

Metaprogramming with Macros

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The essence of macros

Macros are programmable code transformers

Example

```
(defmacro let (decl body)
  (cons
    (cons 'lambda
      (cons (list (car decl)) body))
    (cdr decl)))
```

Here we declare *let*, a Lisp function. Since it is declared as a macro, it's automatically plugged into the Lisp evaluator.

We can say that the evaluator installs a macro transformer implemented by the body of the macro into a slot named *let*.

Example

```
(defmacro let (decl body)
  (cons
    (cons 'lambda
      (cons (list (car decl)) body))
    (cdr decl)))

(let (x 42) (print x))
```

When the evaluator encounters a form that is an application of *let*, it yields control to the corresponding macro transformer, passing it the argument forms.

Example

```
(defmacro let (decl body)
  (cons
    (cons 'lambda
      (cons (list (car decl)) body))
    (cdr decl)))

(let (x 42) (print x))

((lambda (x) (print x)) 42)
```

The macro transformer takes the forms passed by the evaluator, and computes a resulting form (this is called *macro expansion*).

After that the evaluator proceeds with the form produced by macro expansion. The value of the new form is returned as the value of the original form.

Use cases

- ▶ Deeply embedded DSLs (database access, testing)
- ▶ Optimization (programmable inlining, fusion)
- ▶ Analysis (integrated proof-checker)
- ▶ Effects (effect containment and propagation)

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Actually these use cases come from our experience with macros in Scala, which we developed this year.

All the aforementioned scenarios are either already supported by Scala macros or will be supported in vNext!

Outline

Challenges in macrology

Macros in Template Haskell

Macros in Nemerle

Macros in Racket

Macros in Scala

Future work

Setting the stage

In this talk we'll be looking into macros for compiled programming languages, i.e. macros as extensions to compilers.

Different combinations of junction points (function applications, code annotations, custom grammar rules, etc) and tightness of the integration (parser, namer, typer, etc) produce different challenges.

Today we're going to focus on a particular challenge in macrology: tackling syntactic abstractions. These slides discuss the ways to represent, analyze and generate code.

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