

RetDec: An Open-Source Machine-Code Decompiler

Jakub Křoustek
Peter Matula
Petr Zemek



 Jakub Křoustek

- founder of RetDec
- Threat Labs lead @Avast (previously @AVG)
- reverse engineer, malware hunter, security researcher
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 Peter Matula

- main developer of the RetDec decompiler
- senior developer @Avast (previously @AVG)
-  rock climbing and 
-  peter.matula@avast.com

```
.text:004015BB      push    ebp
.text:004015BC      mov     ebp, esp
.text:004015BE      and    esp, 0FFFFFFF0h
.text:004015C1      sub    esp, 20h
.text:004015C4      call   __main
.text:004015C9      mov    [esp+20h+var_4], 0
.text:004015D1      mov    [esp+20h+var_8], 0
.text:004015D9      mov    [esp+20h+var_C], 0
.text:004015E1      lea   eax, [esp+20h+var_C]
.text:004015E5      mov   [esp+20h+var_18], eax
.text:004015E9      lea   eax, [esp+20h+var_8]
.text:004015ED      mov   [esp+20h+var_1C], eax
.text:004015F1      mov   [esp+20h+Format], offset Format
.text:004015F8      call  _scanf
.text:004015FD      mov   edx, [esp+20h+var_C]
.text:00401601      mov   eax, [esp+20h+var_8]
.text:00401605      mov   [esp+20h+var_1C], edx
.text:00401609      mov   [esp+20h+Format], eax
.text:0040160C      call  _ack
.text:00401611      mov   [esp+20h+var_4], eax
.text:00401615      mov   edx, [esp+20h+var_C]
.text:00401619      mov   eax, [esp+20h+var_8]
.text:0040161D      mov   ecx, [esp+20h+var_4]
.text:00401621      mov   [esp+20h+var_14], ecx
.text:00401625      mov   [esp+20h+var_18], edx
.text:00401629      mov   [esp+20h+var_1C], eax
.text:0040162D      mov   [esp+20h+Format], offset aAckermanDDD
.text:00401634      call  _printf
.text:00401639      mov   eax, [esp+20h+var_4]
.text:0040163D      leave
.text:0040163E      retn
```

```
.text:000110E4      STMFD      SP!, {R11,LR}
.text:000110E8      ADD        R11, SP, #4
.text:000110EC      SUB        SP, SP, #0x14
.text:000110F0      STR        R0, [R11,#var_14]
.text:000110F4      STR        R1, [R11,#var_18]
.text:000110F8      BL        __gccmain
.text:000110FC      MOV        R3, #0
.text:00011100      STR        R3, [R11,#var_8]
.text:00011104      MOV        R3, #0
.text:00011108      STR        R3, [R11,#var_C]
.text:0001110C      MOV        R3, #0
.text:00011110      STR        R3, [R11,#var_10]
.text:00011114      SUB        R2, R11, #-var_C
.text:00011118      SUB        R3, R11, #-var_10
.text:0001111C      LDR        R0, =aDD
.text:00011120      MOV        R1, R2
.text:00011124      MOV        R2, R3
.text:00011128      BL        scanf
.text:0001112C      LDR        R2, [R11,#var_C]
.text:00011130      LDR        R3, [R11,#var_10]
.text:00011134      MOV        R0, R2
.text:00011138      MOV        R1, R3
.text:0001113C      BL        ack
.text:00011140      MOV        R3, R0
.text:00011144      STR        R3, [R11,#var_8]
.text:00011148      LDR        R2, [R11,#var_C]
.text:0001114C      LDR        R3, [R11,#var_10]
.text:00011150      LDR        R0, =aAckermanDDD
.text:00011154      MOV        R1, R2
.text:00011158      MOV        R2, R3
.text:0001115C      LDR        R3, [R11,#var_8]
.text:00011160      BL        printf
```

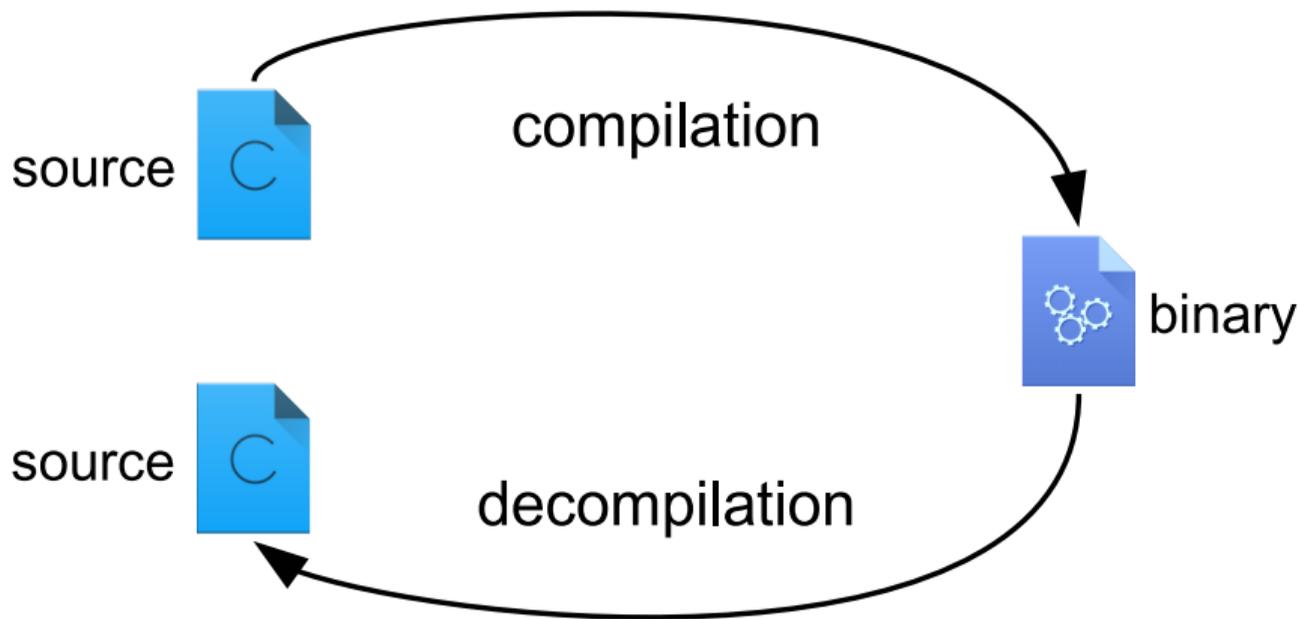
```
.text:08900428      addiu   $sp, -0x20
.text:0890042C      sw     $ra, 0x20+var_4($sp)
.text:08900430      sw     $fp, 0x20+var_8($sp)
.text:08900434      move   $fp, $sp
.text:08900438      sw     $a0, 0x20+var_10($fp)
.text:0890043C      sw     $a1, 0x20+var_C($fp)
.text:08900440      sw     $zero, 0x20+var_20($fp)
.text:08900444      sw     $zero, 0x20+var_1C($fp)
.text:08900448      sw     $zero, 0x20+var_18($fp)
.text:0890044C      addiu   $v1, $fp, 0x20+var_1C
.text:08900450      addiu   $a2, $fp, 0x20+var_18
.text:08900454      lui    $v0, 0x891
.text:08900458      addiu   $a0, $v0, (aDD - 0x8910000)
.text:0890045C      move   $a1, $v1
.text:08900460      jal    scanf
.text:08900464      nop
.text:08900468      lw     $v0, 0x20+var_1C($fp)
.text:0890046C      lw     $v1, 0x20+var_18($fp)
.text:08900470      move   $a0, $v0
.text:08900474      move   $a1, $v1
.text:08900478      jal    ack
.text:0890047C      nop
.text:08900480      sw     $v0, 0x20+var_20($fp)
.text:08900484      lw     $v1, 0x20+var_1C($fp)
.text:08900488      lw     $a2, 0x20+var_18($fp)
.text:0890048C      lui    $v0, 0x891
.text:08900490      addiu   $a0, $v0, (aAckermanDDD - 0x8910000)
.text:08900494      move   $a1, $v1
.text:08900498      lw     $a3, 0x20+var_20($fp)
.text:0890049C      jal    printf
```

```
.text:1000056C      stwu    r1, back_chain(r1)
.text:10000570      mflr   r0
.text:10000574      stw    r0, 0x30+sender_lr(r1)
.text:10000578      stw    r31, 0x30+var_4(r1)
.text:1000057C      mr     r31, r1
.text:10000580      stw    r3, 0x18(r31)
.text:10000584      stw    r4, 0x1C(r31)
.text:10000588      li     r0, 0
.text:1000058C      stw    r0, 8(r31)
.text:10000590      li     r0, 0
.text:10000594      stw    r0, 0xC(r31)
.text:10000598      li     r0, 0
.text:1000059C      stw    r0, 0x10(r31)
.text:100005A0      lis    r0, 0x1000
.text:100005A4      addic  r11, r0, 0x82C # 0x1000082C
.text:100005A8      addi   r9, r31, 0xC
.text:100005AC      addi   r0, r31, 0x10
.text:100005B0      mr     r3, r11
.text:100005B4      mr     r4, r9
.text:100005B8      mr     r5, r0
.text:100005BC      crclr 4*cr1+eq
.text:100005C0      bl     __isoc99_scanf
.text:100005C4      lwz   r9, 0xC(r31)
.text:100005C8      lwz   r0, 0x10(r31)
.text:100005CC      mr     r3, r9
.text:100005D0      mr     r4, r0
.text:100005D4      bl     ack
.text:100005D8      stw   r3, 8(r31)
.text:100005DC      lis   r0, 0x1000
.text:100005E0      addic r11, r0, 0x834 # 0x10000834
.text:100005E4      lwz   r9, 0xC(r31)
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The same, but decompiled to C

```
int main(int argc, char ** argv) {
    __main();
    int32_t v1 = 0;
    int32_t v2 = 0;
    scanf("%d %d", &v1, &v2);
    int32_t result = _ack(v1, v2);
    printf("ackerman( %d , %d ) = %d\n", v1, v2, result);
    return result;
}
```



Q Binary analysis

- reverse engineering
- **malware** analysis
- **vulnerability** detection
- verification
- binary comparison
- ...

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🔄 Binary recompilation (yeah, like that's ever gonna work)

- porting
- bug fixing
- adding new features
- original sources got lost
- optimizations

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 - obfuscation, packing, anti-debugging

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 - x86, ARM, MIPS, PowerPC, ...
 - CISC vs. RISC
 - bit length, endianness, floating points
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© Goal

- generic decompilation of binary code

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🕒 History

- 2011–2013 (AVG + BUT FIT via TAČR TA01010667 grant)
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📄 Lines of code

☰ 419,451 code

💬 205,222 comments, etc.

⊕ 624,673 total

Supports

- architectures (32-bit): x86, ARM, PowerPC, MIPS
- OFFs: ELF, PE, COFF, Mach-O, Intel HEX, AR, raw
- compilers (we test with): gcc, Clang, MSVC

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- statically linked code detection
- OS loader simulation
- recursive traversal disassembling
- high-level constructions/types reconstruction
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▶ Runs on (hopefully)



Linux

- RetDec goes open-source under the MIT license
 - december 2017, shortly after the conference

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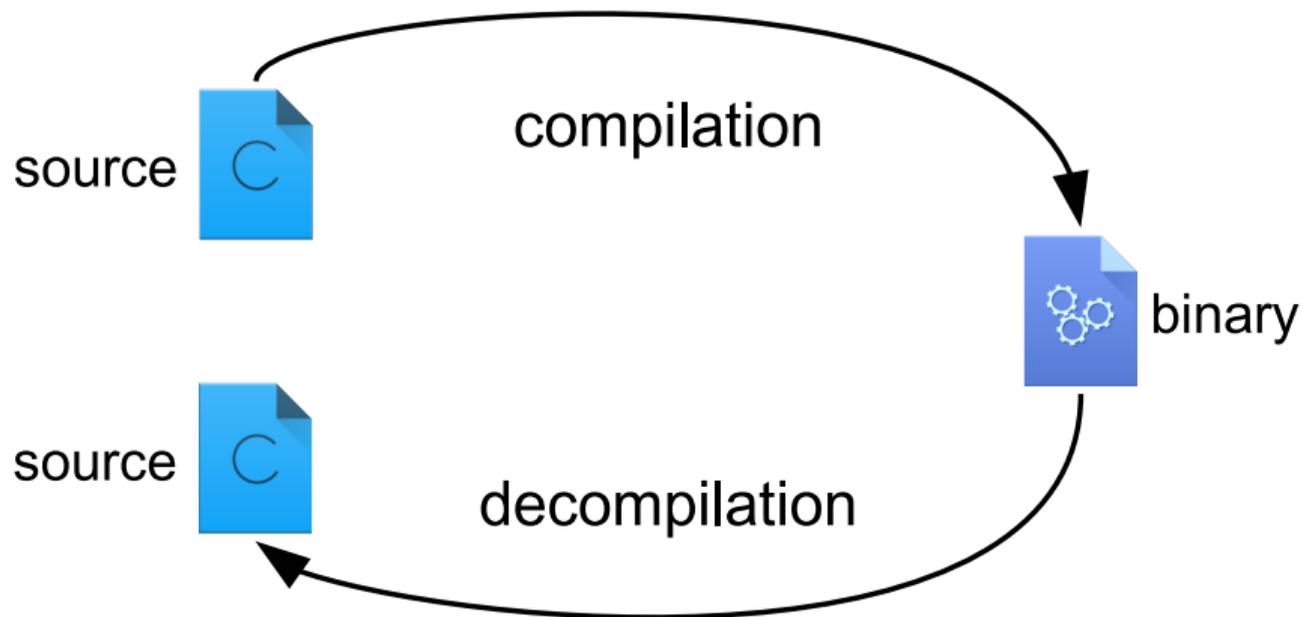
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Repositories

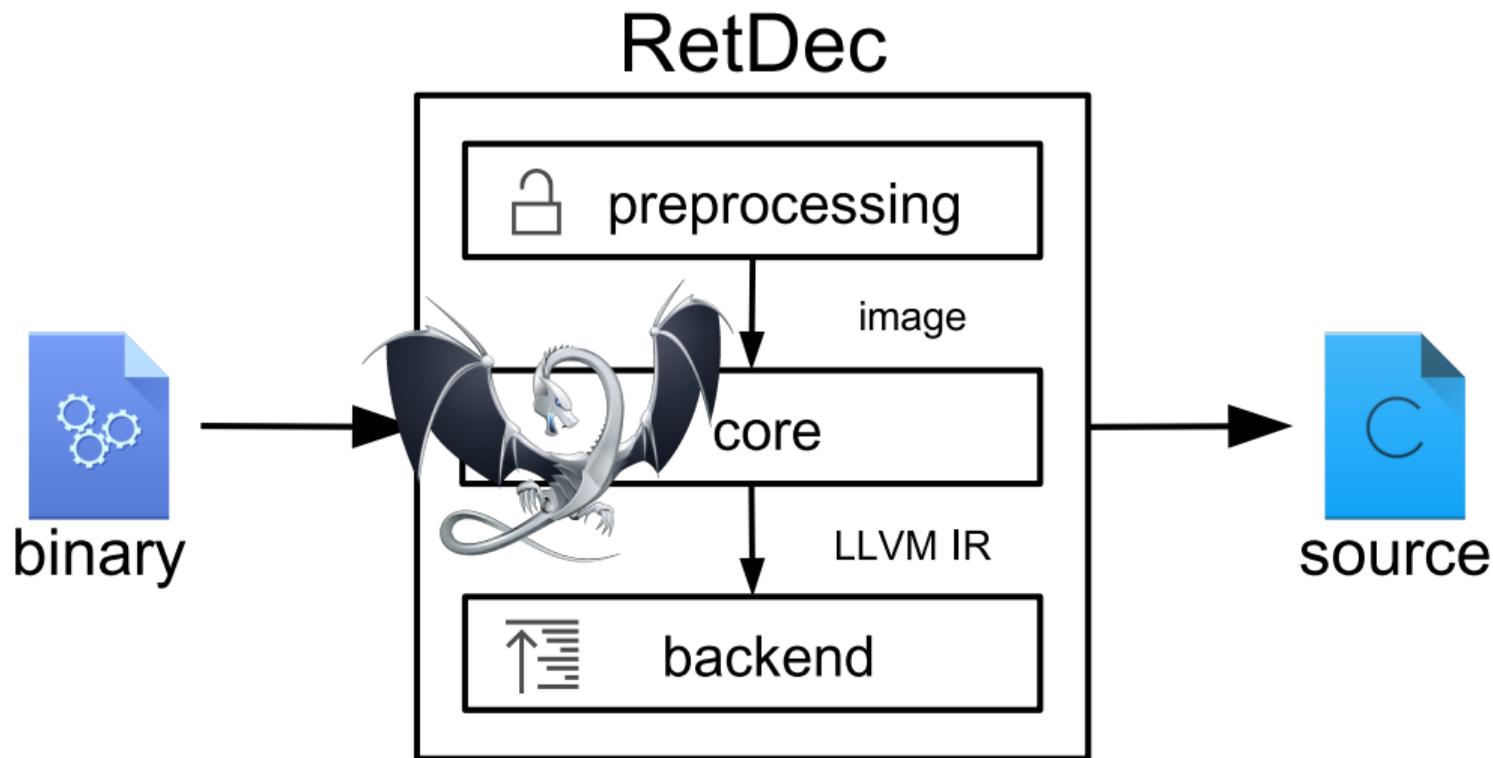
-  11 core
-  6 support
-  8 third party

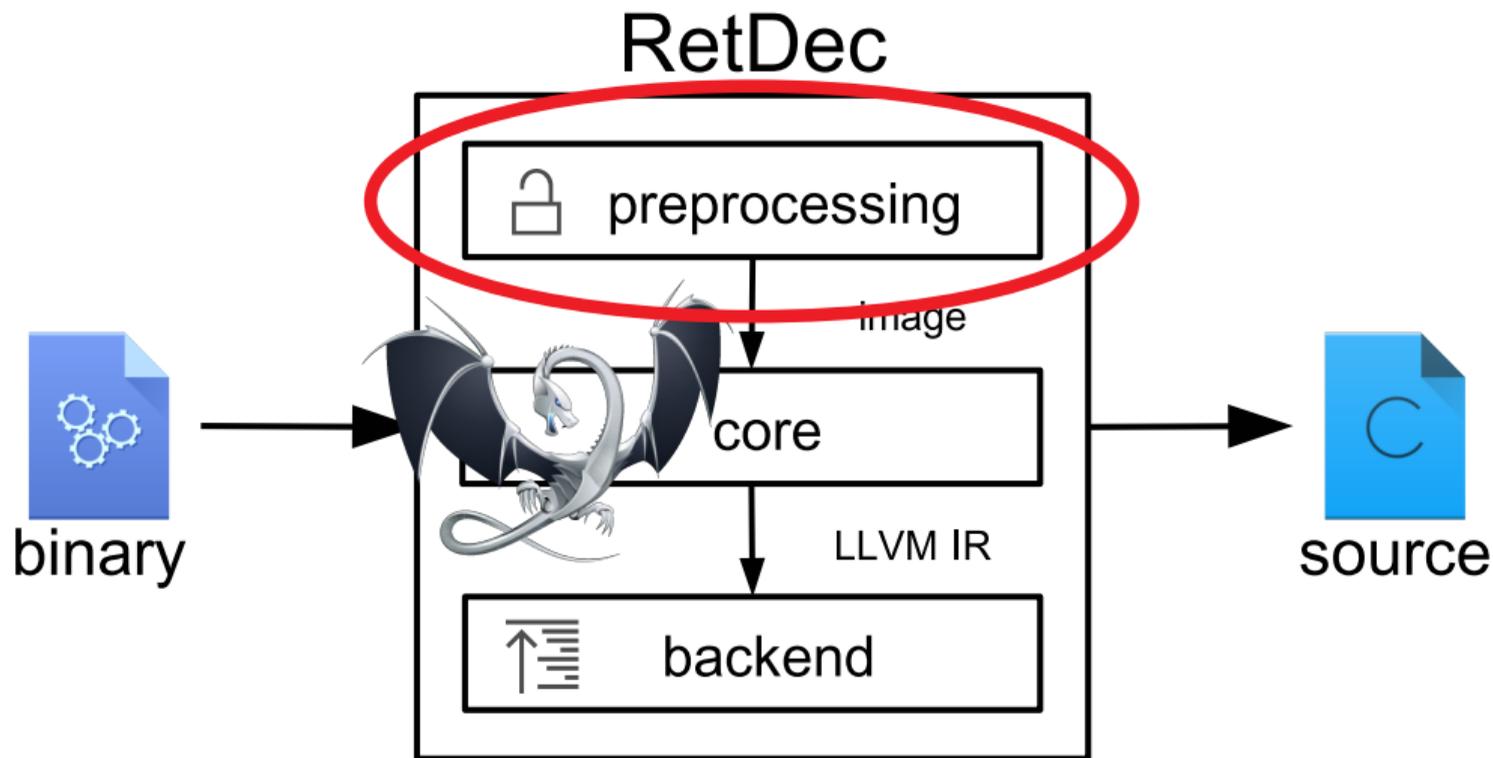
Contacts

-  <https://retdec.com/>
-  <https://github.com/avast-tl>
-  <https://twitter.com/retdec>
-  <https://retdec.com/rss/>
-  info@retdec.com













ELF



HEX



PE



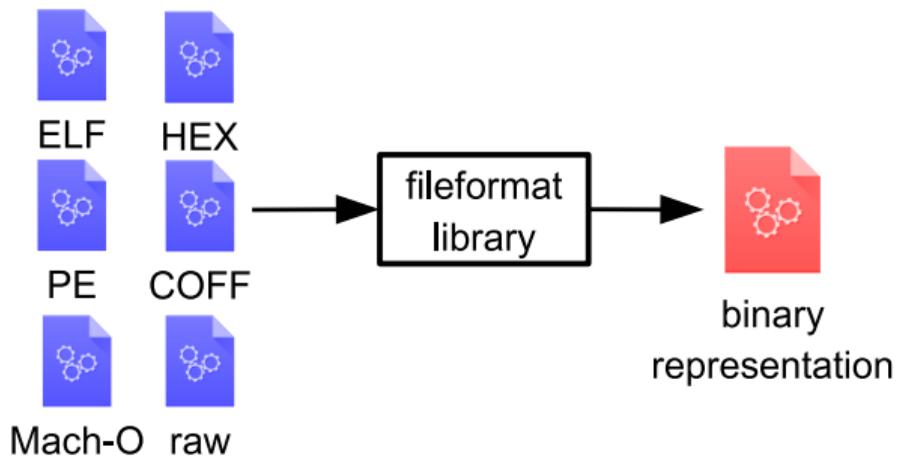
COFF

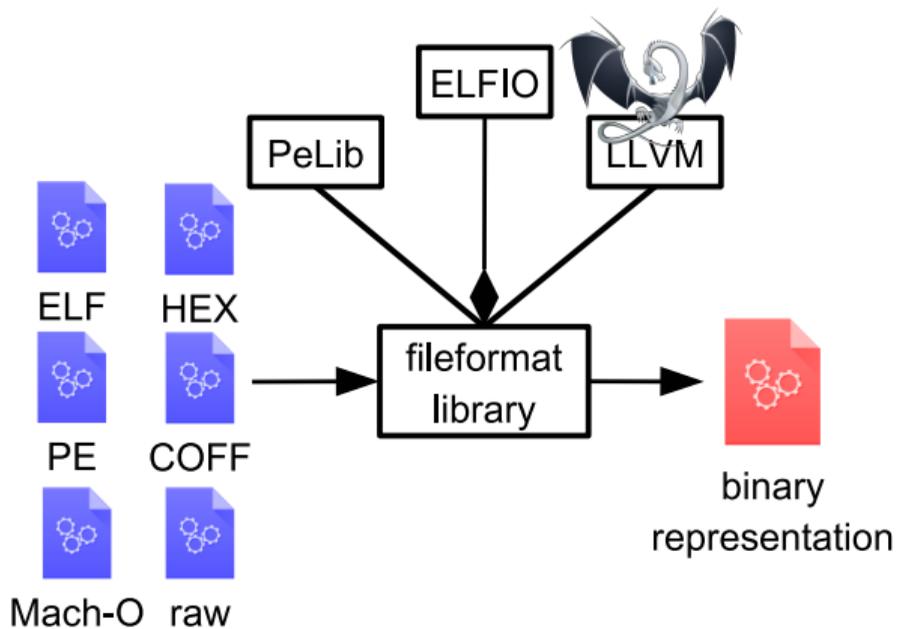


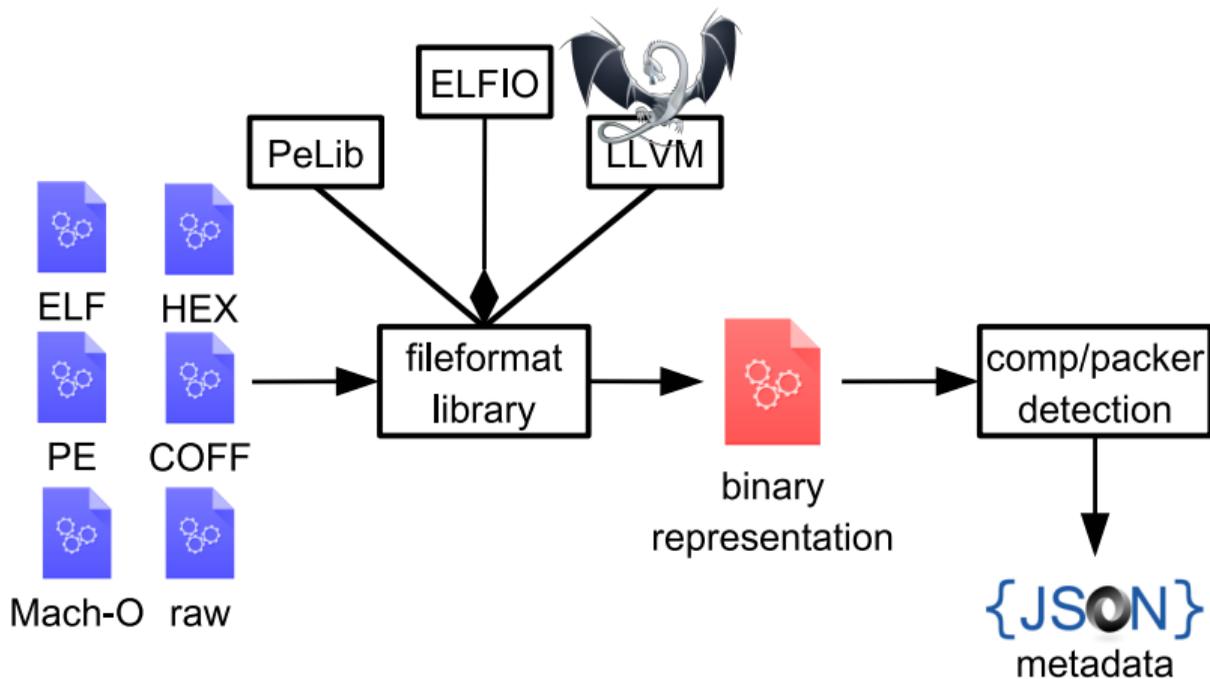
Mach-O

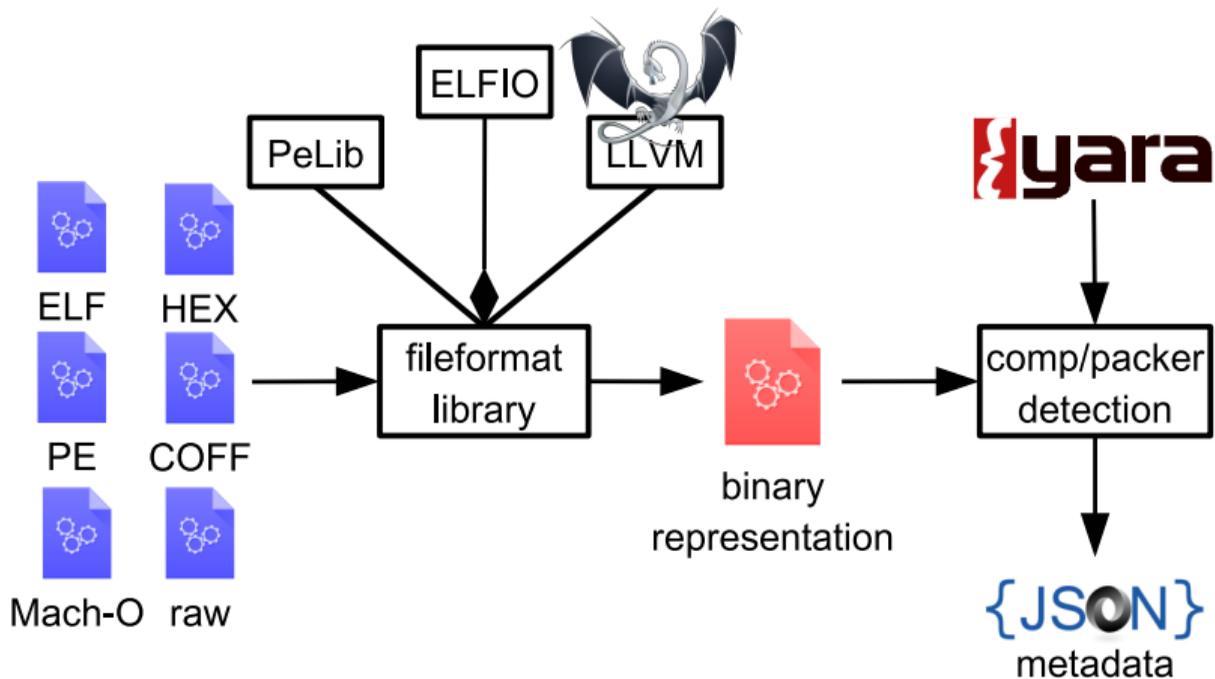


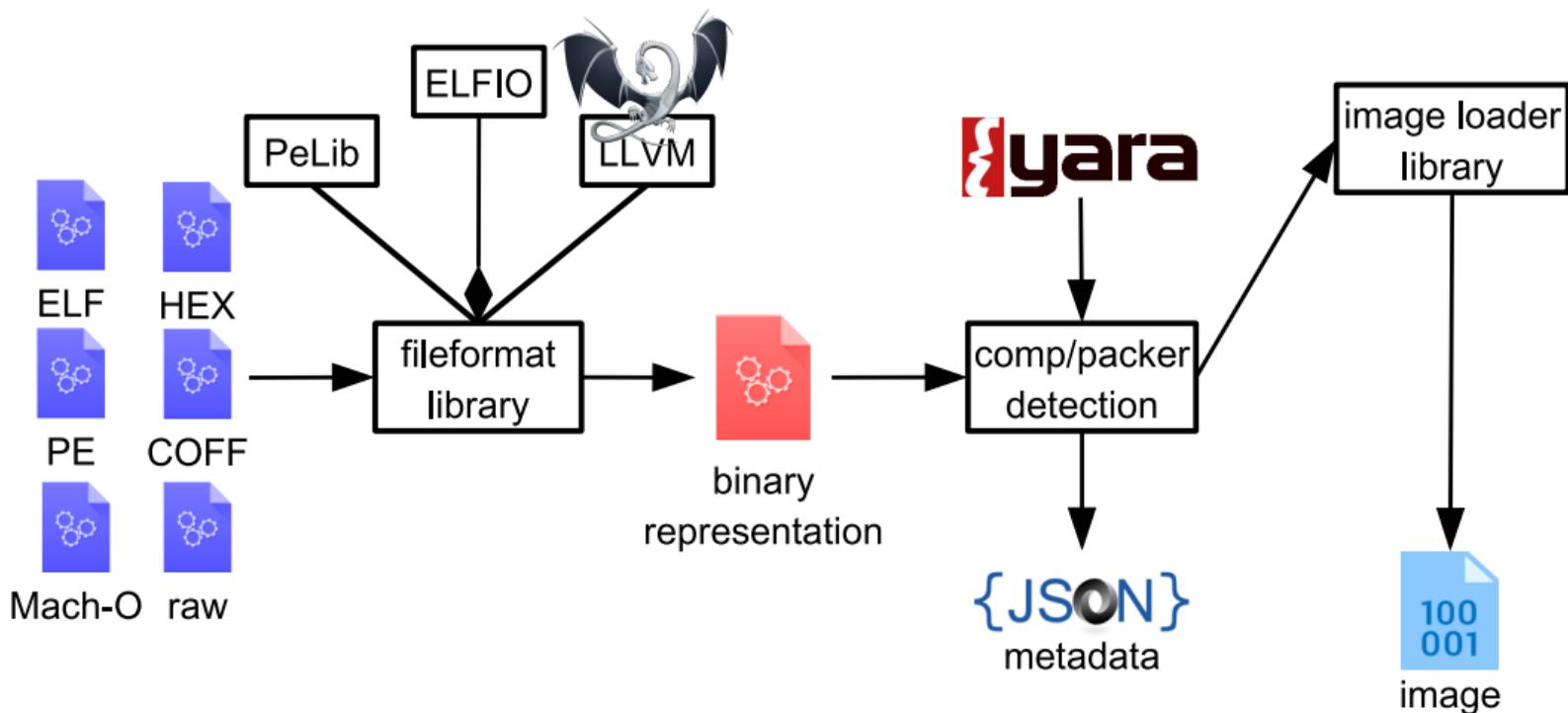
raw

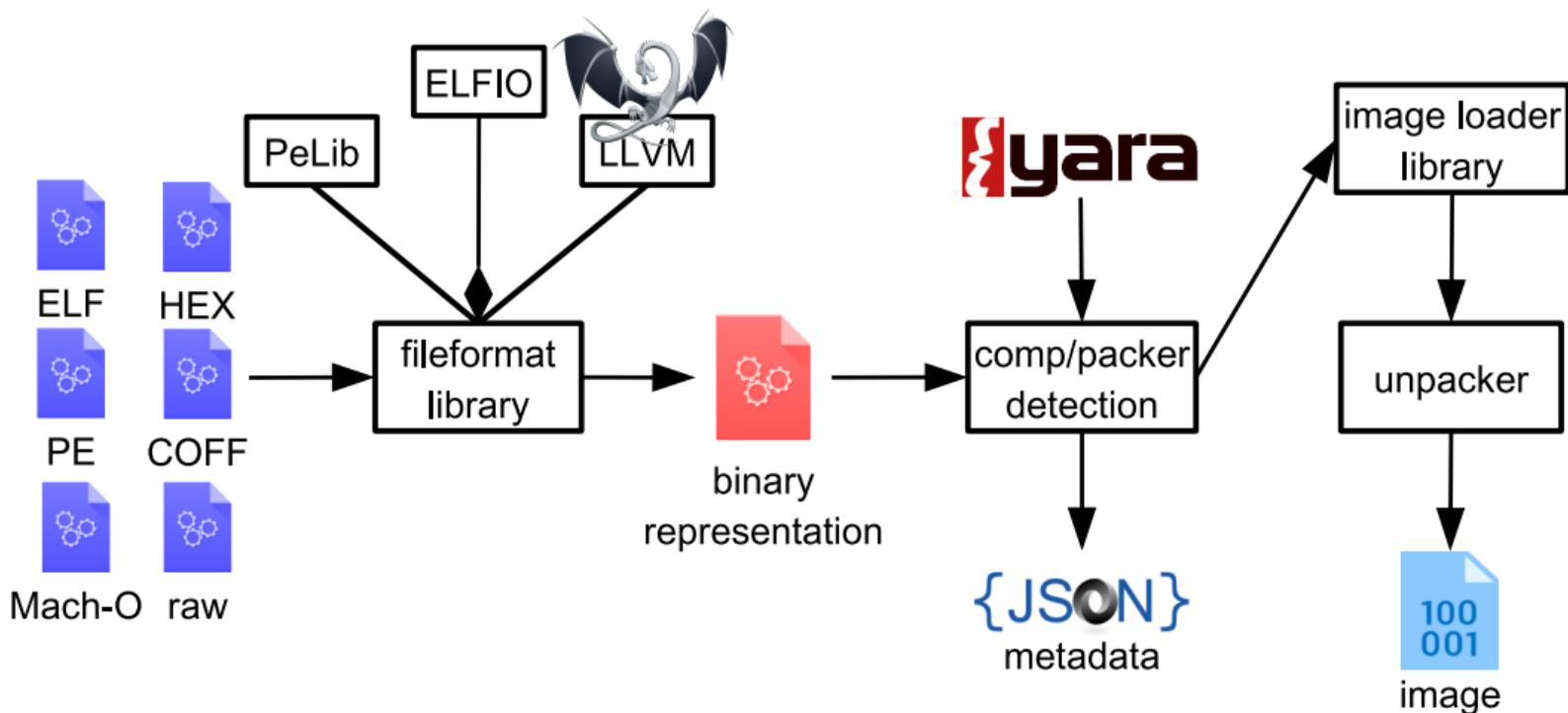


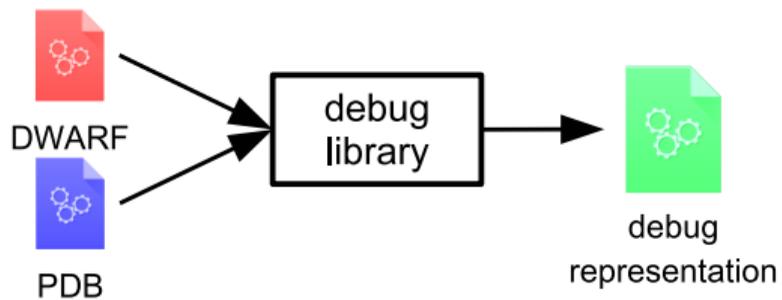


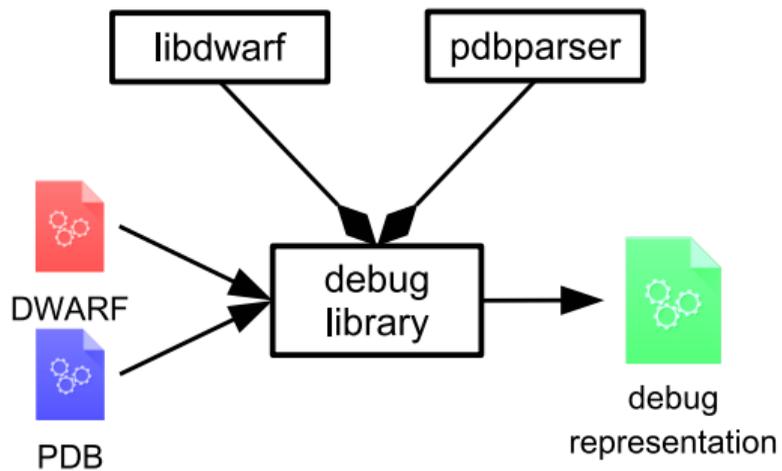












git Fileformat

- fileformat, loader, cpdetect, fileinfo, unpacker
- ar-extractor, macho-extractor, ...

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- strengthened
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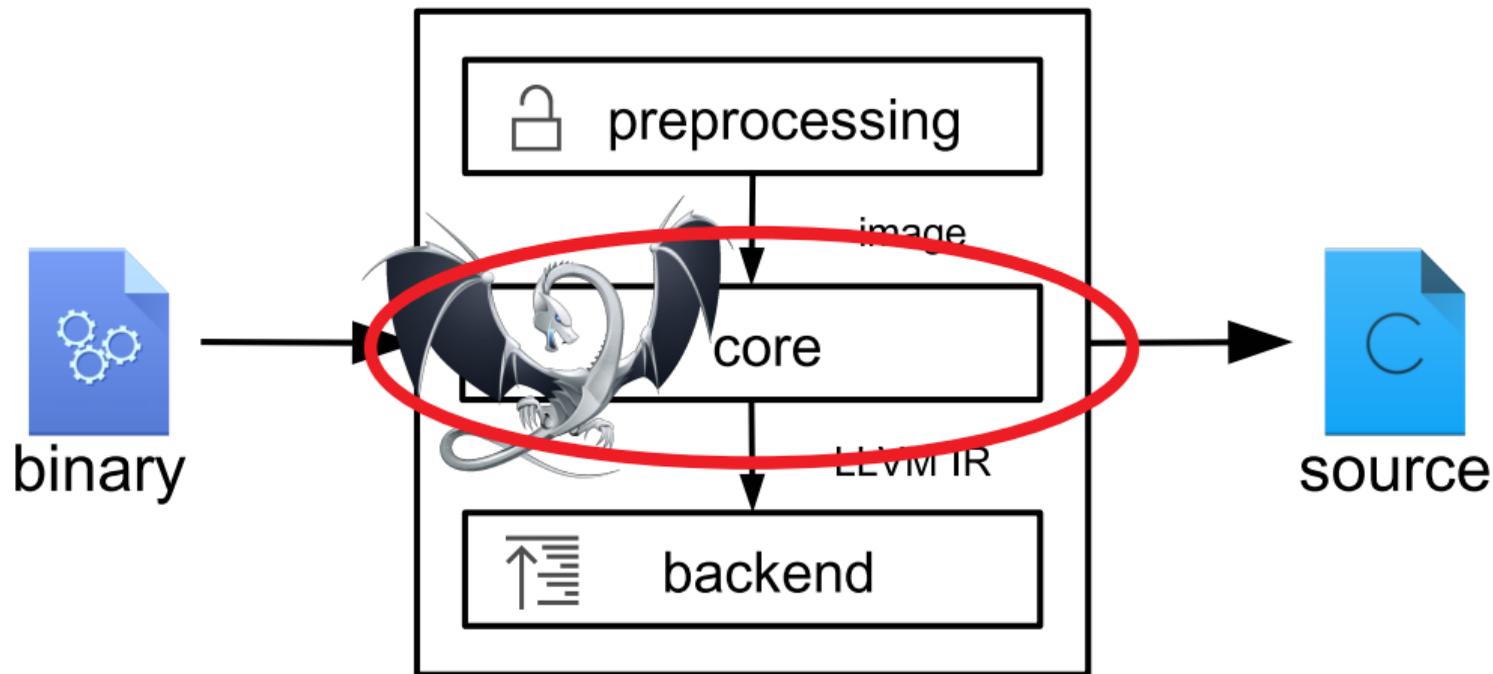
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git YaraC++

- YARA C++ wrapper

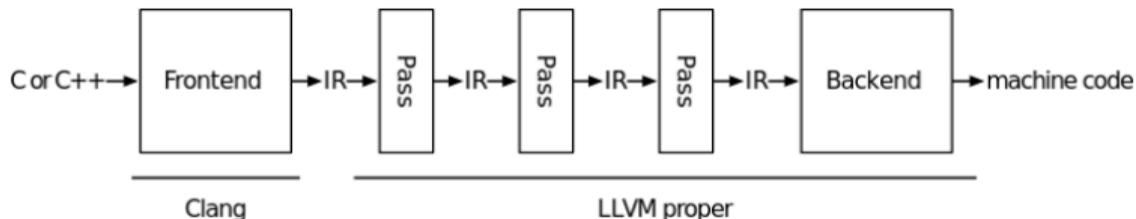
RetDec



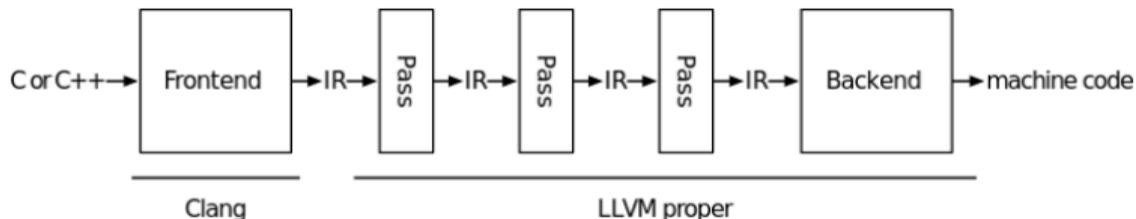








- dozens of analysis & transform & utility passes
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 - dead global elimination, constant propagation, inlining, reassociation, loop optimization, memory promotion, dead store elimination, ...
- `clang -o hello hello.c -O3`
 - 217 passes
 - `-targetlibinfo -tti -tbaa -scoped-noalias -assumption-cache-tracker -profile-summary-info -forceattrs -inferattrs -ipsccp -globalopt -domtree -mem2reg -deadargelim -domtree -basicaa -aa -instcombine -simplifycfg -basiccg -globals-aa -prune-eh -inline -functionattrs -argpromotion -domtree -sroa -basicaa -aa -memoryssa -early-cse-memssa -speculative-execution -domtree -basicaa -aa -lazy-value-info -jump-threading...`

- LLVM IR = LLVM Intermediate Representation
 - kind of assembly language / three address code

```
@global = global i32
define i32 @fnc(i32 %arg) {
    %x = load i32, i32* @global
    %y = add i32 %x, %arg
    store i32 %y, @global
    return i32 %y
}
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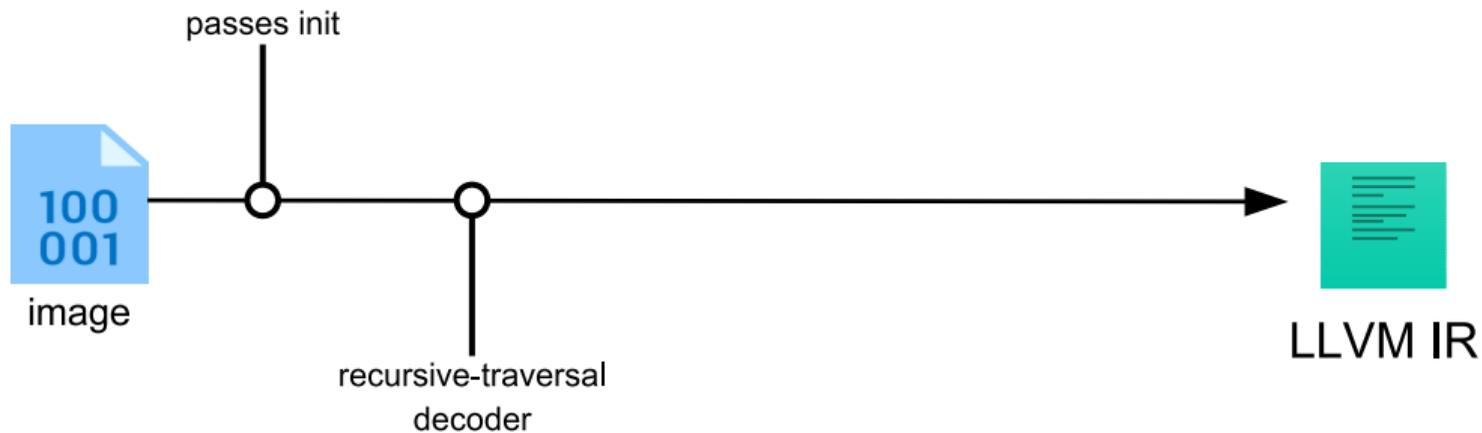
- SSA = Static Single Assignment
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- Functions, arguments, returns, data types
- (Un)conditional branches, switches

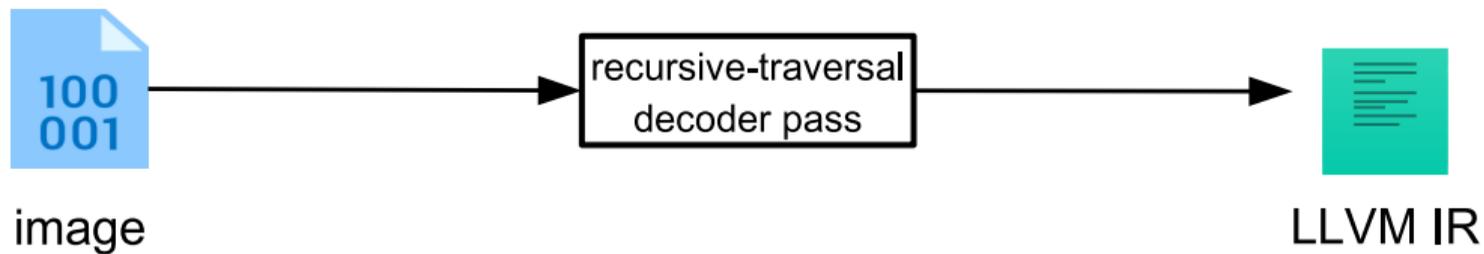
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- 👍 Universal IR for efficient compiler transformations and analyses







Capstone2LlvmIR

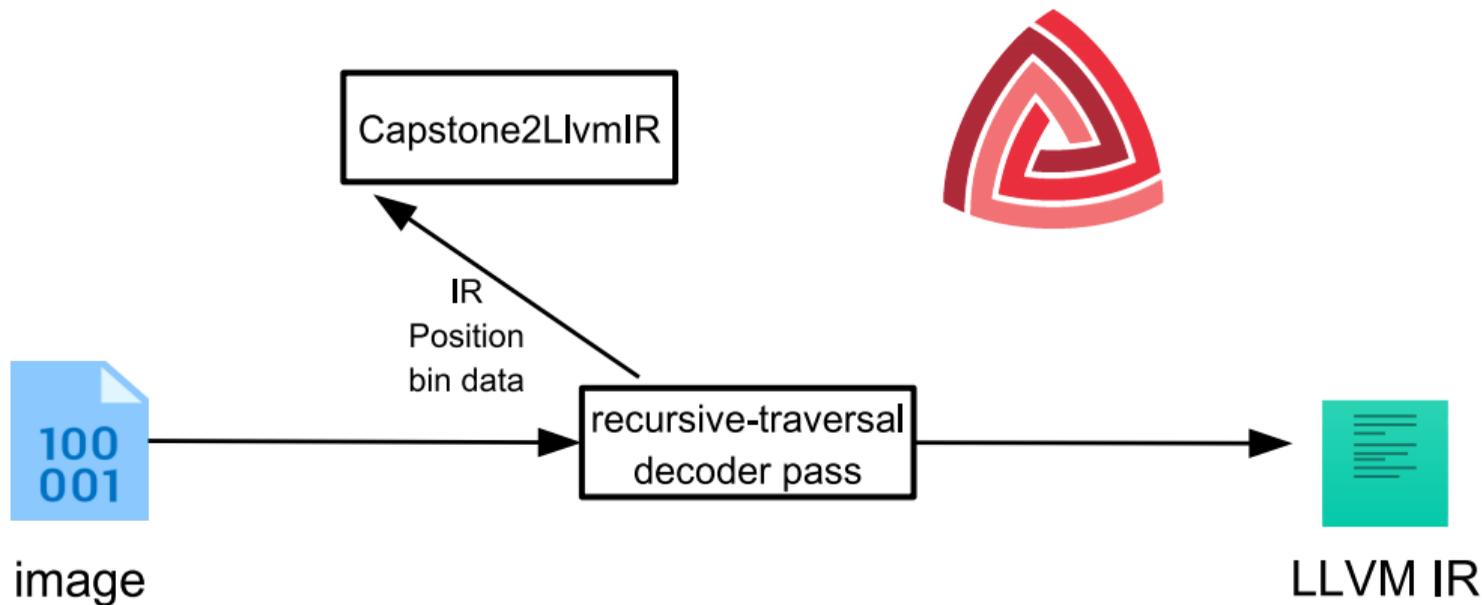


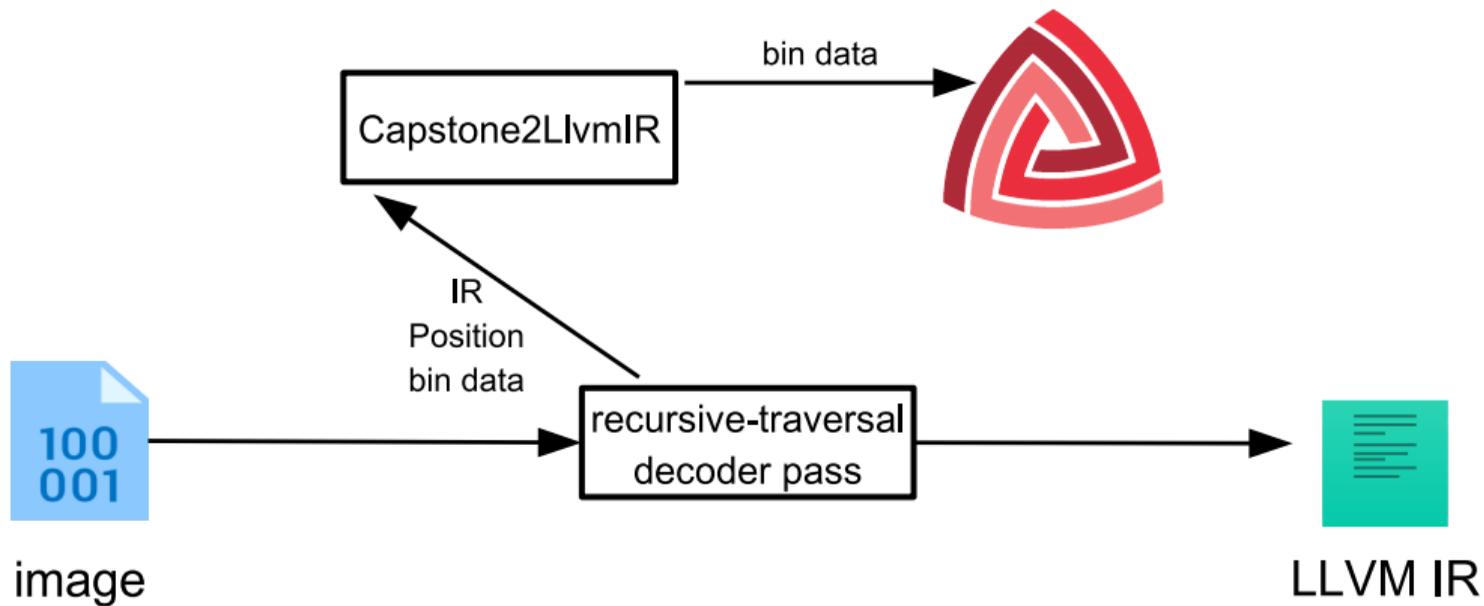
image

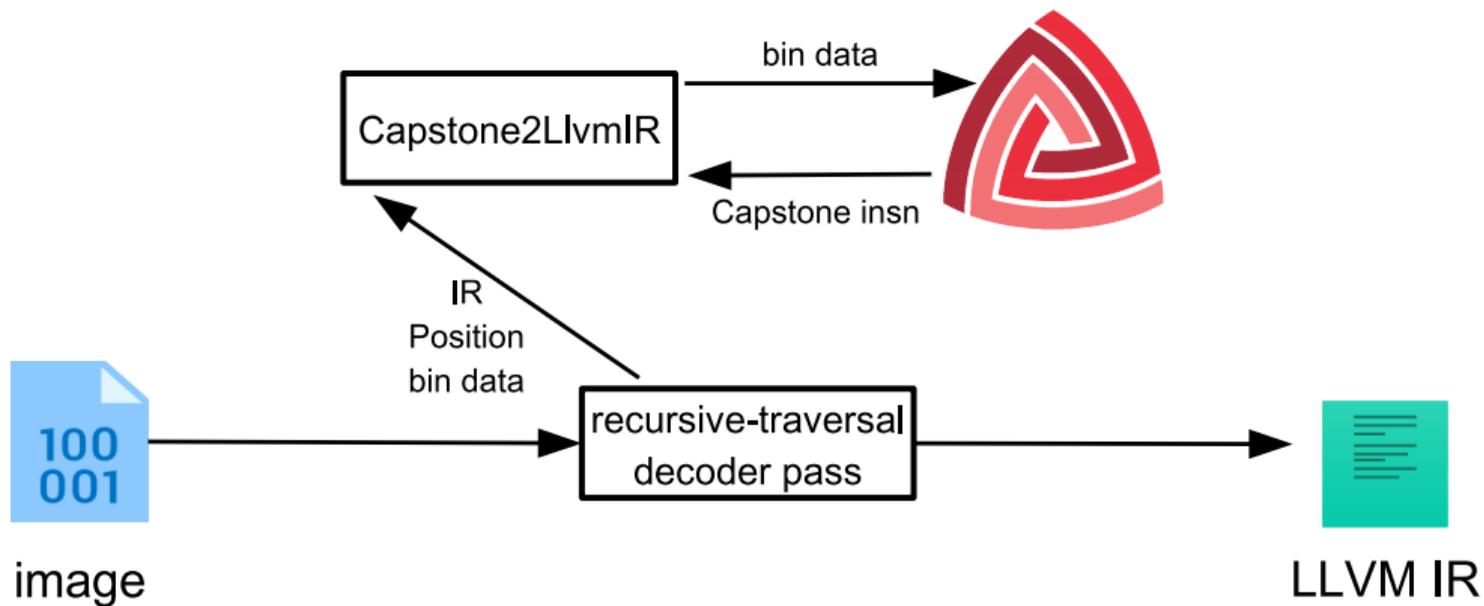
recursive-traversal
decoder pass

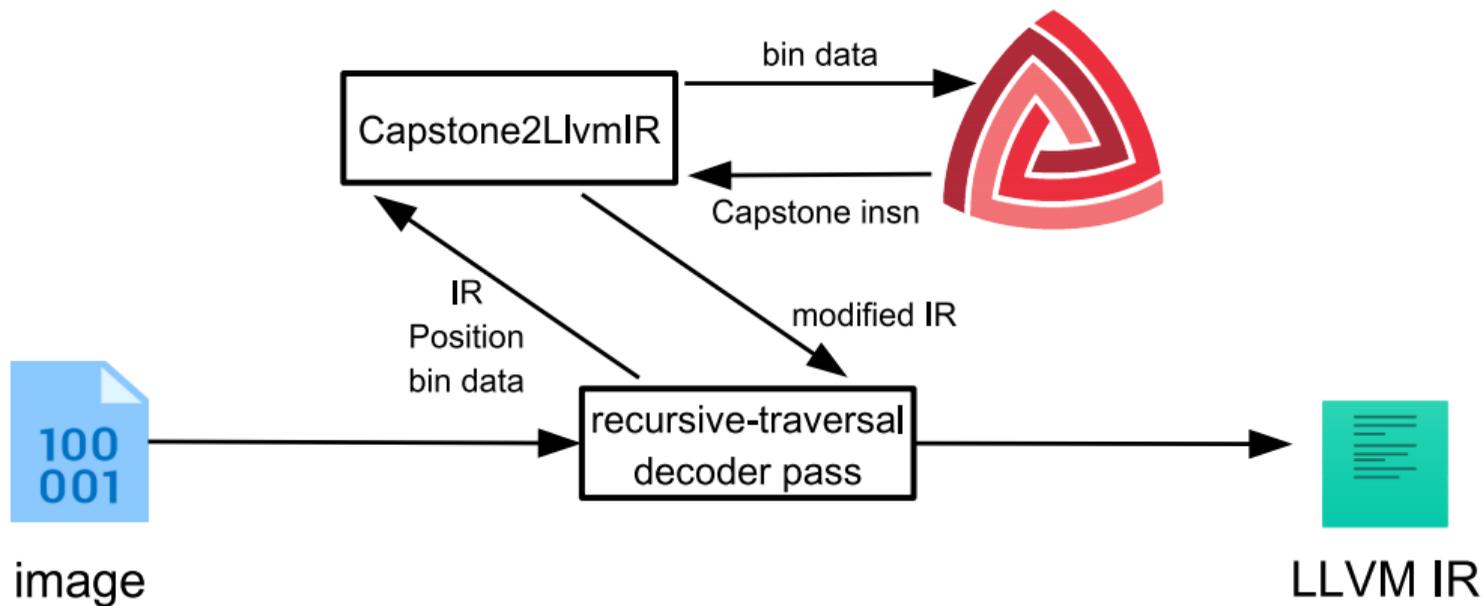


LLVM IR









- Capstone insn → sequence of LLVM IR
- Handcoded sequences
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- Decompilation & advanced insns

- PMULHUW
 - Multiply Packed Unsigned Integers and Store High Result

```
if (OperandSize == 64) {  
    //PMULHUW instruction with 64-bit operands:  
    Tmp0[0..31] = Dst[0..15] * Src[0..15];  
    Tmp1[0..31] = Dst[16..31] * Src[16..31];  
    Tmp2[0..31] = Dst[32..47] * Src[32..47];  
    Tmp3[0..31] = Dst[48..63] * Src[48..63];  
    Dst[0..15] = Tmp0[16..31];  
    Dst[16..31] = Tmp1[16..31];  
    Dst[32..47] = Tmp2[16..31];  
    Dst[48..63] = Tmp3[16..31];  
}  
else {  
    //PMULHUW instruction with 128-bit operands:  
    // Even longer ...  
}
```

```
__asm_P MULHUW (mm1, mm2);
```

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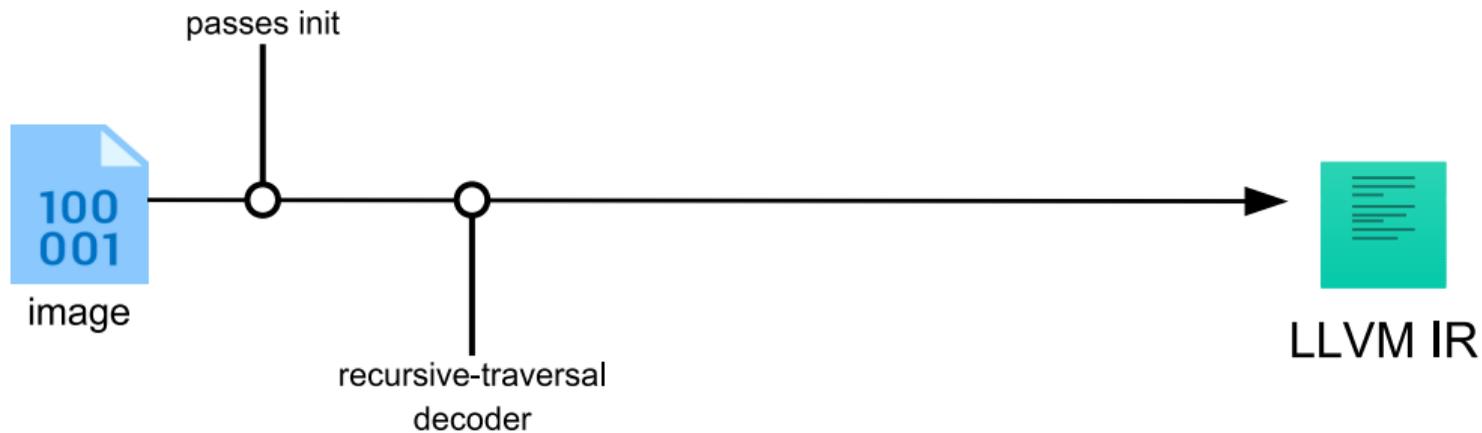
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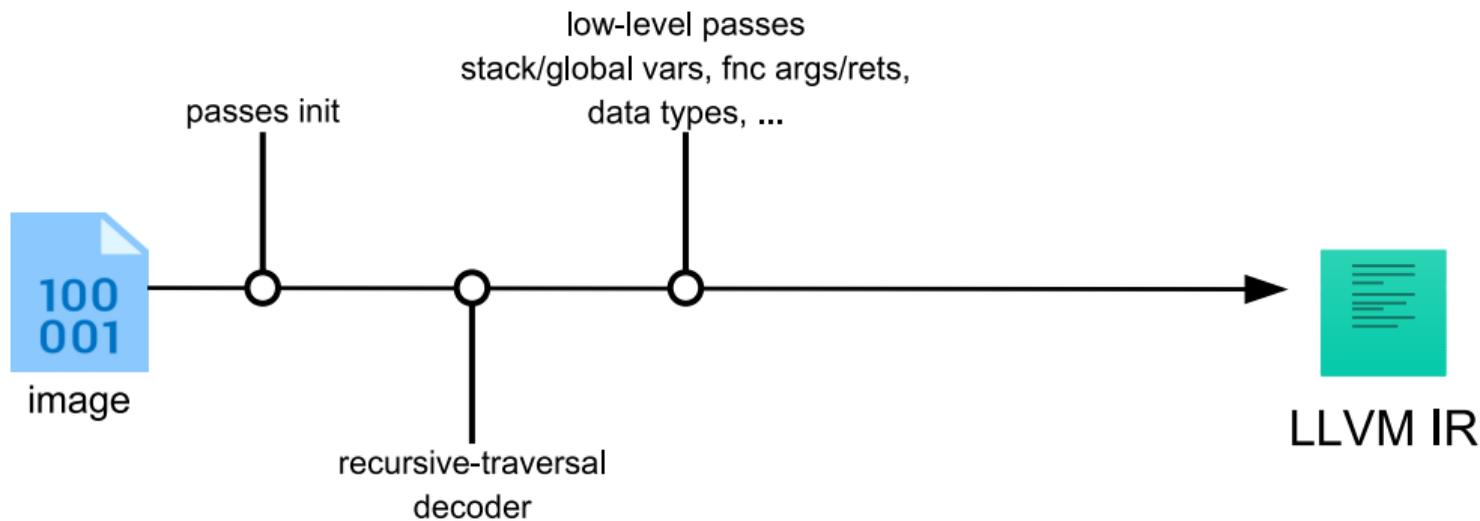
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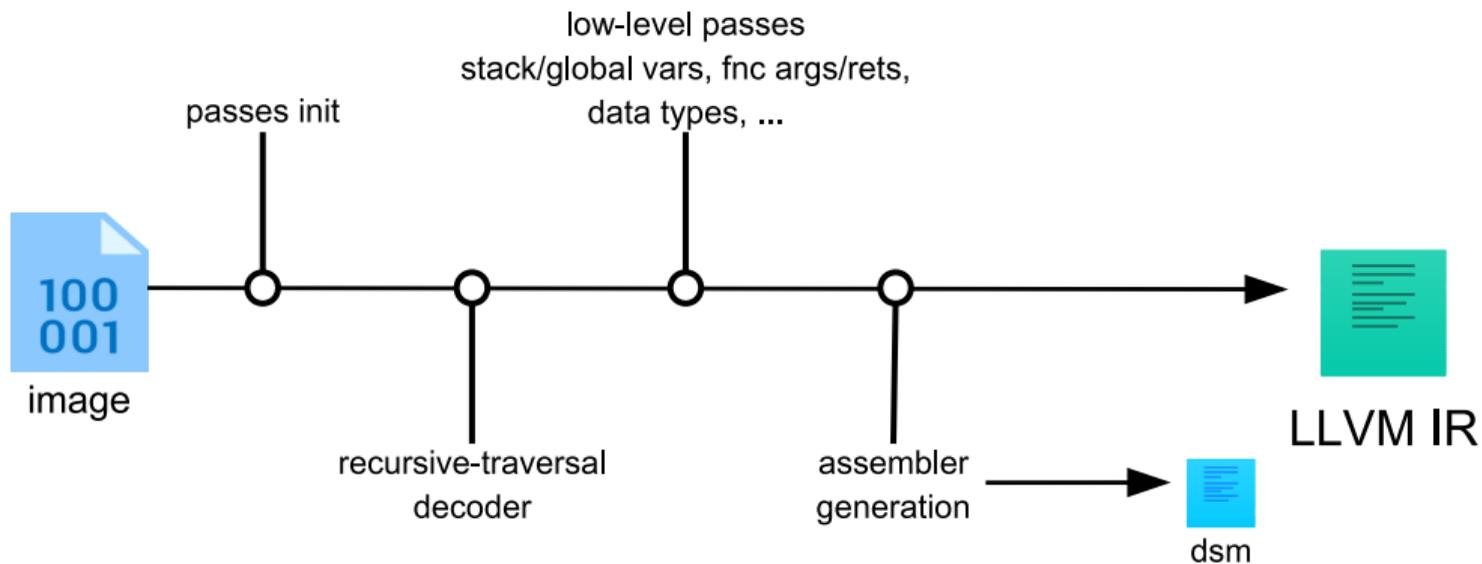


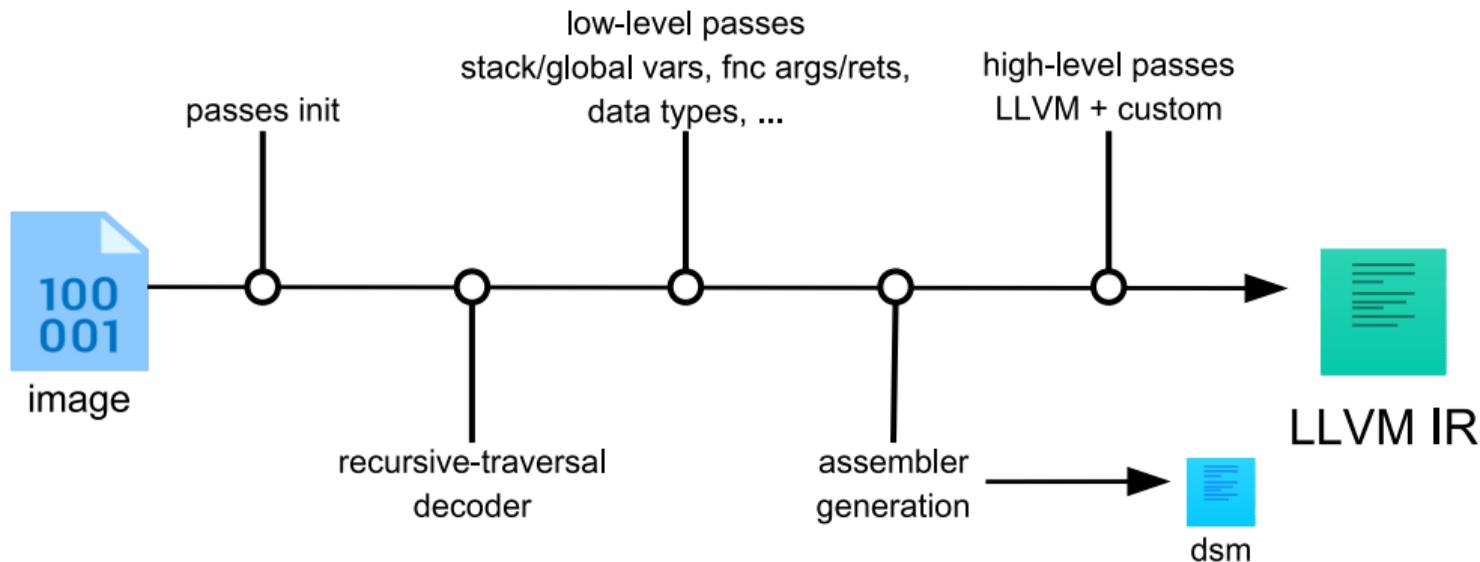
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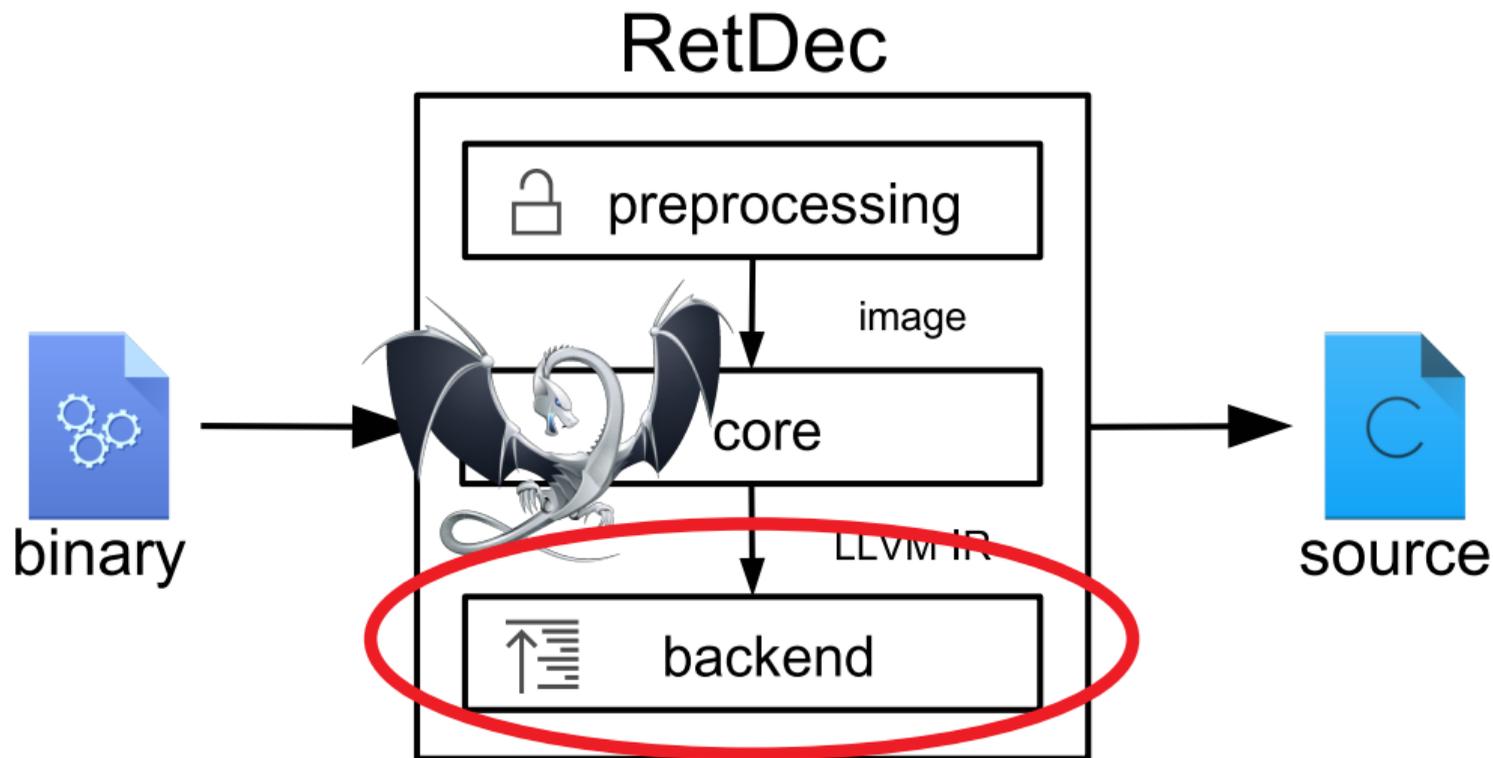
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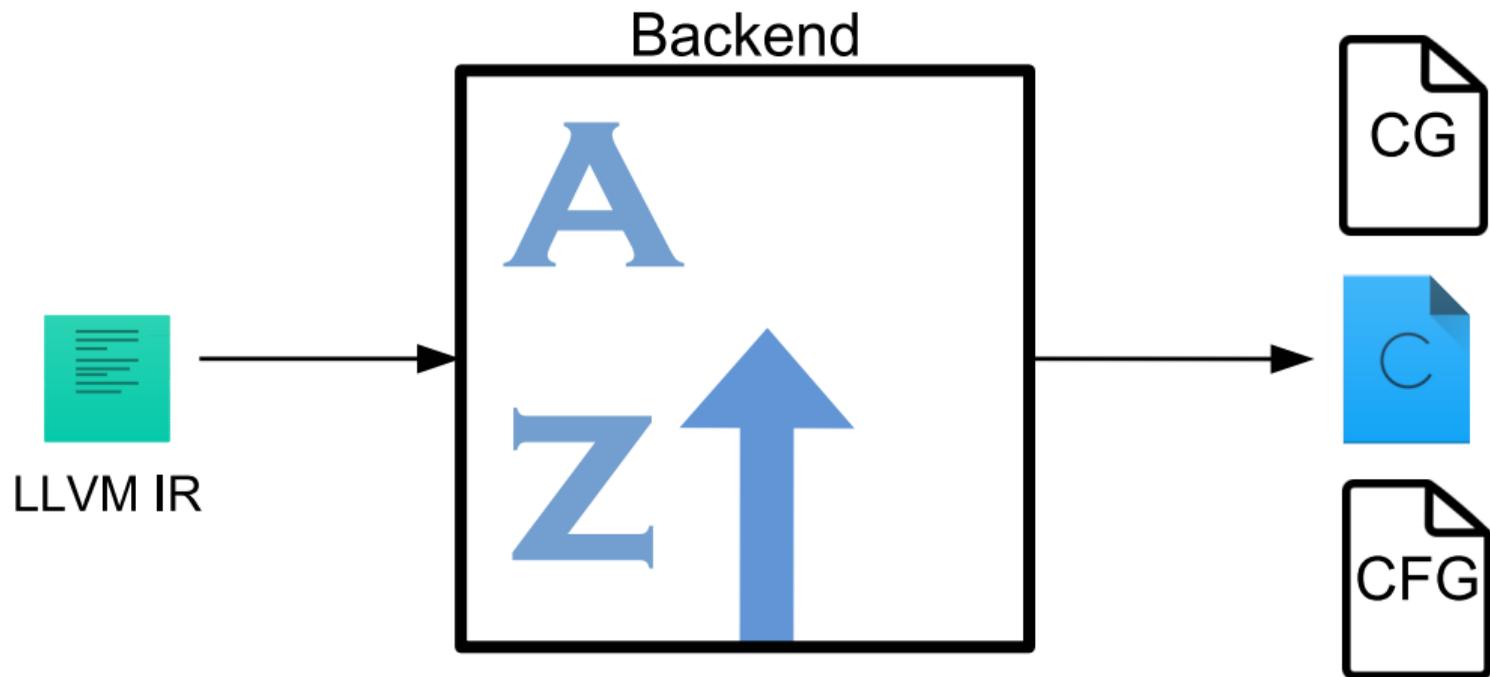
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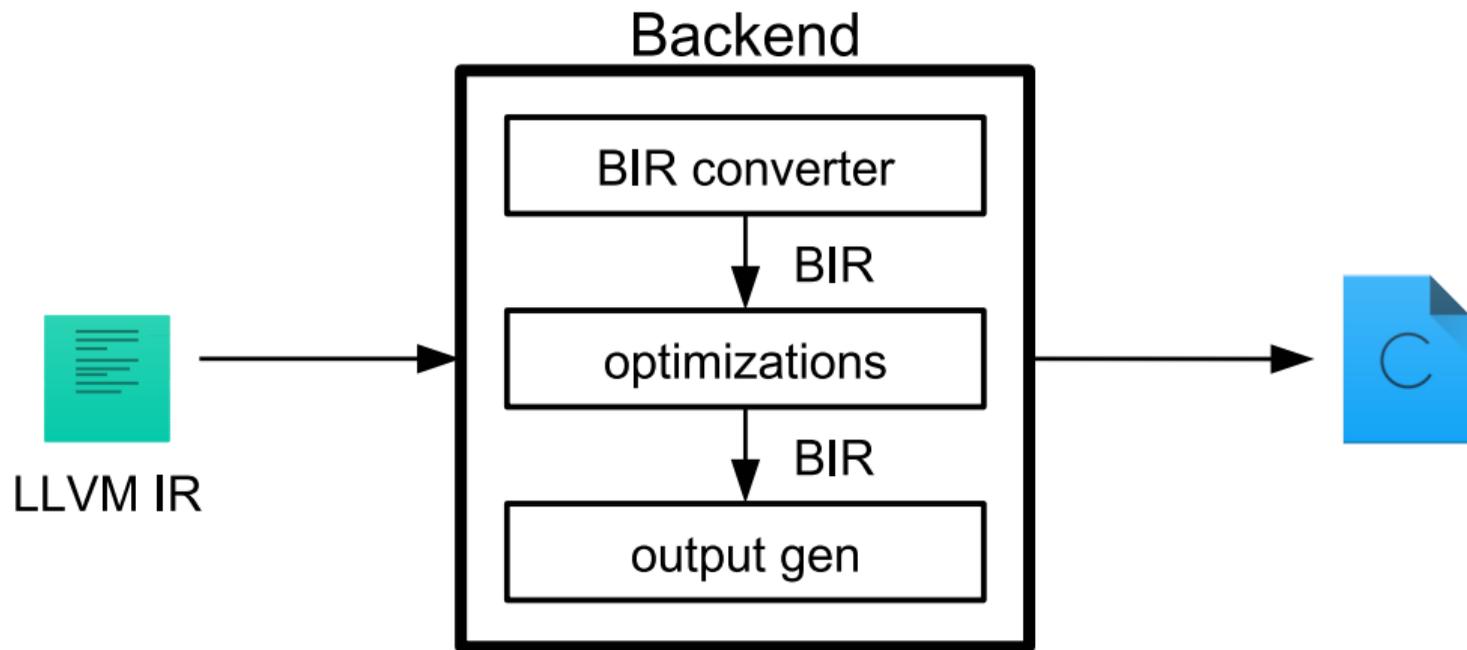
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git Demangler

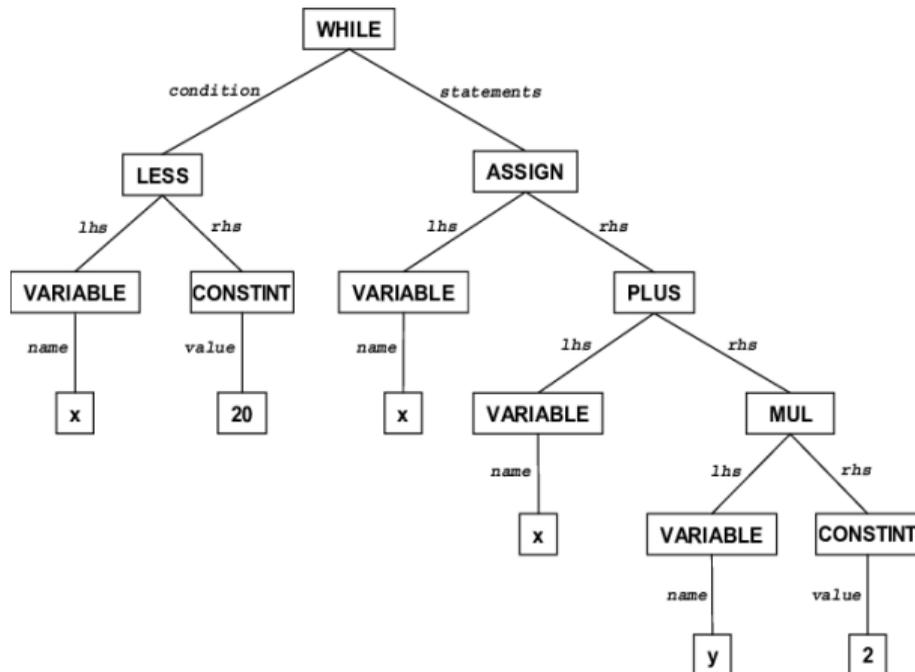
- gcc/Clang, Microsoft Visual C++, and Borland C++





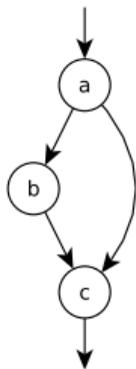


- BIR = Backend IR
- AST = Abstract syntax tree
- **while** (x < 20) { x = x + (y * 2); }

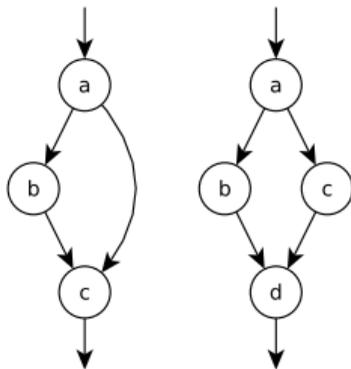


- LLVM IR: only (un)conditional branches & switches
- identify high-level control-flow patterns
- restructure BIR: if-else, for-loop, while-loop, switch, break, continue

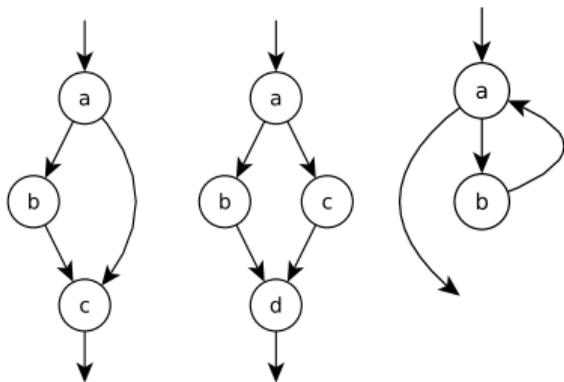
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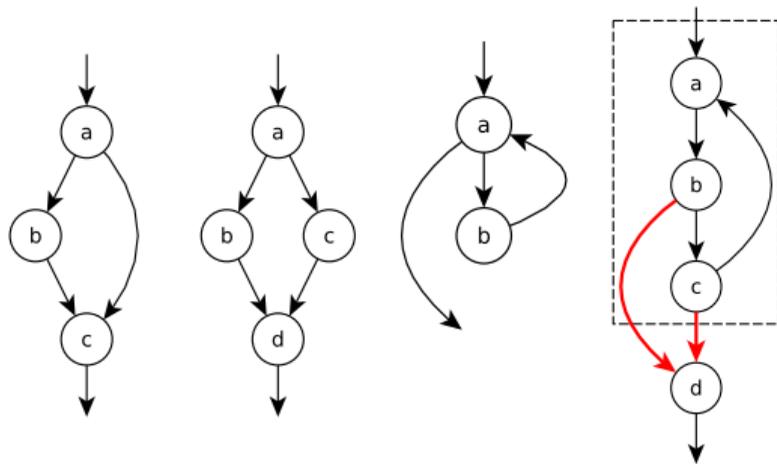
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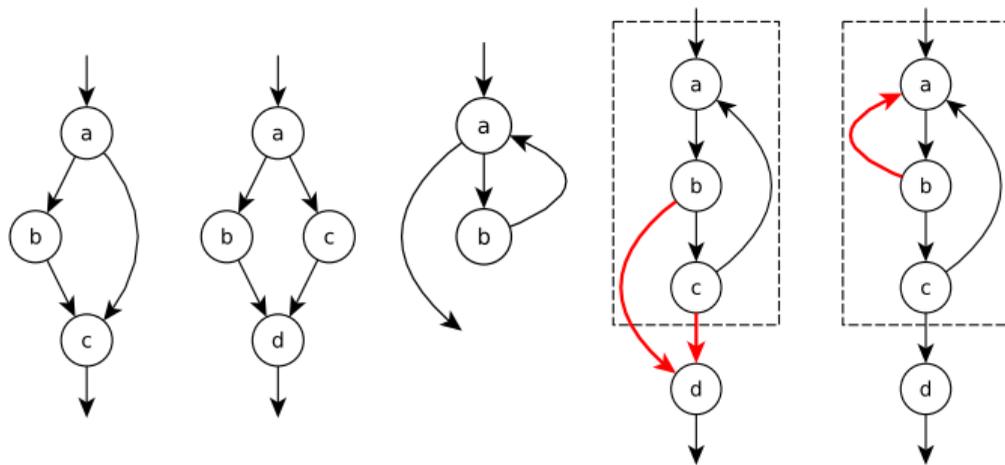
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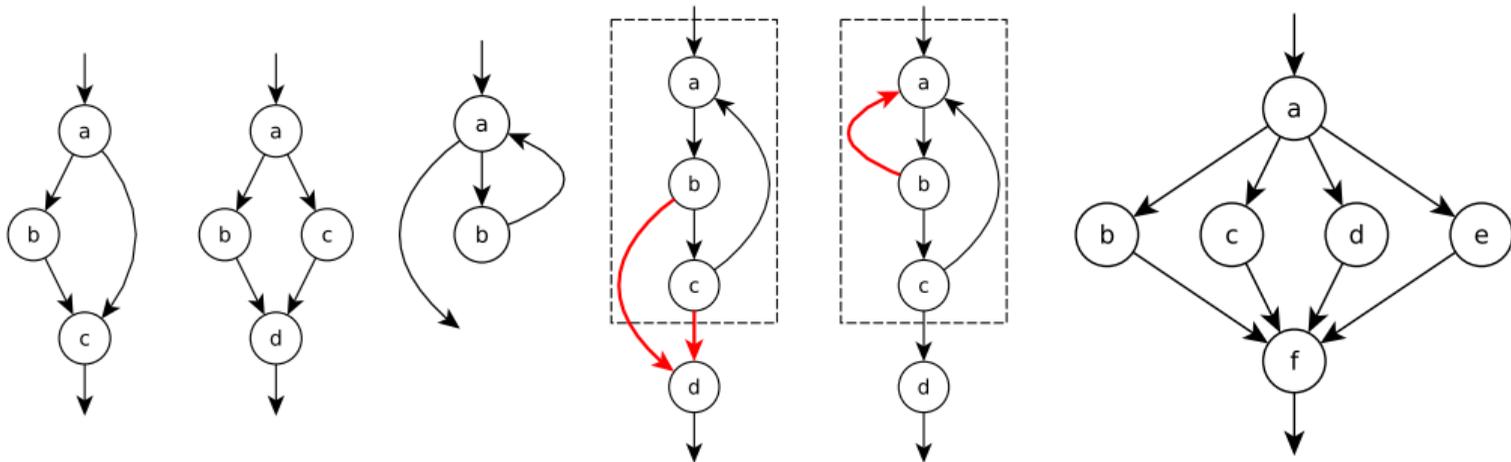
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 - induction variables: **for** (i = 0; i < 10; ++i)
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- output generation
 - C
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git RetDec

- llvmir2hll library
- llvmir2hlltool

 Online decompilation service

<https://retdec.com/decompilation/>

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 Get RetDec IDA plugin

```
.text:004015BB      push    ebp
.text:004015BC      mov     ebp, esp
.text:004015BE      and     esp, 0FFFFFF0h
.text:004015C1      sub     esp, 20h
.text:004015C4      call   __main
.text:004015C9      mov     [esp+20h+var_4], 0
.text:004015D1      mov     [esp+20h+var_8], 0
.text:004015D9      mov     [esp+20h+var_C], 0
.text:004015E1      lea    eax, [esp+20h+var_C]
.text:004015E5      mov     [esp+20h+var_18], eax
.text:004015E9      lea    eax, [esp+20h+var_8]
.text:004015ED      mov     [esp+20h+var_1C], eax
.text:004015F1      mov     [esp+20h+Format], offset Format
.text:004015F8      call   _scanf
.text:004015FD      mov     edx, [esp+20h+var_C]
.text:00401601      mov     eax, [esp+20h+var_8]
.text:00401605      mov     [esp+20h+var_1C], edx
.text:00401609      mov     [esp+20h+Format], eax
.text:0040160C      call   _ack
.text:00401611      mov     [esp+20h+var_4], eax
.text:00401615      mov     edx, [esp+20h+var_C]
.text:00401619      mov     eax, [esp+20h+var_8]
.text:0040161D      mov     ecx, [esp+20h+var_4]
.text:00401621      mov     [esp+20h+var_14], ecx
.text:00401625      mov     [esp+20h+var_18], edx
.text:00401629      mov     [esp+20h+var_1C], eax
.text:0040162D      mov     [esp+20h+Format], offset aAckermanDDD
.text:00401634      call   _printf
.text:00401639      mov     eax, [esp+20h+var_4]
.text:0040163D      leave
.text:0040163E      retn
```

```
//
// This file was generated by the Retargetable Decompiler
// Website: https://retdec.com
// Copyright (c) 2017 Retargetable Decompiler <info@retdec.com>
//

#include <stdint.h>
#include <stdio.h>

// ----- Functions -----
int32_t _ack(int32_t a1, int32_t a2) {
    if (a1 == 0) {
        return a2 + 1;
    }
    int32_t result;
    if (a2 == 0) {
        result = _ack(a1 - 1, 1);
    } else {
        result = _ack(a1 - 1, _ack(a1, a2 - 1));
    }
    return result;
}

int main(int argc, char ** argv) {
    __main();
    int32_t v1 = 0;
    int32_t v2 = 0;
    scanf("%d %d", &v1, &v2);
    int32_t result = _ack(v1, v2);
    printf("ackerman( %d , %d ) = %d\n", v1, v2, result);
    return result;
}
```

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-  look & feel native
-  same object names as IDA
-  interactive

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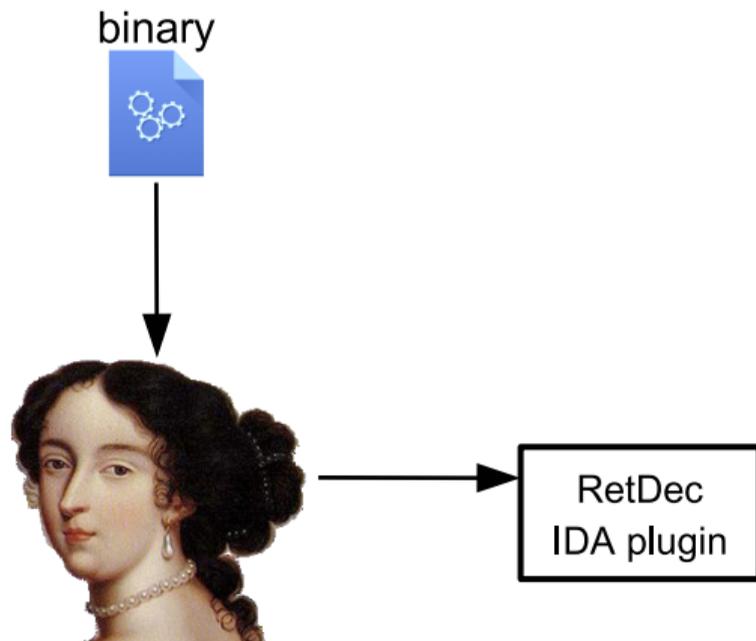
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binary



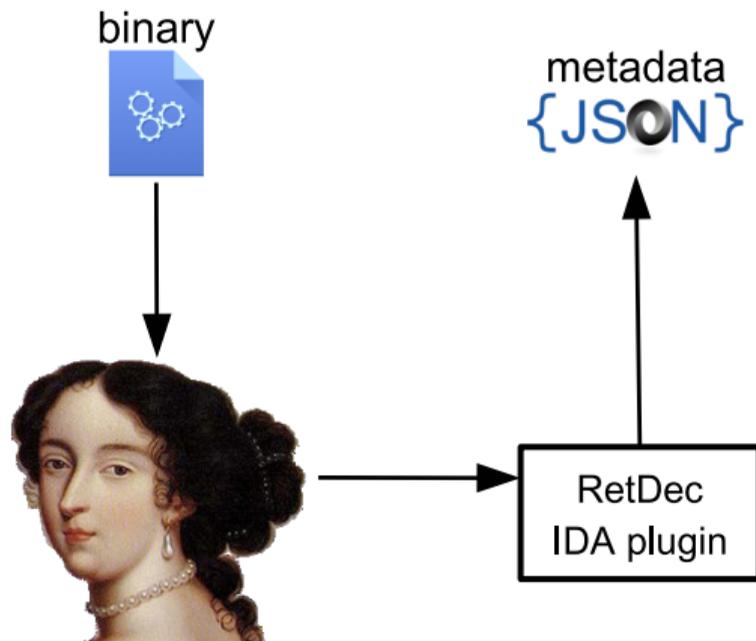
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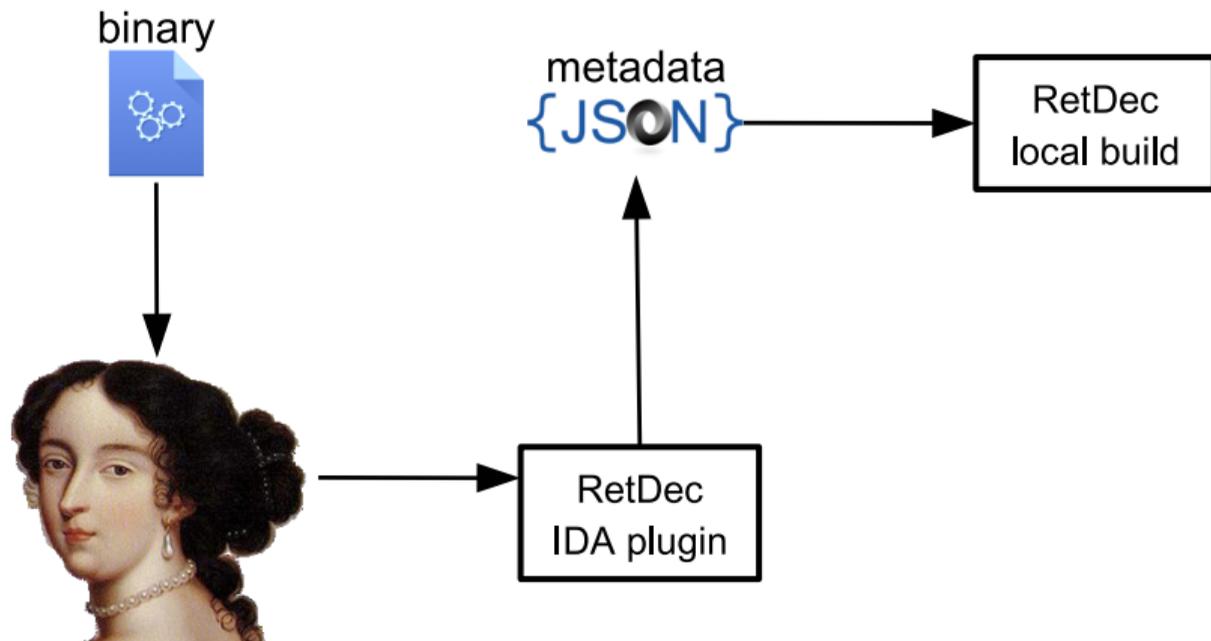
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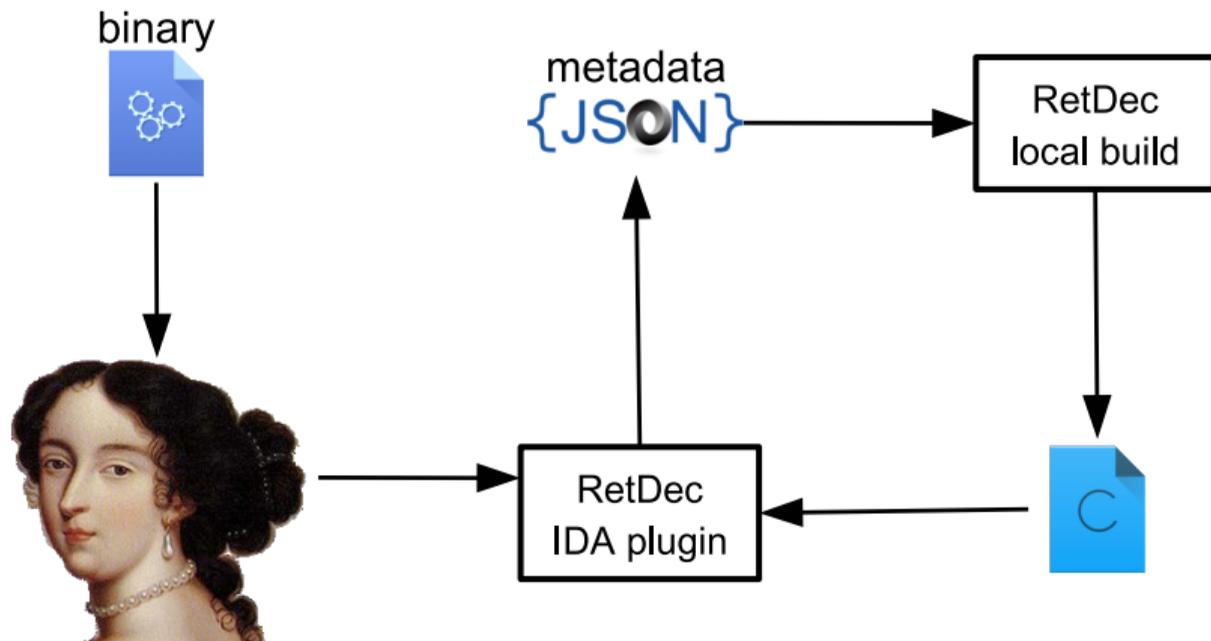
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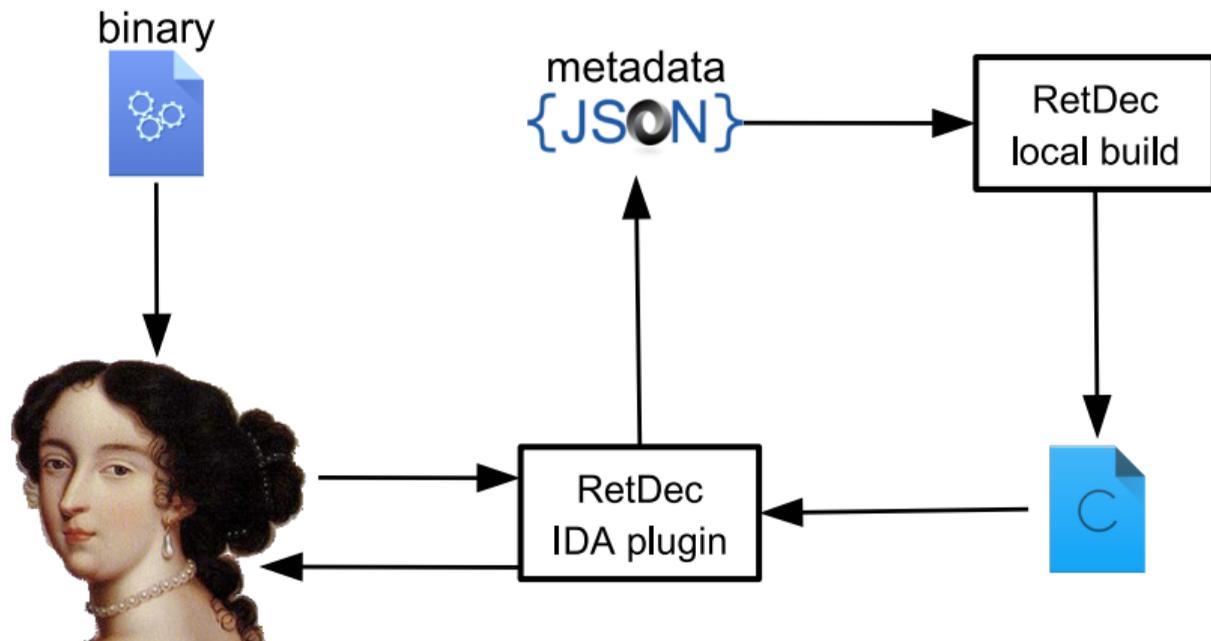
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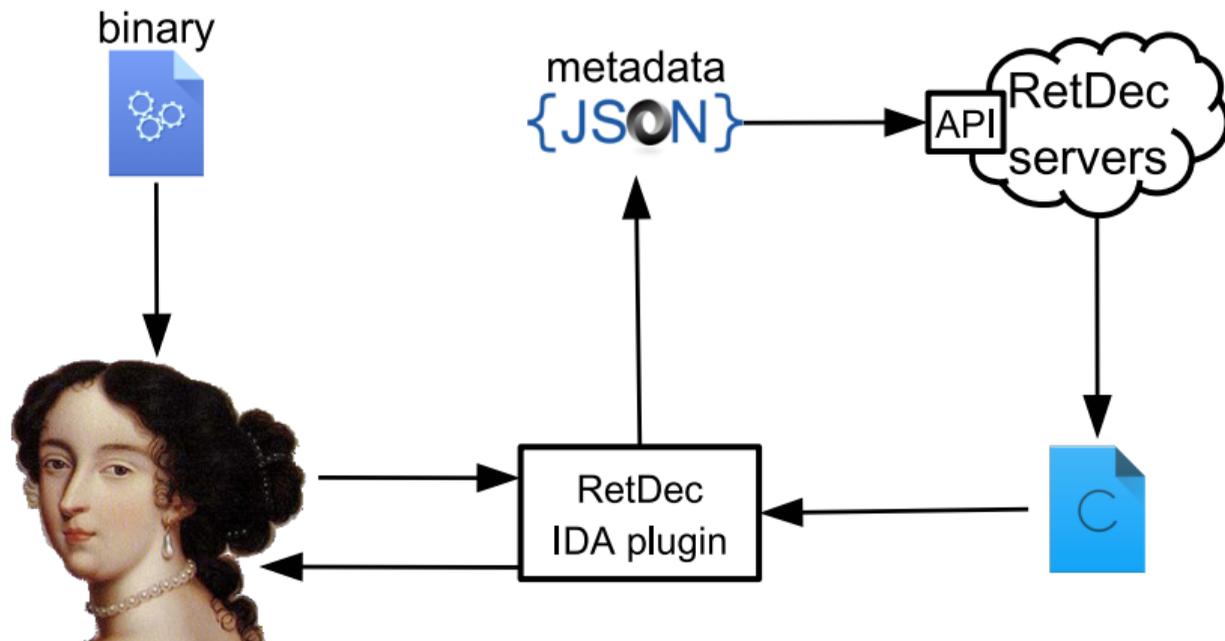
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```

// From module: /home/peter/decompiler/decompiler.
// Address range: 0x804851c - 0x8048576
// Line range: 4 - 11
int32_t ack(int32_t m, int32_t n) {
    // 0x804851c Jump to ASM A
    if (m) {
        // 0x804851d Rename function N
        // 0x804851e Change type declaration Y
        // 0x804851f Open xrefs window X
        // 0x8048520 Open calls window C
        // 0x8048521 Edit func comment /
        // 0x8048522 Move backward Esc
        // 0x8048523 Move forward Ctrl+Enter
    }
    int32_t result; // 0x8048524
    if (n == 0) {
        // 0x8048525
        result = ack(m - 1, 1);
        // branch -> 0x8048526
    } else {
        // 0x8048527
        result = ack(m - 1, ack(m, n - 1));
        // branch -> 0x8048528
    }
    // 0x8048529
    return result;
}

```

```

// ----- Global Variables -----
int32_t CTOR_LIST = -1; // 0x80497f4

// ----- Functions -----
// Address range: 0x8048680 - 0x80486a9
int32_t __do_global_ctors_aux(void) {
    // 0x8048680
    if (CTOR_LIST == -1) {
        // 0x80486a4
        return -1;
    }
    int32_t v1 = 0x80486a4;
    unknown_ffffffff(v1);
    // branch -> 0x8048698
    while (*(int32_t*)(v1 - 4) != -1) {
        // 0x8048698
        v1 -= 4;
        unknown_ffffffff();
        // continue -> 0x8048698
    }
    // 0x80486a4
    return -1;
}

```

Jump to ASM	A
Rename global variable	N
Edit func comment	/
Move backward	Esc
Move forward	Ctrl+Enter

 retdec.com launched on 2015-02-05

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 12,000 registered users

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 423,000 decompilations

 350,000 Web

 73,000 API

 410 decompilations daily

DSM

```
.text:1000DD3E ; HKEY__usercall getNextRegValueOfFCkey@<eax>(CHAR *outSubKey@<edx>, char **filename, DWORD *pcbData)
.text:1000DD3E getNextRegValueOfFCkey proc near
.text:1000DD3E             push  ebp
.text:1000DD3F             mov   ebp, esp
.text:1000DD41             sub   esp, 14h
```

Hex-Rays

```
HKEY__usercall getNextRegValueOfFCkey@<eax>(CHAR *outSubKey@<edx>, char **filename, DWORD *pcbData)
{
    v3 = outSubKey;
    v11 = 0;
    lstrcpyA(outSubKey, "SOFTWARE\\");
    lstrcatA(v3, byte_10032D70);
}
```

RetDec

```
struct HKEY__ * getNextRegValueOfFCkey(char * outSubKey, char ** filename, int32_t * pcbData) {
    int32_t lpValueName = (int32_t)outSubKey; // esi
    lstrcpyA(outSubKey, "SOFTWARE\\");
    lstrcatA(outSubKey, byte_10032D70);
}
```

Hex-Rays

```
int unregisterAutorun3()
{
    CHAR pszPath; // [esp+0h] [ebp-118h]@1
    int v2; // [esp+104h] [ebp-14h]@3
    int v3; // [esp+108h] [ebp-10h]@3
    CHAR *v4; // [esp+10Ch] [ebp-Ch]@3
    int v5; // [esp+114h] [ebp-4h]@1

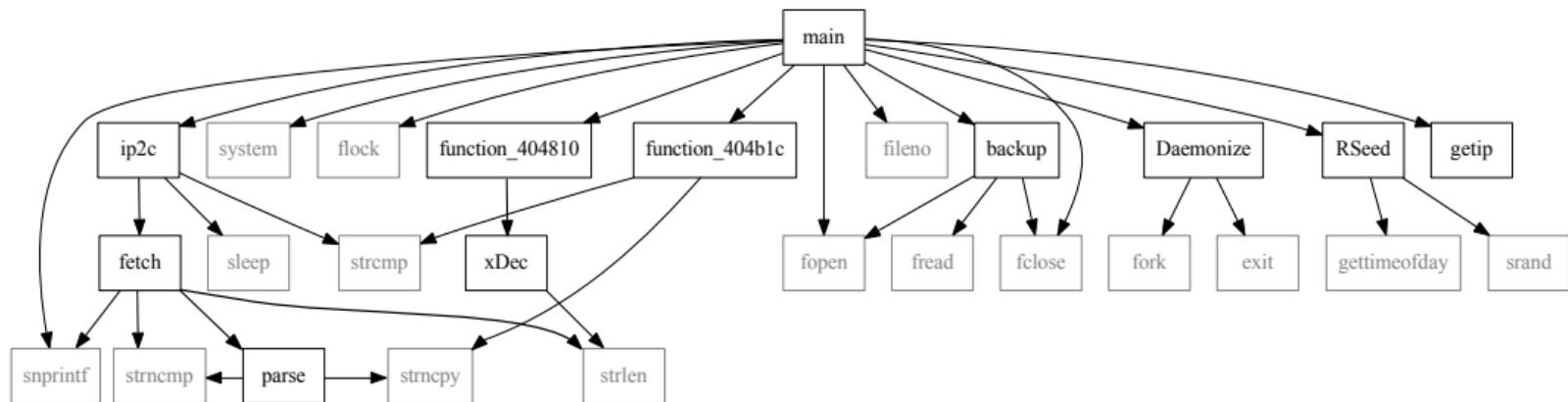
    v5 = getApplicationDataFullPath(26, 0, 0, &pszPath);
    if ( !v5 )
        return 0;
    v2 = -2147483647;
    v3 = 0;
    v4 = &pszPath;
    regOpenKeyAndCallProc(
        HKEY_CURRENT_USER,
        "Software\\Microsoft\\Windows\\CurrentVersion\\Run",
        (int)sub_10018797,
        (int)&v2);
    v2 = -2147483646;
    regOpenKeyAndCallProc(
        HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE,
        "Software\\Microsoft\\Windows\\CurrentVersion\\Run",
        (int)sub_10018797,
        (int)&v2);
    return v3;
}
```

RetDec

```
int32_t unregisterAutorun3(void) {
    int32_t v1 = 0; // bp-284
    if (getApplicationDataFullPath(26, NULL, NULL, (char *)&v1) != 0) {
        int32_t v2 = -0x7fffffff; // bp-24
        int32_t v3 = &v2; // 0x10018849
        regOpenKeyAndCallProc((struct HKEY__ *)-0x7fffffff,
            "Software\\Microsoft\\Windows\\CurrentVersion\\Run",
            0x10018797,
            v3);
        v2 = -0x7fffffff;
        regOpenKeyAndCallProc((struct HKEY__ *)-0x7fffffff,
            "Software\\Microsoft\\Windows\\CurrentVersion\\Run",
            0x10018797,
            v3);
    }
    // 0x10018889
    return 0;
}
```



```
// Address range: 0x419378 - 0x41946f
int32_t uptime(void) {
    struct _IO_FILE * file = fopen("/proc/uptime", "r"); // 0x4193bc
    int32_t str = 0; // bp-56
    fgets((char *)&str, 32, file);
    fclose(file);
    int32_t result = 0; // bp-64
    sscanf((char *)&str, "%d", &result);
    return result;
}
```



NO!

- IDA and Hex-Rays are great
 - 👍 output quality
 - 🔄 interactive
 - 🔗 seamlessly integrated
 - 🏠 mature
 - 👜 many plugins
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 - 👜 many plugins
 - 🛠️ official support
- IDA and Hex-Rays have flaws
 - ₿ not free
 - 🔒 proprietary
 - 🔗 big monolithic GUI app

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 -  MIPS architecture
 -  MIT license
 -  you can play with the sources

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- Not so obvious reasons
 -  LLVM is awesome
 -  different basic designs: interactive GUI vs. pipeline
 -  LLVM is OP (don't worry, it won't be nerfed)

git [RetDec](#) – the decompiler

git [RetDec IDA plugin](#) – Hex-Rays impersonation

- git** [RetDec](#) – the decompiler
- git** [RetDec IDA plugin](#) – Hex-Rays impersonation
- git** [Fileformat](#) – generic OFF parsing and analysis
- git** [Capstone2LlvmIR](#) – binary to LLVM translation
- git** [Fnc-patterns](#) – statically linked code detection in YARA (IDA F.L.I.R.T.)
- git** [Yaramod](#) – hack YARA rules in C++
- git** [Yaracpp](#) – YARA C++ wrapper
- git** [Ctypes](#) – info on function types

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- We will see. . .

Thanks!

Contacts

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