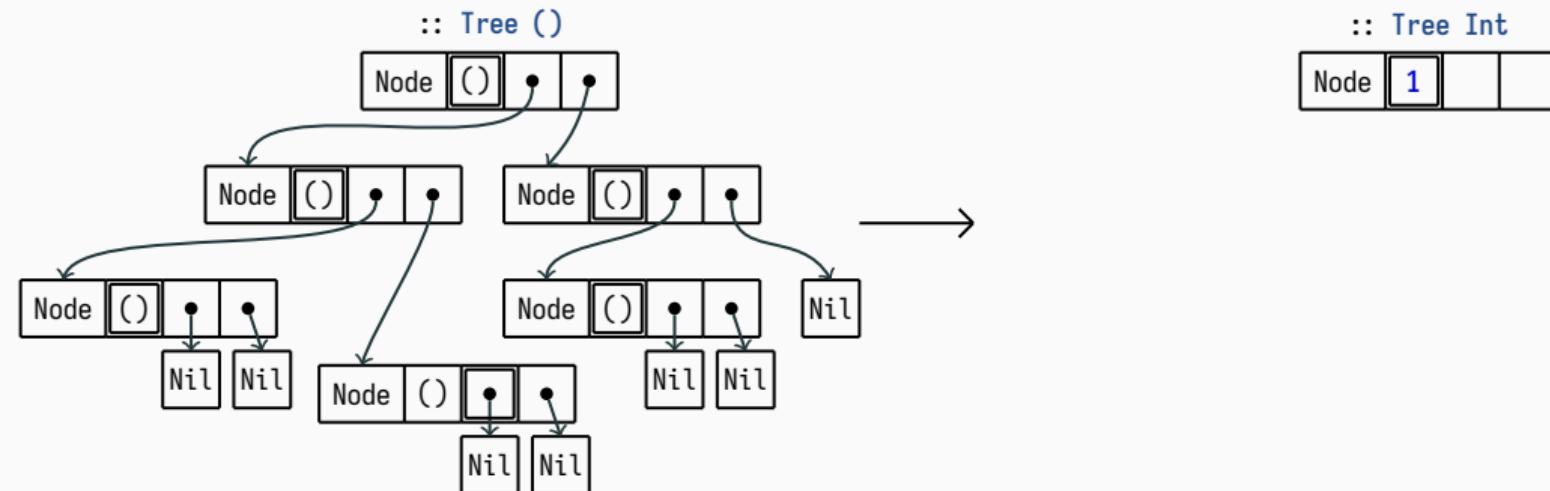
## Example: Breadth-first tree relabeling in DPS (1/2)

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data Tree t = Nil | Node t (Tree t) (Tree t)
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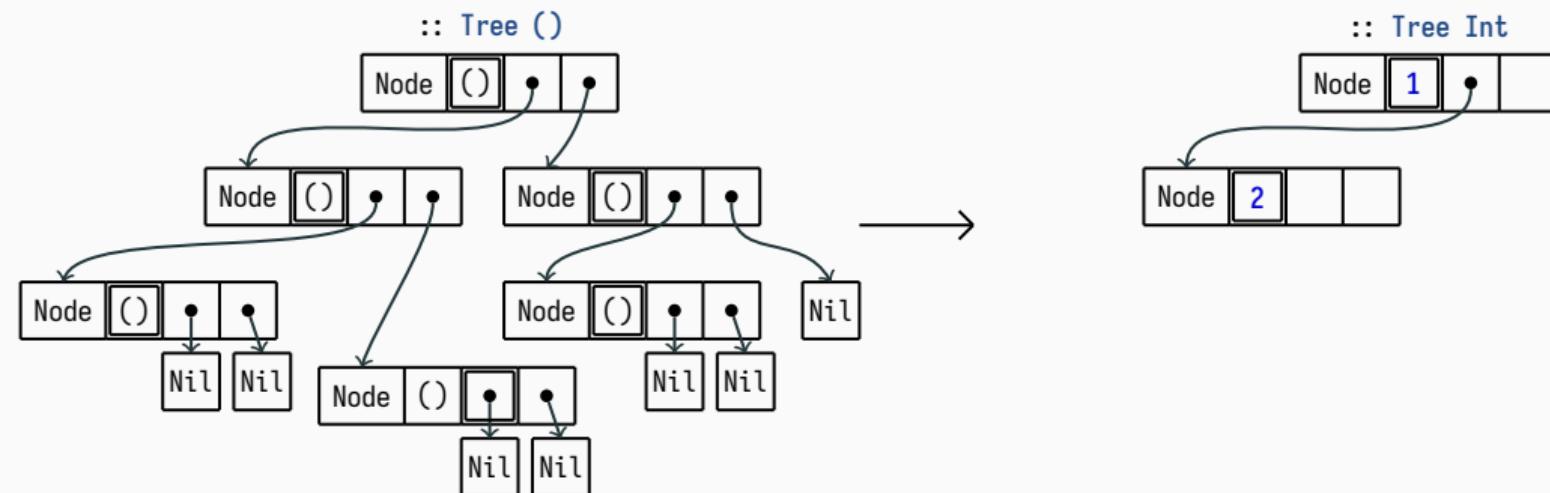
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I represent boxed integer values in a compact way on the schema for clarity of the presentation.

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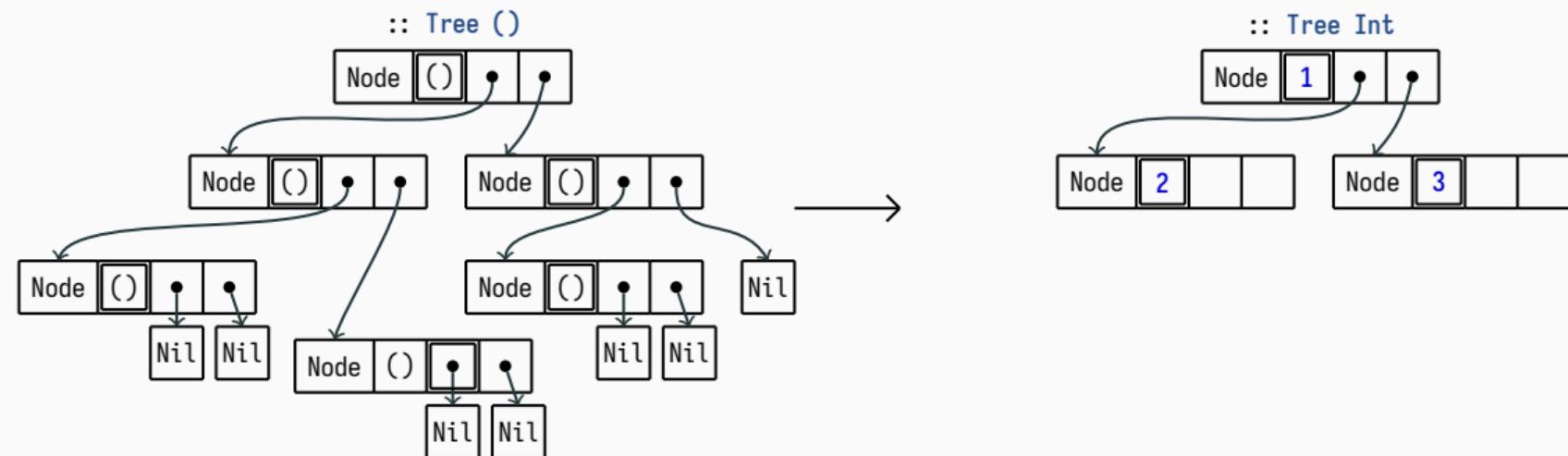
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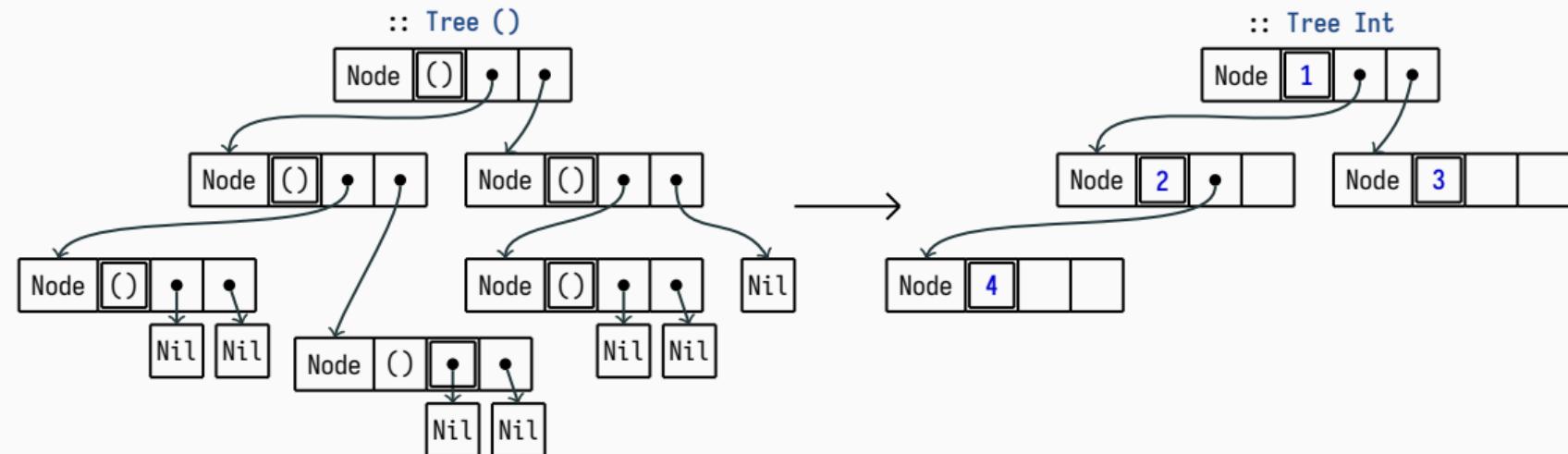
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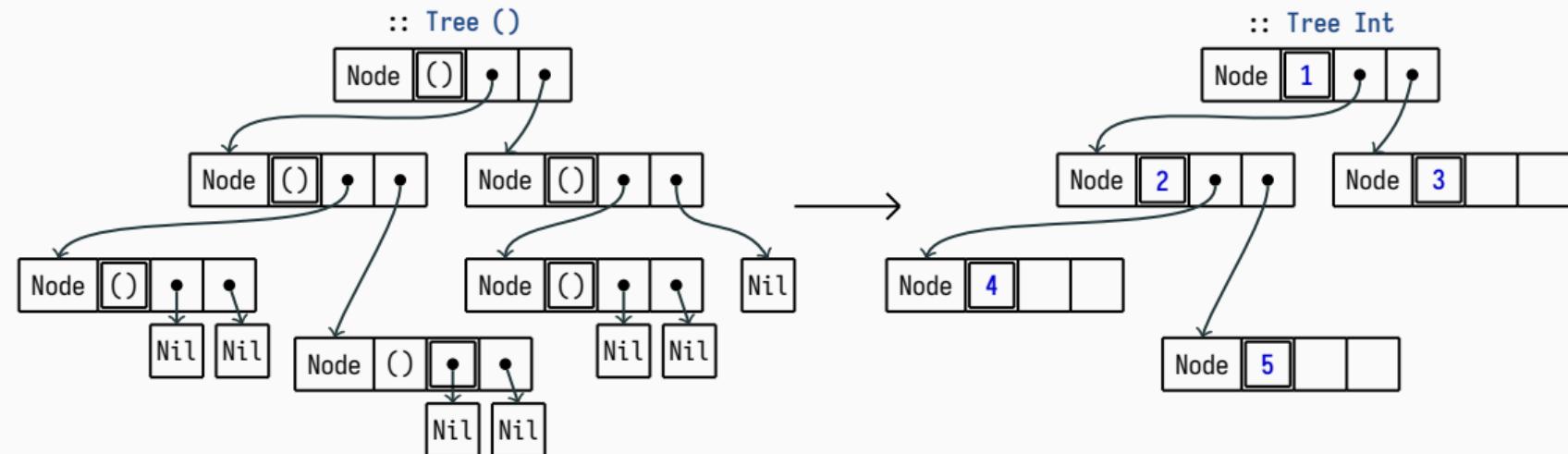
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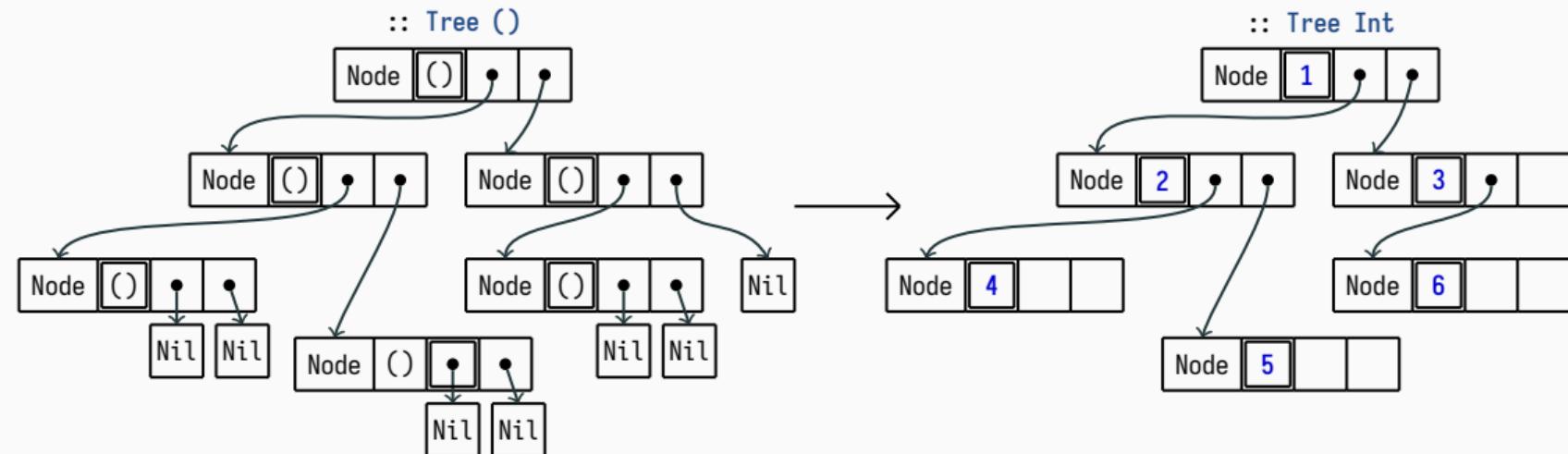
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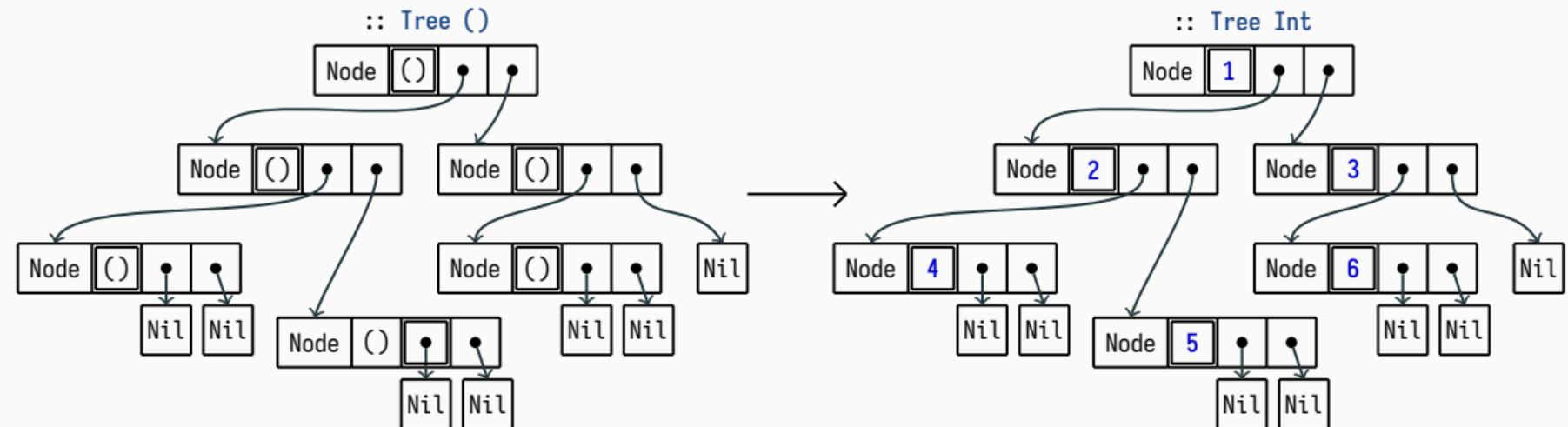
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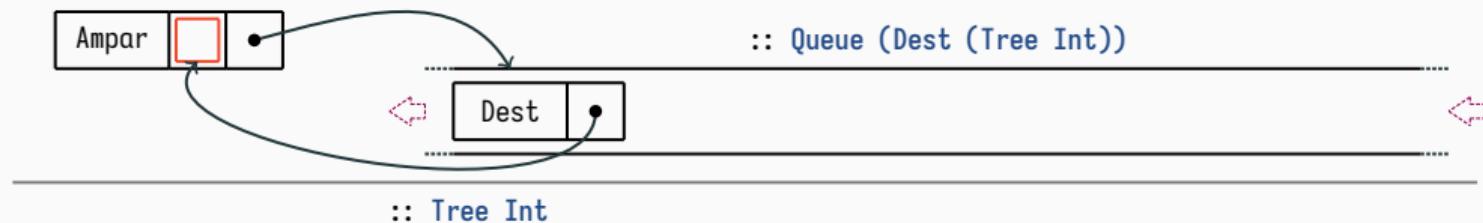
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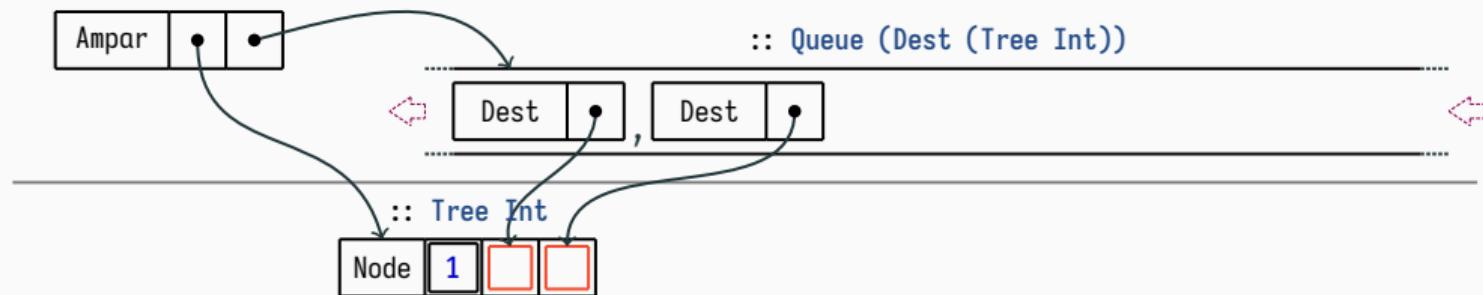
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:: Ampar (Tree Int) (Queue (Dest (Tree Int)))



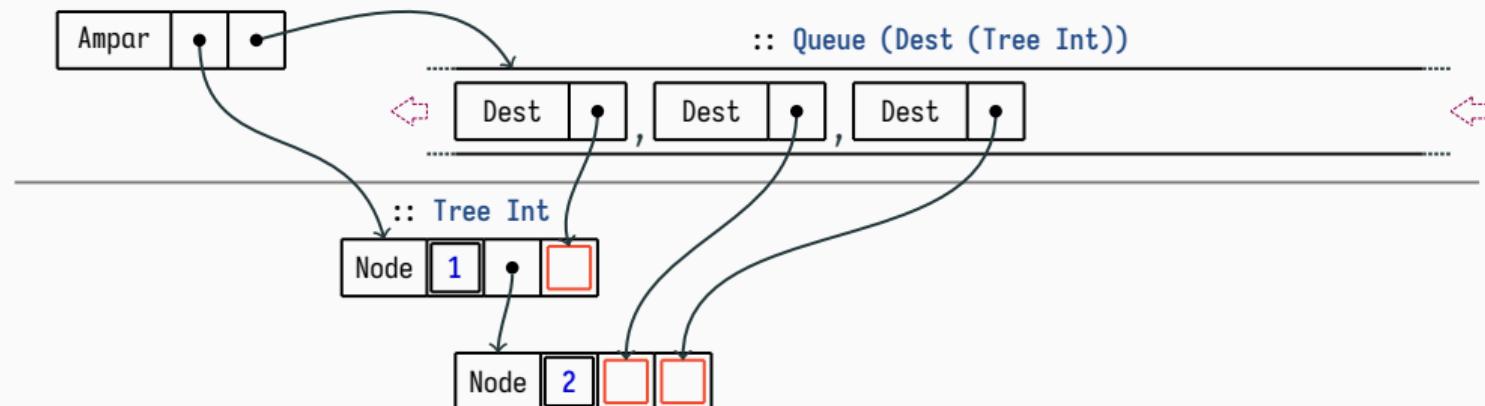
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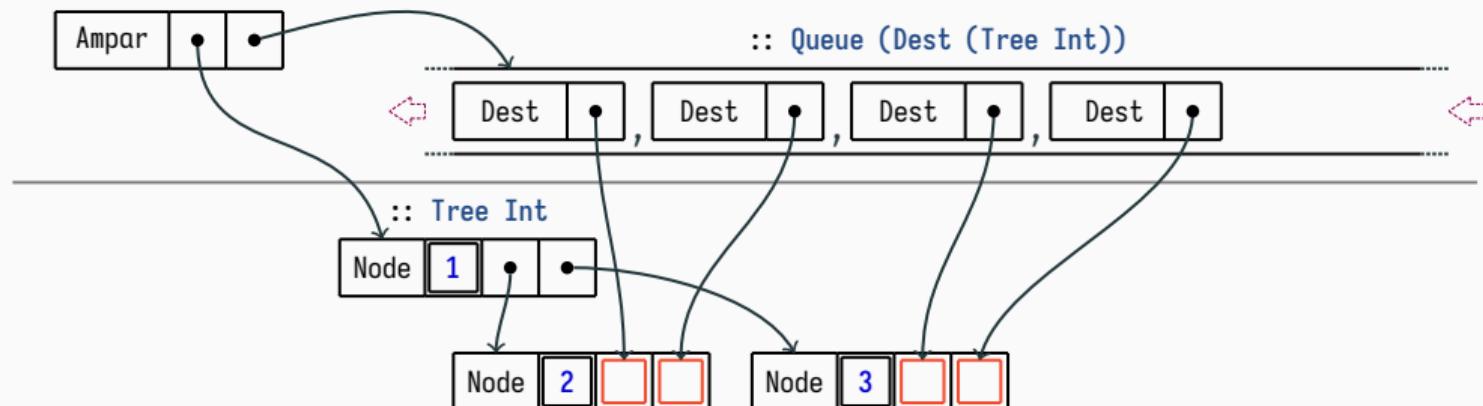
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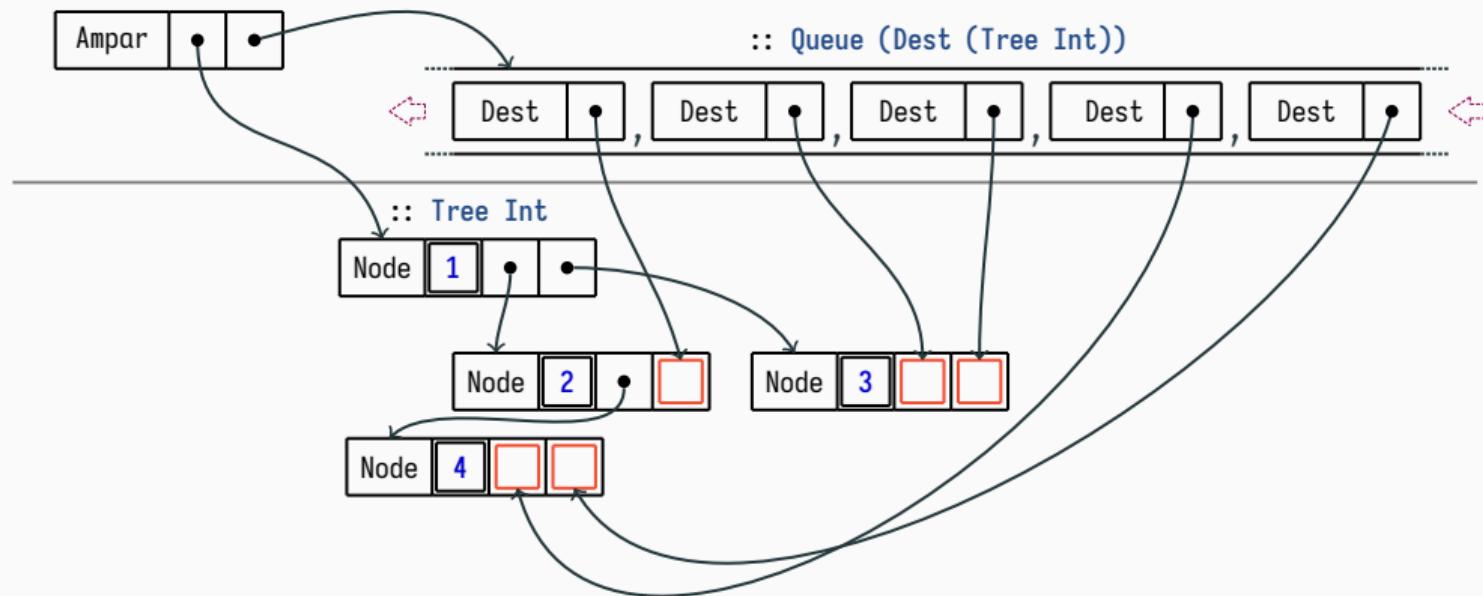
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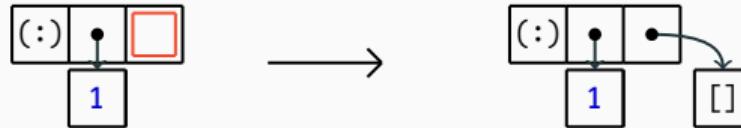


## Functional DPS API – First attempt

```
1  data Ampar s t
2  data Dest t
3  type family DestsOf 'Ctor t  -- returns dests corresponding to fields of Ctor
4
5  -- Functions on destinations (infix)
6  &fill @'Ctor :: Dest t          → DestsOf 'Ctor t
7  &fillComp    :: Dest s → Ampar s t → t
8  &fillLeaf    :: Dest t → t      → ()
9
10 -- Functions on Ampar
11 newAmpar    :: Ampar s (Dest s)
12 fromAmpar'   :: Ampar s () → s
13 `updWith`    :: Ampar s t  → (t → u) → Ampar s u  -- (infix)
```

## Functional DPS API – Functions (1/6)

- ▶ Allocate a hollow data constructor and plug it into a hole?



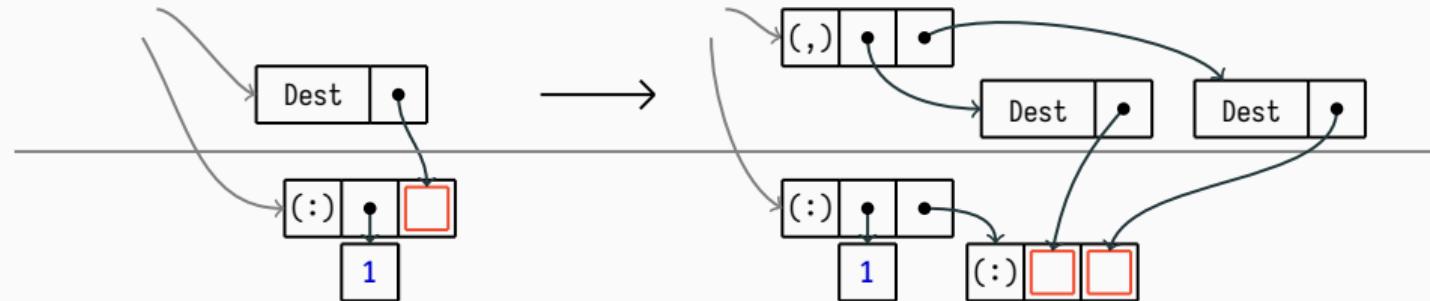
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`&fill @'(:) :: Dest [t]`

→

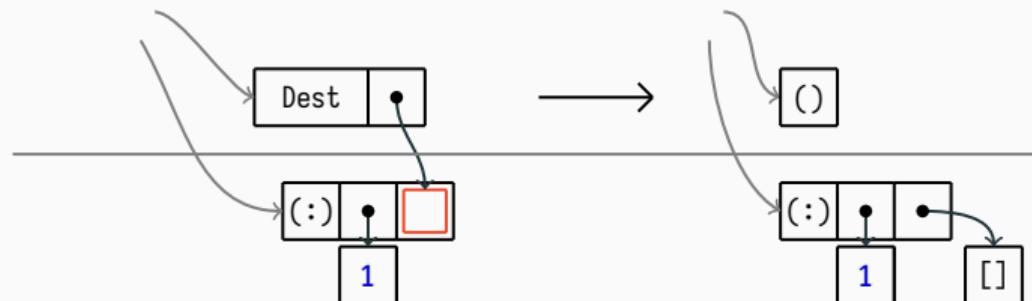
`(Dest t, Dest [t])`



`&fill @'[] :: Dest [t]`

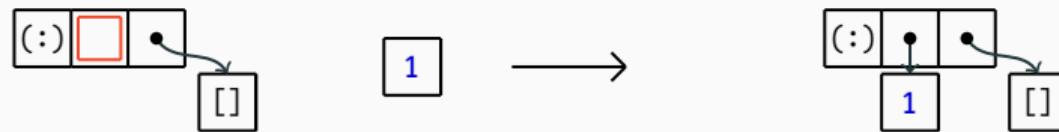
→

`()`



## Functional DPS API – Functions (2/6)

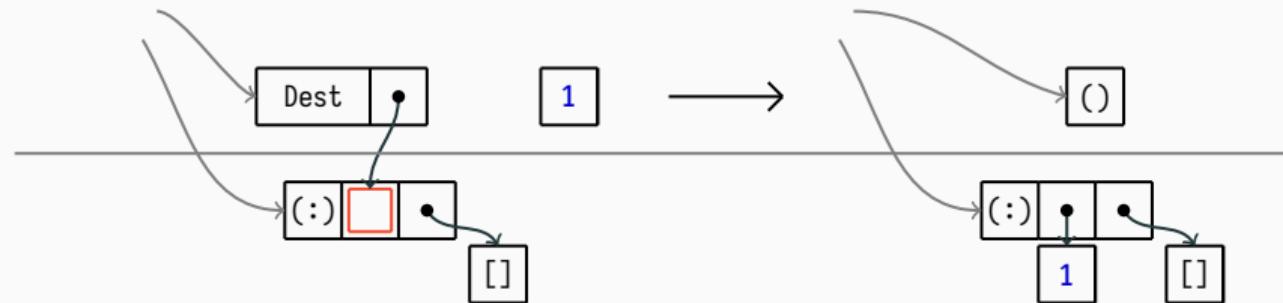
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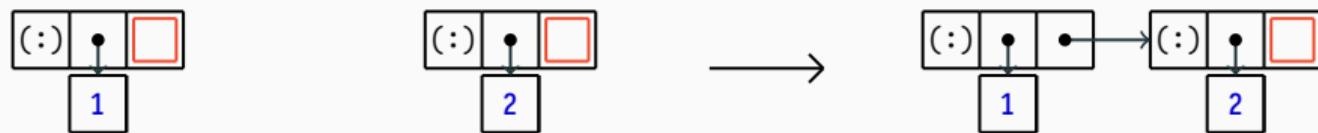
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`&fillLeaf :: Dest t → t → ()`



## Functional DPS API – Functions (3/6)

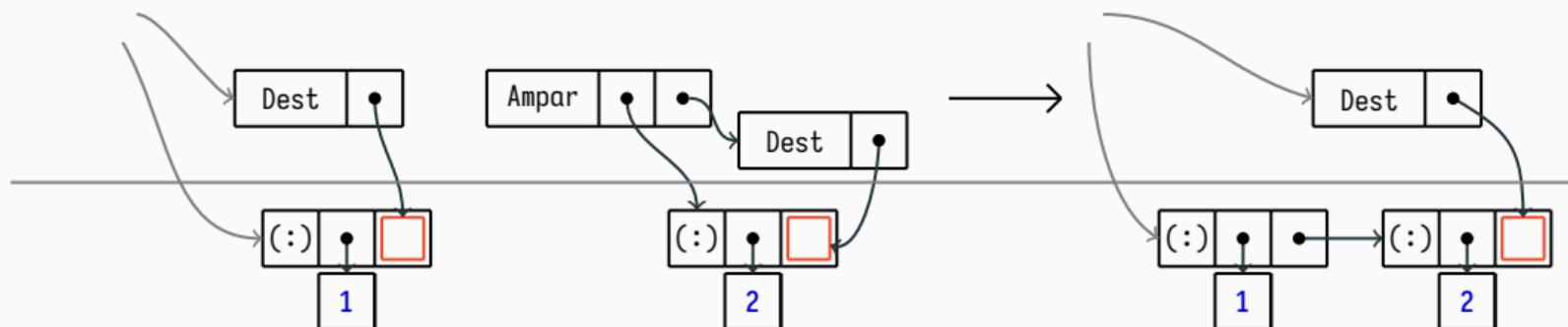
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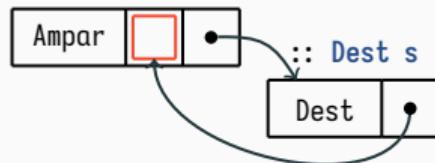
**&fillComp :: Dest s → Ampar s t → t**



## Functional DPS API – Functions (4/6)

- ▶ Spawn new incomplete structure?

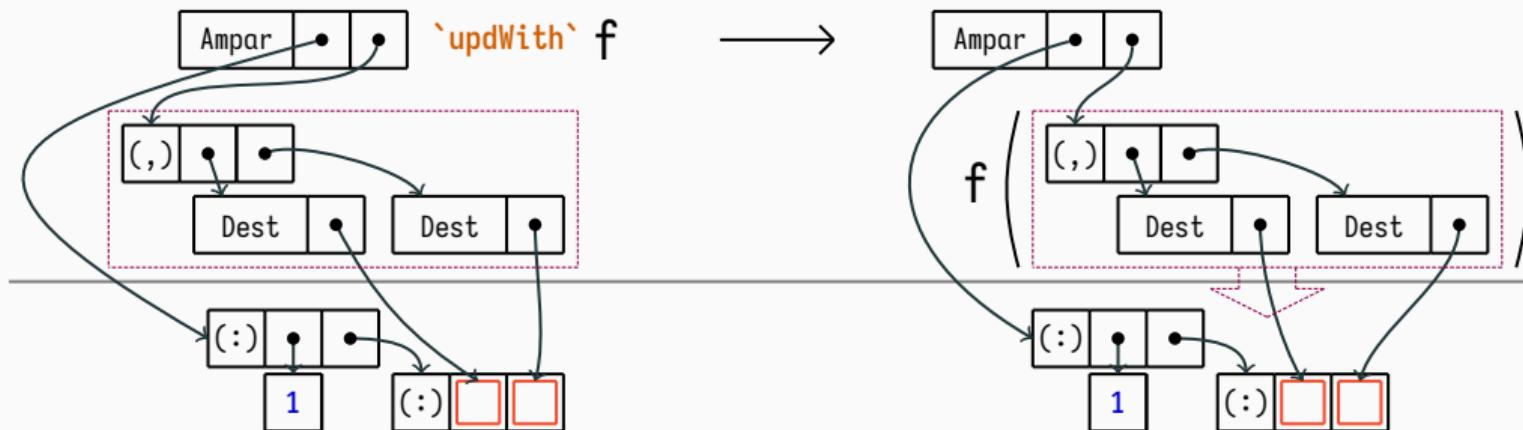
`newAmpar :: Ampar s (Dest s)`



## Functional DPS API – Functions (5/6)

- ▶ Access destinations of an Ampar?

`'updWith' :: Ampar s t      → (t → u)    →      Ampar s u`



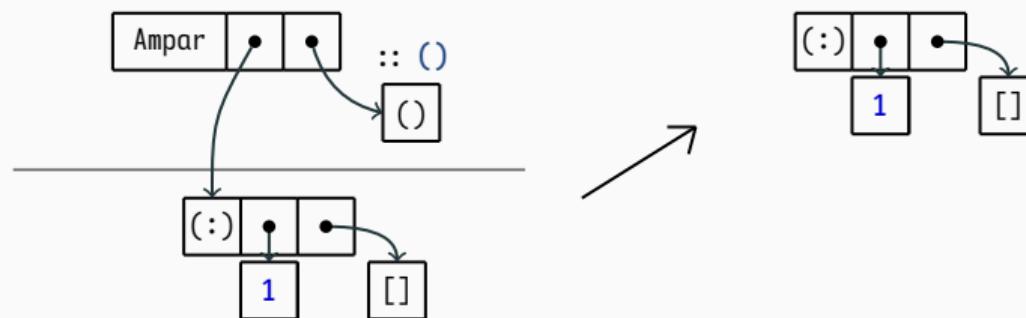
## Functional DPS API – Functions (6/6)

- ▶ Extract a completed structure?

`fromAmpar' :: Ampar s ()`

→

`s`



Destination passing

(1<sup>st</sup> article)

## **Safety concerns for functional DPS**

(1<sup>st</sup> article)

Linear types

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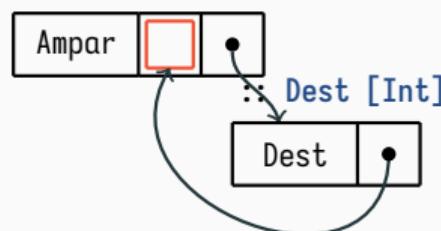
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## Unrestricted use of destinations

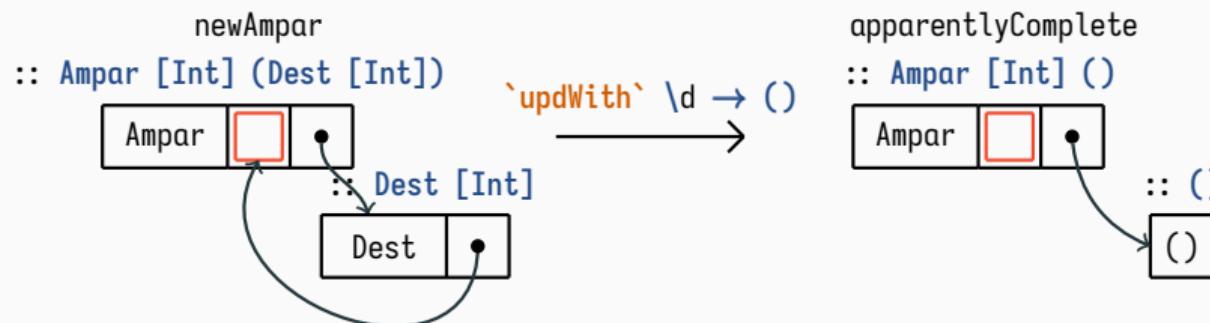
```
1 fromAmpar' :: Ampar s () → s -- I recall the signature
2
3 let apparentlyComplete :: Ampar [Int] () = newAmpar `updWith` \d → ()
4   in fromAmpar' apparentlyComplete
```

newAmpar  
:: Ampar [Int] (Dest [Int])



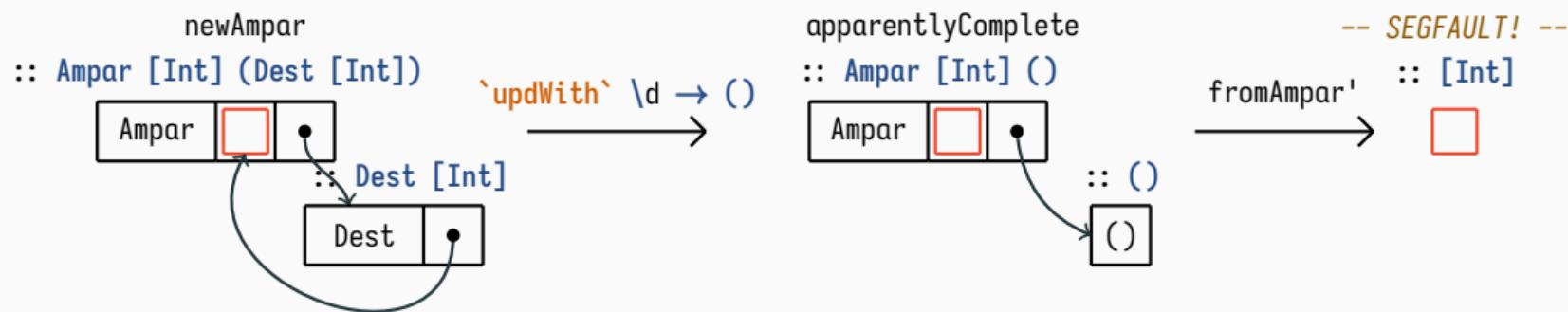
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Destination passing (1<sup>st</sup> article)

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## Linearity to the rescue

Linear types and linearity let us control resource consumption of functions.

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- ▶ consumed less than once → hole remained unfilled
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Unconsumed destination = witnesses a remaining hole

## Linear Haskell overview (1/2)

Haskell supports linear types since GHC 9.0.1

*follows from “Linear Haskell: practical linearity in a higher-order polymorphic language”,*

*Bernardy et al. (2018)*

**s → t** = Linear function from **s** to **t**

means that if the result of type **t** is consumed exactly once, then the argument of type **s** is consumed exactly once too.

## Linear Haskell overview (2/2)

A value is **consumed once** when:

- ▶ **pattern-matched on**, and all its fields are consumed once
- ▶ **used as an argument** of a linear function whose results is consumed once
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| x | linear in | case y of {Nothing -> x ; Just v -> v} ?           | → NO  |
| x | linear in | case y of {Nothing -> (x, 0) ; Just v -> (x, v)} ? | → YES |

## Linear Haskell overview (2/2)

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- ▶ **pattern-matched on**, and all its fields are consumed once
- ▶ **used as an argument** of a linear function whose results is consumed once
- ▶ (*function*) **applied** to give a result which is consumed once

**Examples** (assuming the value on the right is consumed):

|   |           |                                                    |       |
|---|-----------|----------------------------------------------------|-------|
| x | linear in | (x, y) ?                                           | → YES |
| x | linear in | (x, x) ?                                           | → NO  |
| x | linear in | case y of {Nothing -> x ; Just v -> v} ?           | → NO  |
| x | linear in | case y of {Nothing -> (x, 0) ; Just v -> (x, v)} ? | → YES |
| x | linear in | f x      where    f :: t → u ?                     | → NO  |

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| x | linear in | fLin x where fLin :: t → u ?                       | → YES |

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| x | linear in | case y of {Nothing -> (x, 0) ; Just v -> (x, v)} ? | → YES |
| x | linear in | f x where f :: t → u ?                             | → NO  |
| x | linear in | fLin x where fLin :: t → u ?                       | → YES |
| x | linear in | Ur x ?                                             | → NO  |

## Linear scopes and resources

Linearity chains consumption requirements, but it needs to be bootstrapped.

Trick: scoping function

```
withResource :: (Resource → Ur t) → Ur t
```

which is the only **producer** of **Resource** values

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- ▶ `withResource (\res -> linearConsume res ∘ Ur ())` is **OK**
- ▶ `withResource (\res -> res)` or  
`withResource (\res -> Ur res)` are **REJECTED** (cannot leak)

## Updating the API with linearity

Trick to easier manage linear resources and their scopes: linearity-infectious **Token**:

```
1 | data Token
2 | dup  :: Token -> (Token, Token)
3 | drop :: Token -> ()
4 | withToken :: (Token -> Ur t) -> Ur t
```

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**Old:** newAmpar :: Ampar s (Dest s)

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**New:** updWith :: Ampar s t → (t → u) → Ampar s u

**Dests** can only ever be accessed through **updWith**, which takes a linear function **t → u** now

## Functional DPS API – Second attempt, with linearity

```
1  data Ampar s t
2  data Dest t
3  type family DestsOf 'Ctor t  -- returns dests corresponding to fields of Ctor
4
5  &fill @'Ctor :: Dest t          → DestsOf 'Ctor t
6  &fillComp    :: Dest s → Ampar s t → t
7  &fillLeaf    :: Dest t → t      → ()
8
9  newAmpar     :: Token        → Ampar s (Dest s)
10 toAmpar      :: Token        → s   → Ampar s ()
11 tokenBesides :: Ampar s t    → (Ampar s t, Token)
12 fromAmpar    :: Ampar s (Ur t) → (s, Ur t)
13 fromAmpar'   :: Ampar s ()   → s
14 `updWith`    :: Ampar s t    → (t → u) → Ampar s u
```

Destination passing (1<sup>st</sup> article)

Safety concerns for functional DPS (1<sup>st</sup> article)

Linear types (1<sup>st</sup> article)

**Safe yet?** (1<sup>st</sup> article)

Avoiding scope escape in Haskell (1<sup>st</sup> article)

A more general solution: age control (2<sup>nd</sup> article)

Formalization and proofs in Rocq (2<sup>nd</sup> article)

## Scope escape – Example

```
1 let outer :: Ampar (Dest ()) ()
2   outer = (newAmpar tok1) `updWith` \ (dOuter :: Dest (Dest ())) →
3     let inner :: Ampar () ()
4       inner = (newAmpar tok2) `updWith` \ (dInner :: Dest ()) →
5         dOuter &fillLeaf dInner
6       in fromAmpar' inner
7   in fromAmpar' outer
```

*Minimal example of type-checked code that produce scope-escape/segfault*

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```

*Minimal example of type-checked code that produce scope-escape/segfault*

## Scope escape – Bigger picture

Not just an artificial edge-case

- ▶ Linear API are often based on scope-delimited resource consumption
- ▶ Any form of (linear) storage for linear resources breaks that
  - `storeAway :: t → ()` -- *resource goes away magically*

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## With just Haskell type system (1/2)

Solution 1: destinations can only store non-linear data

**Old:** `fillLeaf :: t → Dest t → ()`

**New:** `fillLeaf :: t → UDest t → ()`

**Old:** `fromAmpar' :: Ampar s () → s`

**New:** `fromUAmpar' :: UAmpar s () → Ur s`

In other words, `UAmpar s t` builds an unrestricted `s`

*Used in my library `linear-dest` from article “DPS: a Haskell implementation”, Bagrel, JFLA 2024*

## With just Haskell type system (2/2)

### Solution 2: destinations for linear data needs new primitives instead of `fillLeaf` / `fillComp`

Back to Minamide-like system where one operate on **Ampars** directly instead of **Dests** (to prevent scope escape)

- ▶ With some complications, can work with multiple holes
- ▶ Still allows for efficient queue of **Dests** in BF-traversal

*Developed in Chapter 4 of the PhD manuscript (unpublished)*

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## Age system

Principle: track the age of resources.

- ▶ Age  $\uparrow^0$  says the resource (variable) comes from the innermost `updWith` scope.
- ▶ When entering a new `updWith` scope, all existing resources ages are multiplied by  $\uparrow$  (scope number increased by 1)

*Developed in “Destination Calculus: A Linear  $\lambda$ -Calculus for Purely Functional Memory Writes”,  
Bagrel & Spiwack, OOPSLA1 2025*

## Age system – Example

Colors indicate the scope in which each object lives.

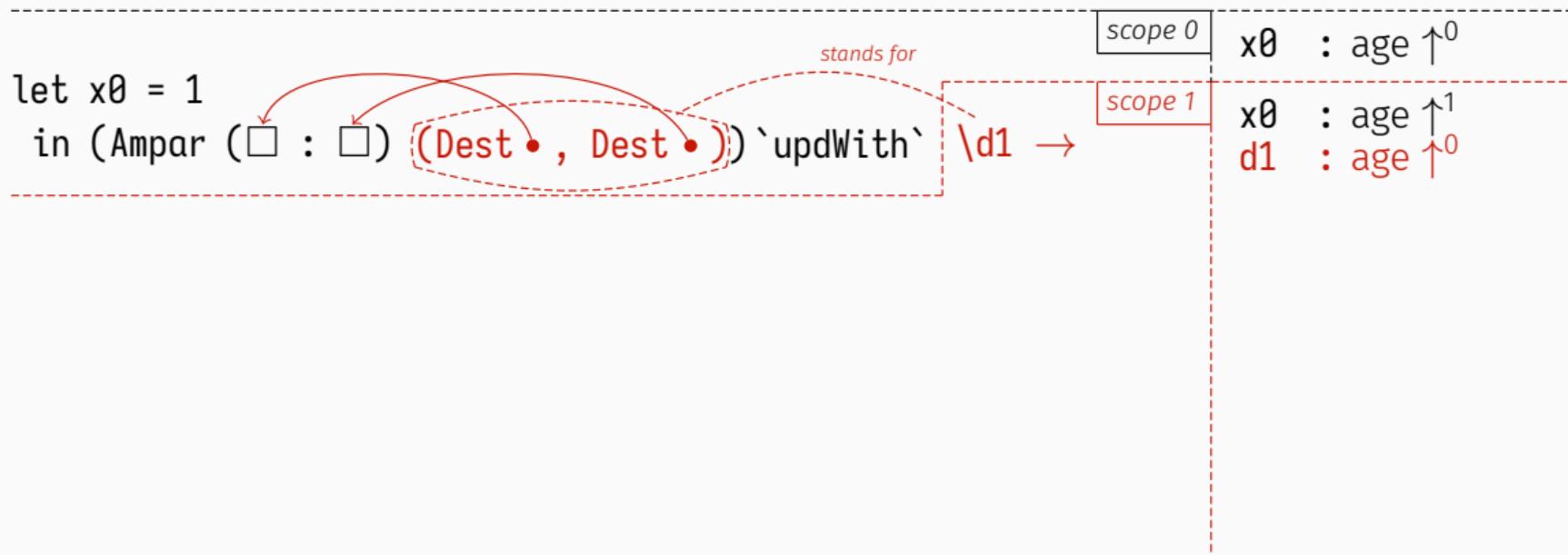
```
let x0 = 1
in (Ampar (□ : □) (Dest • , Dest • ))
```

scope 0

x0 : age ↑<sup>0</sup>

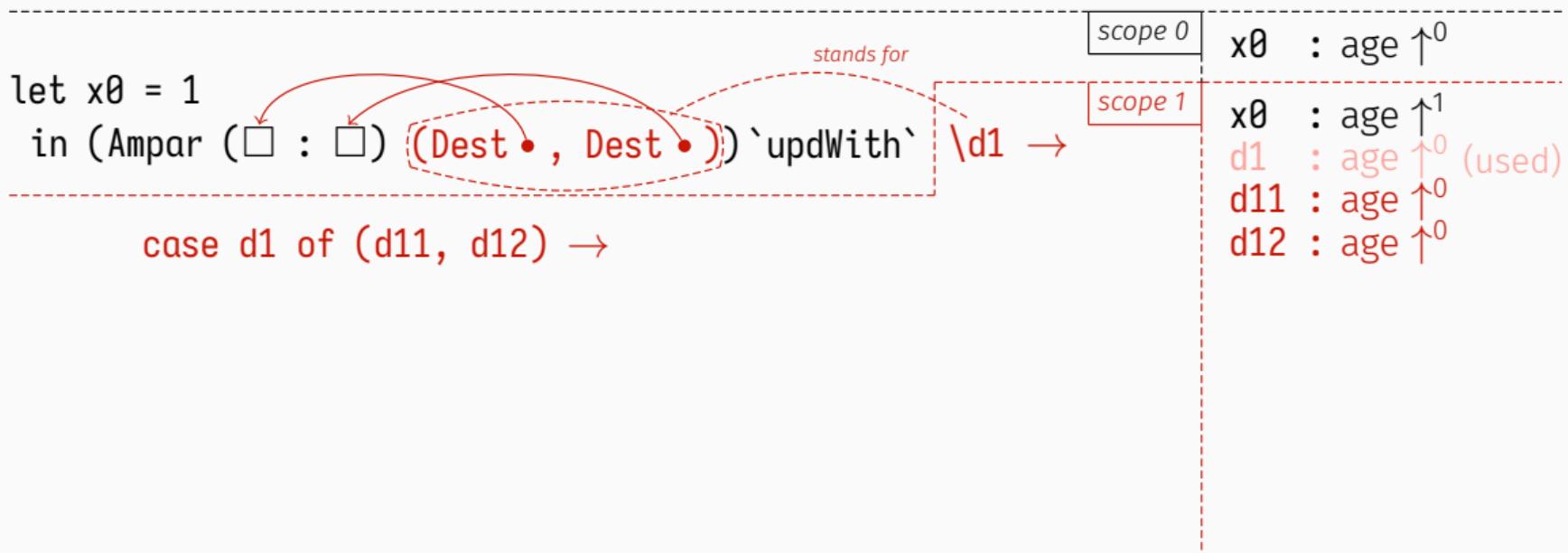
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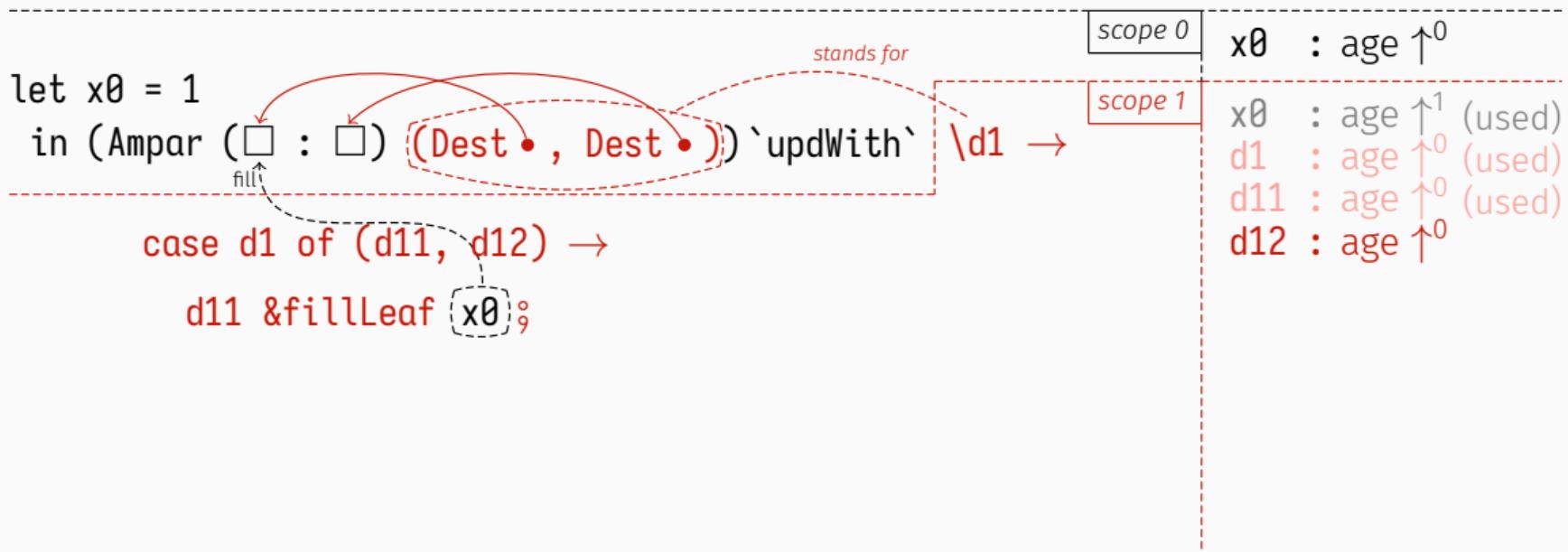
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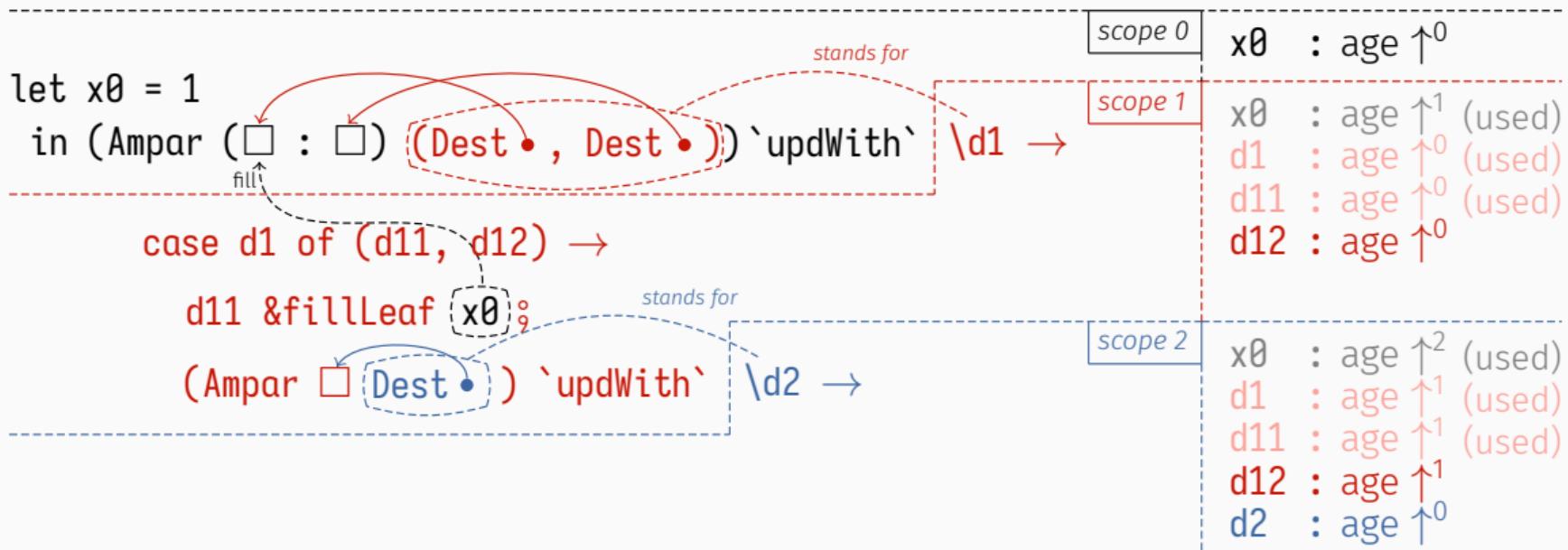
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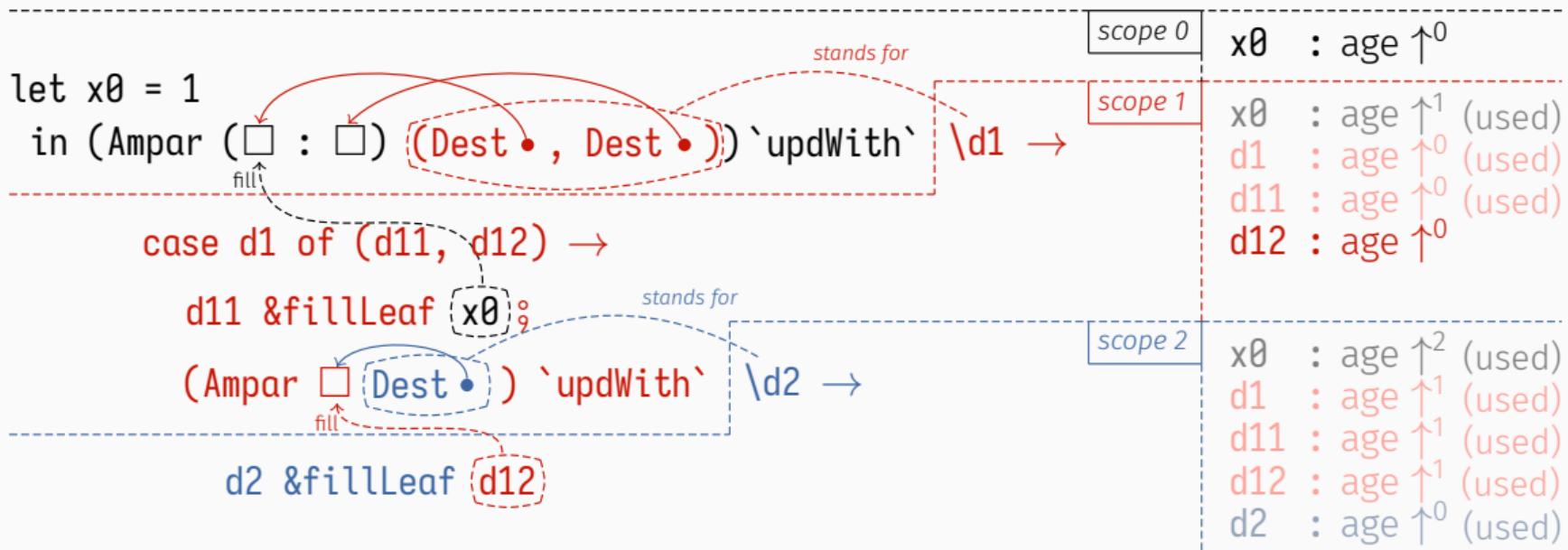
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## Age system – Example

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## Age control prevents scope escape

New rule: The LHS of **&fillLeaf** (destination being filled) must be exactly one scope **younger** than the RHS (content being stored away)

```
1 let outer :: Ampar (Dest ()) ()
2     outer = (newAmpar tok1) `updWith` \ (dOuter :: ↑0 Dest (Dest ())) →
3         let inner :: Ampar () ()
4             inner = (newAmpar tok2) `updWith` \ (dInner :: ↑0 Dest ()) →
5                 (dOuter :: ↑1) &fillLeaf (dInner :: ↑0) -- REJECTED
6                 in fromAmpar' inner
7             in fromAmpar' outer
```

Destination passing (1<sup>st</sup> article)

Safety concerns for functional DPS (1<sup>st</sup> article)

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A more general solution: age control (2<sup>nd</sup> article)

**Formalization and proofs in Rocq** (2<sup>nd</sup> article)

Essence of “*Destination Calculus: A Linear  $\lambda$ -Calculus for Purely Functional Memory Writes*”,  
*Bagrel & Spiwack, OOPSLA1 2025*:

- ▶ Formal language  $\lambda_d$
  - ▶ Built from the ground up with destination-passing in mind
  - ▶ Equipped with linear types and age control
  - ▶ Mechanical proof of type safety (progress + preservation) in Rocq
- Prove definitively that it is possible to safely program with destinations in a purely functional language!

## Modal type system to track linearity and ages

Many similarities with type system and rules of “*Linear Haskell [...]*”, *Bernardy et al., 2018*:

- ▶ Every variable is annotated with a **mode**
  - ▶ Modes indicates how variables can be used
  - ▶ Following insight from “*Bounded Linear Types in a Resource Semiring*”, *Ghica & al., 2014* and “*Coeffects: a calculus of context-dependent computation*”, *Petricek & al., 2014*, modes as a **semiring** and operations on modes are lifted to typing contexts
- Easy to add age control without changing much to linear type system rules!

## Combining linearity and ages in a same semiring

Modes are elements of a semiring  $(M, +, \cdot, 1)$

- ▶  $+$  is used to combine modes when a same variable is used in multiple sub-expressions
- ▶  $\cdot$  is used to combine modes when a substitution/function composition happens

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Linearity is represented as semiring

$$(\{l, \omega\}, +, \cdot, l)$$

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Ages are represented as semiring

$$(\{\uparrow^n \mid n \in \mathbb{N}, \infty\}, \equiv, \cdot, \uparrow^0)$$

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$$(\{l, \omega\}, +, \cdot, l)$$

Ages are represented as semiring

$$(\{\uparrow^n \mid n \in \mathbb{N}, \infty\}, \equiv, \cdot, \uparrow^0)$$

→ Product of semirings is a semiring!

## Type system – balancing destinations and holes

I ensure holes and destinations are balanced using a “subtractive” typing technique:

- ▶ The presence of a hole **provides** a special binding in the typing context

$$\{\rightarrow h :_m \text{Dest}_n t\} \dashv \text{OpAmp}[\boxed{h}] [] :: u_1 \rightarrow u_2$$

- ▶ The use of a destination **requires** a special binding in the typing context  
(same as a variable use)

$$\{\rightarrow h :_m \text{Dest}_n t\} \vdash \rightarrow h \& \text{fillLeaf} () :: ()$$

- A closed term/program is necessarily well-balanced wrt. destinations and holes.

Theoretical language  $\lambda_d$  is equipped with small-step semantics.

- ▶ Controlled mutations resulting from destination filling are implemented as substitutions on the evaluation context E  
*Syntactic manipulation of the evaluation context as a stack*
- ▶ No need for full-blown memory model

Named hole substitution lemma is the most technical part of the proofs

## Type safety

Proved using fairly standard techniques (progress + preservation).

Most of the heavy lifting is done through lemmas and theorems about typing contexts due to the algebraic structure of the type system.

### Theorem (Type preservation)

If  $\vdash E[e] :: t$  and  $E[e] \rightarrow E'[e']$  then  $\vdash E'[e'] :: t$

### Theorem (Progress)

If  $\vdash E[e] :: t$  and  $\forall v, E[e] \neq [][v]$  then  $\exists E', e'. E[e] \rightarrow E'[e']$

## Conclusion (1/3) – Goal reached!

- Safe functional destination-passing is definitely doable!
  - ▶ Build immutable structures in a more flexible order
  - ▶ Incomplete structures as first-class citizens

## Conclusion (2/3) – Applications

Direct applications:

- ▶ Enable new algorithms with less copying (difference lists, BF tree traversal)
- ▶ Prototype already available in Haskell (`linear-dest` library)
- ▶ Zero-copy interface to compact regions in GHC (**proposal submitted!**)

## Conclusion (3/3) – Trade-offs of the different approaches

Trade-offs to be found between complexity of the type system and expressivity of the destination-passing interface:

- ▶ Lower end: Haskell type system only, simple interface, destinations can't store linear data – still very useful!
- ▶ Higher end: safe-proven theoretical language with no limit on destination use (but needs a bespoke type system)

Further work: Use the theoretical language as a framework to prove safety of less expressive destination-passing systems

## Contributions

- ▶ “Destination-passing style programming: a Haskell implementation” (Article + Impl)  
JFLA 2024, [inria.hal.science/hal-04406360](https://inria.hal.science/hal-04406360)
- ▶ “A zero-copy interface to compact regions powered by destinations” (Talk)  
HIW 2024, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=UIw0s-yEkfw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UIw0s-yEkfw)
- ▶ “Destination Calculus: A Linear  $\lambda$ -Calculus for Purely Functional Memory Writes” (Article)  
Co-authored with A. Spiwack, OOPSLA 2025, [dl.acm.org/doi/10.1145/3720423](https://dl.acm.org/doi/10.1145/3720423)
- ▶ “Primitives for zero-copy compact regions” (GHC Proposal)  
Work in progress, [github.com/ghc-proposals/ghc-proposals/pull/683](https://github.com/ghc-proposals/ghc-proposals/pull/683)

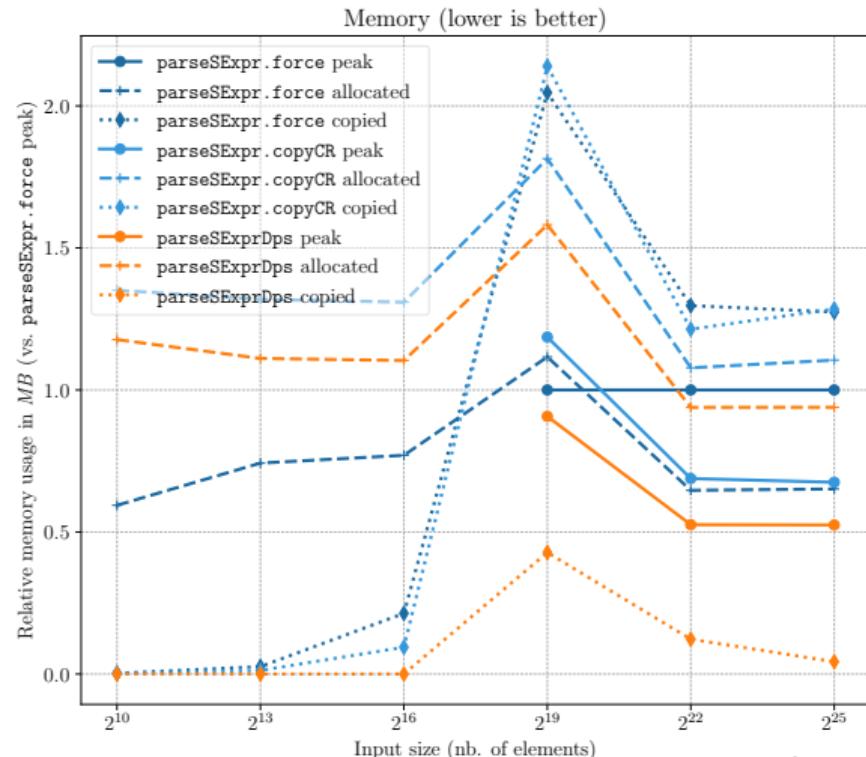
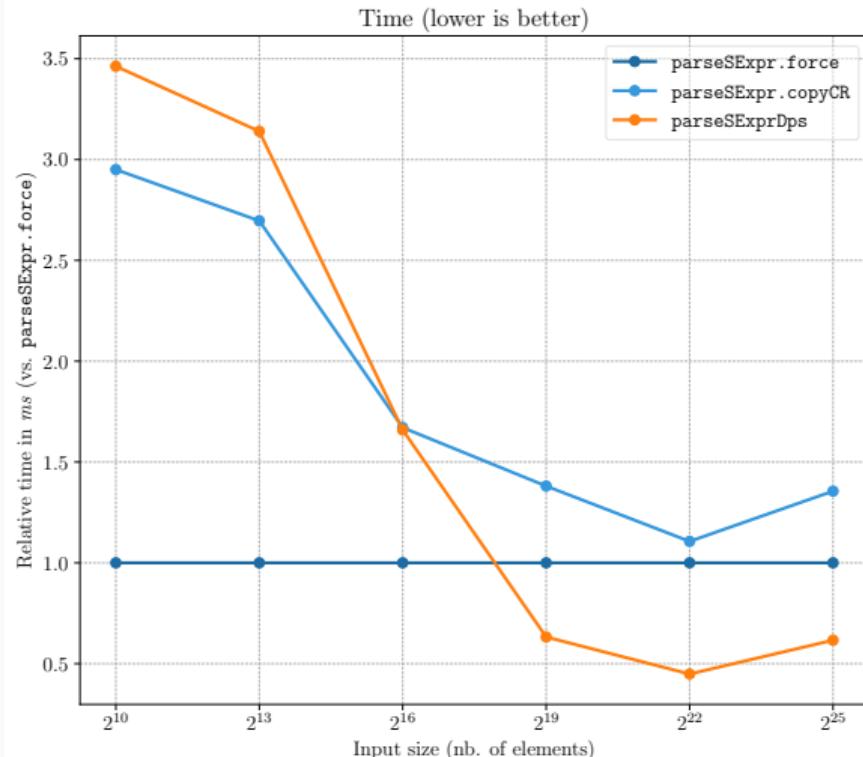
Thank you for your attention! I'll be happy to answer your questions.

## Functional DPS API – scope-escape free

```
1  data UAmpar s t
2  data UDest t
3  type family UDestsOf 'Ctor t  -- returns dests corresponding to fields of Ctor
4
5  &fill @'Ctor :: UDest t          → UDestsOf 'Ctor t
6  &fillComp    :: UDest s → UAmpar s t → t
7  &fillLeaf    :: UDest t → t      → ()
8
9  newUAmpar   :: Token           → UAmpar s (Dest s)
10 toUAmpar    :: Token  → s     → UAmpar s ()
11 tokenBesides :: UAmpar s t    → (UAmpar s t, Token)
12 fromUAmpar  :: UAmpar s (Ur t) → Ur (s, t)
13 fromUAmpar' :: UAmpar s ()   → Ur s
14 `updWith`   :: UAmpar s t    → (t → u) → UAmpar s u
```

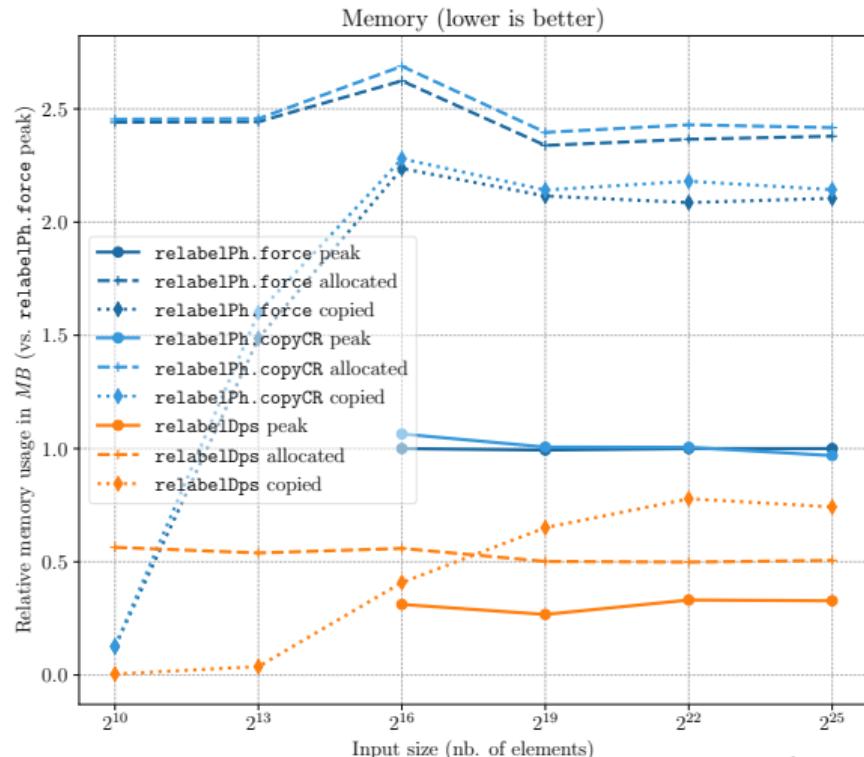
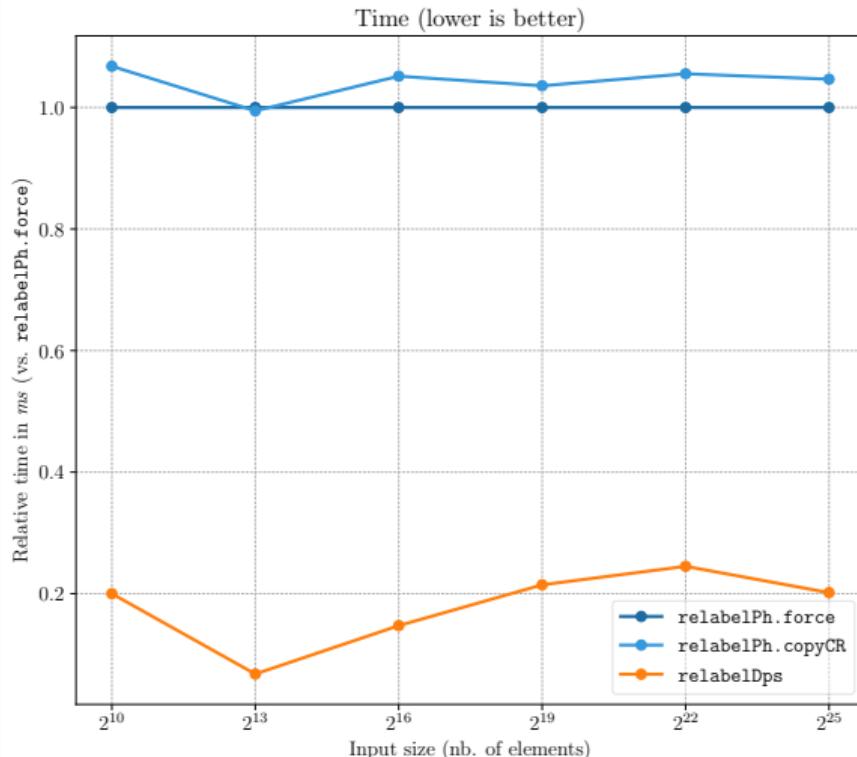
# Benchmarks of zero-copy compact region implementation

## S-expression parser



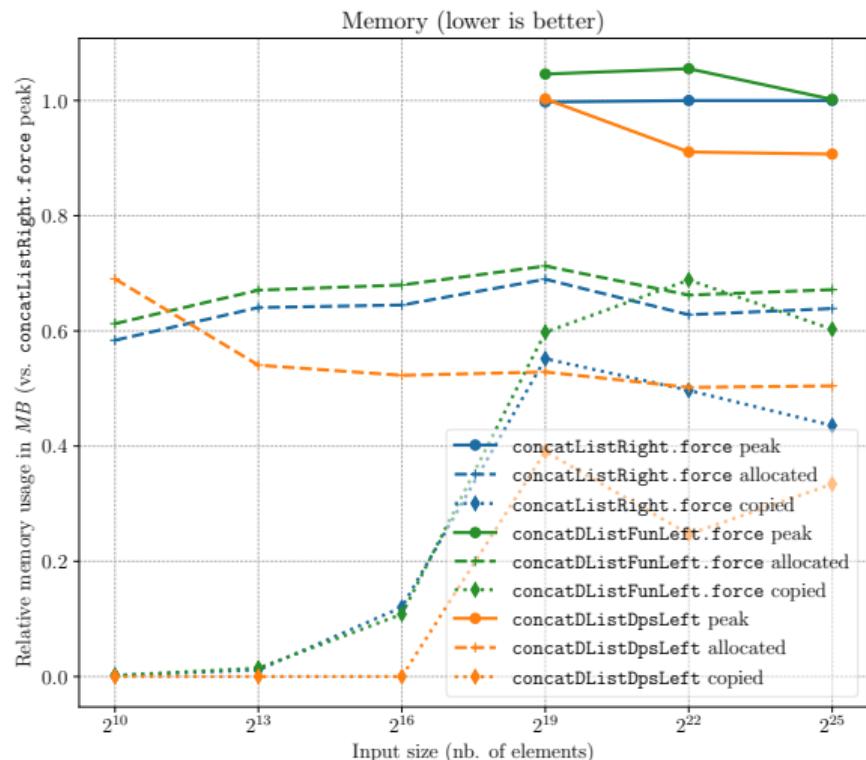
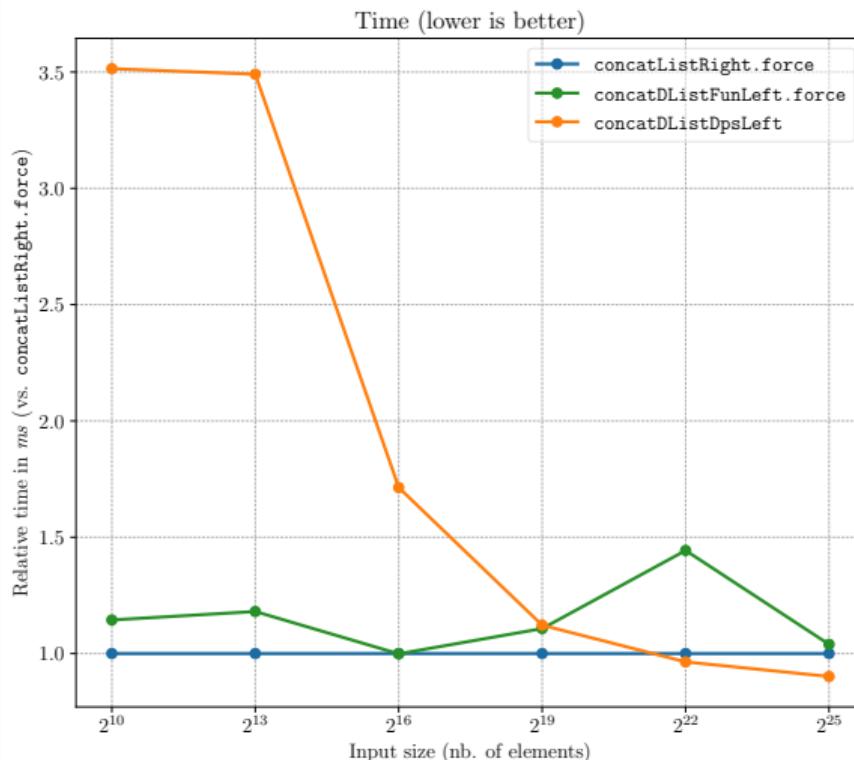
# Benchmarks of zero-copy compact region implementation

## Tree relabeling



# Benchmarks of zero-copy compact region implementation

## Iterated list concatenation



## Ampar: origin of the name

In classical linear logic, the linear implication  $\multimap$  can decomposed into  $\cdot^\perp$  and  $\wp$ :

$$t \multimap u \equiv t^\perp \wp u \equiv u \wp t^\perp$$

Minamide shows that a structure of type  $u$  with a hole of type  $t$  can be represented as a form of linear function  $t \xrightarrow{\text{mem}} u$

So we decompose it into  $u \xrightarrow{\text{mem}} t^\perp$ .

Actually,

- ▶  $t^\perp$  is **Dest** t
- ▶  $\wp$  is **Ampar** type constructor (*asymetrical memory par*)

The *asymetrical* aspect comes from the fact that we lose some nice properties of the original  $\wp$  connective because we are not in a classical setting.

## Age system VS Rust lifetimes

**Ages** in  $\lambda_d$  are:

- ▶ relative (relative offsets through modality  $\text{Mod}_m$ )
- ▶ locally exact
- ▶ equalities and strict inequalities

**Rust lifetimes** are:

- ▶ global/absolute
- ▶ lifetime subtyping = (local) loss of information
- ▶ supports only large inequalities

To avoid scope escape, we want to know that **something will die strictly before another** instead of that **something will live at least as long as another**.

## Existentials for scope escape (idea)

Add an extra type parameter on destinations: `Dest t r`

`Ampar` right side is now a type constructor: `Ampar s tc` where `tc :: Type -> Type`.

`'updWith'` now has signature `Ampar s tc -> (\forall r. tc r -> uc r) -> Ampar s uc.`

→ Destinations only have a concrete type when their `Ampar` is operated upon with `'updWith'`.

We shouldn't be able to create a container for them if we don't know their full type yet...

Good start, but:

- ▶ We can use a wrapper `data Any where Any :: \forall t. t -> Any` and an outer `Dest Any rOuter` to leak a destination `Dest t rInner` even though we don't know `rInner` in the outer scope  
*(Equivalent to storing a dest into a `Dest (\exists r. Dest t r)` with primitive support for existentials)*
- ▶ Might prevent scope escape of dests, but still breaks other linear APIs