The STklos Virtual Machine

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This is the documentation for the opcodes of the STklos virtual machine. The VM implementation is contained in the files `src/vm.h` and `src/vm.c`.

The VM has a stack, which in the source code is accessed using the C functions `push(elt)` and `pop()`. Each VM thread also has:

- `STk_instr *pc`, the program counter
- `SCM *fp`, the frame pointer
- `SCM *sp`, the Scheme stack pointer
- `SCM *stack`, the Scheme stack
- `int stack_len`, the length of the stack
- `SCM val`, a register for the current value
- `SCM vals[]`, a register for multiple values
- `int valc`, the number of multiple values
- `SCM r1, r2` two registers
- `SCM env`, the current environment
- `SCM current_module`, the current module
- `SCM iport, oport, eport`, the current input, output and error ports
- `SCM scheme_thread`, the Scheme thread associated with this thread

Of these, only a few are relevant to understanding the bytecode – these are the value registers and the stack.

Chapter 1. The bytecode

STklos bytecode is a sequence of 16-bit integers. You can see the opcodes of a compiled thunk with

```
(disassemble (lambda () ...))
```

and the opcodes of an expression with

```
(disassemble-expr 'expr)
```

With an extra `#t` argument, `dissasemble-proc` will show constants:

```
(disassemble-expr "abc")
```

```
000:  CONSTANT             0
002:
```

```
(disassemble-expr "abc" #t)
```

```
000:  CONSTANT             0
002:

Constants:
0: "abc"
```

When we make a closure with the lambda, we'll always see a `RETURN` at the end of the output:

```
stklos> (disassemble (lambda () '() ))
```

```
000:  IM-NIL
001:  RETURN
```

In the above example, one opcode loads the `NIL` value to the register and another opcode `RETURN`s. This return is from the lambda.

Chapter 2. Value register

The simpler opcodes are those that carry with them an immediate value. These operations will copy their value to the `val` register in the VM.

```
IM_FALSE
IM_TRUE
IM_NIL
IM_MINUS1
IM_ZERO
IM_ONE
IM_VOID
```

Examples:

```
(disassemble-expr  1)
```

```
000:  IM-ONE
```

```
(disassemble  (lambda () #f 1) )
```

```
000:  IM-FALSE
001:  IM-ONE
002:  RETURN
```

Opcodes for small integers and constants do the same, but they take a little longer to execute, since they need to perform some small operations.

```
SMALL_INT
CONSTANT
```

```
(disassemble-expr  5)
```

```
000:  SMALL-INT            5
```

Small integers are *not* the same as fixnums! A small integer is an integer number that fits in 16 bits (that is, in one bytecode element). The fixnum range depends on the size of `long` in the platform being used.

Suppose STklos has been compiled on a 64 bit system and also ona 32 bit system. The ranges for small ints and fixnums are:

```
small integer (on both): [ -2^15, +2^15 - 1 ]
fixnum (long is 32-bit): [ -2^29, +2^29 - 1 ]
fixnum (long is 64-bit): [ -2^61, +2^61 - 1 ]
```

The expression above, `5`, is compiled into the bytes

```
00 08 00 05
```

where `00 08` is the opcode for `` `small int'', and `00 05 `` is the argument (the small integer, 5).

Small integers are compiled *into* the bytecode. Fixnums, bignums, strings are stored *outside* of the bytecode, and the instruction `CONSTANT` takes as argument an index into the constants vector.

The expression `50000` is not a small integer, so it is compiled as a constant:

```
(disassemble-expr 50000 #t)
000:  CONSTANT             0
002:

Constants:
0: 50000
```

Zero is the index of `50000` in the constants vector.

The above code is compiled into bytecode as

```
00 09 00 00
```

where `00 09` means `CONSTANT` and `00 00` is the index into the constants vector.

Another clarifying example:

(disassemble-expr ’(values 50000 ``abc'') #t)

```
000:  PREPARE-CALL
001:  CONSTANT-PUSH        0
003:  CONSTANT-PUSH        1
005:  GREF-INVOKE          2 2
008:

Constants:
0: 50000
1: "abc"
```

```
2: values
```

The bytecode is

```
37 85 0 85 1 86 2 2
```

Here,

- `85 0` is `CONSTANT-PUSH 0` (0 = first element of the vector)
- `85 1` is `CONSTANT-PUSH 1` (1 = second element)
- `86 2 2` is `GREF-INVOKE 2 2` (2 = number, arg to `values, next 2 = third element of vector)

Chapter 3. Stack

The following opcodes are similar to the immediate-value ones, except that, instead of copying their values to the `val` register, they push the value on the stack.

```
FALSE_PUSH
TRUE_PUSH
NIL_PUSH
MINUS1_PUSH
ZERO_PUSH
ONE_PUSH
VOID_PUSH

INT_PUSH
CONSTANT_PUSH
```

The `POP` and `PUSH` move objects between stack and value register.

```
POP     ; move top of stack to val register
PUSH    ; store val register on top of stack
```

Chapter 4. Local variables

The `LOCAL_REF` opcodes will load the values of variables from the current environment (the ``local'' variables) on the `val` register.

```
LOCAL_REF0
LOCAL_REF1
LOCAL_REF2
LOCAL_REF3
LOCAL_REF4
LOCAL_REF
```

Examples:

```
(disassemble (lambda (a) a))
```

```
000:  LOCAL-REF0
001:  RETURN
```

```
(disassemble (lambda (a b) a))
```

```
000:  LOCAL-REF1
001:  RETURN
```

There are opcodes for five fixed positions only, so after that another opcode, `LOCAL_REF`, needs an argument:

```
(disassemble (lambda (a b c d e f) a))
```

```
000:  LOCAL-REF            5
002:  RETURN
```

The following opcodes are similar to the local reference ones, except that, instead of copying their values to the `val` register, they push the value on the stack.

```
LOCAL_REF0_PUSH
LOCAL_REF1_PUSH
LOCAL_REF2_PUSH
LOCAL_REF3_PUSH
LOCAL_REF4_PUSH
```

The following opcodes are analogous to the local reference ones, but instead of loading values, they store the value of the `val` register on the local variables

```
LOCAL_SET0
LOCAL_SET1
LOCAL_SET2
LOCAL_SET3
LOCAL_SET4
LOCAL_SET
```

Chapter 5. Deep variables

Variables which are visible but not in the immediately accessible environment are accessed with the DEEP opcodes.

```
DEEP_LOCAL_REF
DEEP_LOCAL_SET
DEEP_LOC_REF_PUSH
```

STklos organizes local environments as this: each level has a maximum of 256 variables. Both the level and the address of local variables are encoded in a single 16-bit integer, as "256v1+v2". For example, 2*256 + 03 = 0x0203. The first byte, 0x02, identifies the level, and the second byte, 0x03, identifies the variable.

The VM will, then, do something like this to access a deep local variable:

```
  /* See this is src/vm.c, CASE(DEEP_LOCAL_REF):  */
  for (level = FIRST_BYTE(info); level; level--)
    e = (SCM) FRAME_NEXT(e);

  vm->val = FRAME_LOCAL(e, SECOND_BYTE(info));
```

Here, info is the information to access the variable (a uint16_t number, as every opcode and operand used in the VM). FIRST_BYTE gets the level; SECOND_BYTE gets the var address.

Examples:

```
(disassemble
 (let ((a 10))
   (lambda () a)))
```

```
000:  DEEP-LOCAL-REF       256
002:  RETURN
```

```
(disassemble
 (let ((a 10))
   (lambda ()
     (set! a 20))))
```

```
000:  SMALL-INT            20
002:  DEEP-LOCAL-SET       256
004:  RETURN
```

In the following example, the value of `a` is fetched from a deep environment and pushed onto the stack, so it can be used by the comparison opcode `IN-NUMEQ`:

```
(disassemble
 (let ((a 10))
   (lambda ()
     (= a 20))))
```

```
000:  DEEP-LOC-REF-PUSH    256
002:  SMALL-INT            20
004:  IN-NUMEQ
005:  RETURN
```

The following example shows a variable in a deeper level.

```
(disassemble
  (let ((c 4)
        (b 3))
    (lambda ()
      (let ((a 2))
        c))))
```

```
000:  PREPARE-CALL
001:  INT-PUSH             2
003:  ENTER-TAIL-LET       1
005:  DEEP-LOCAL-REF       513
007:  RETURN
```

The number 513 is composed of the bytes 0x02 and 0x01: `#x0201 = 513`. This means "the variable of index 1 in level 2" (index 1 is for `c`, and index 0 is for `b`).

The code for `(let ((c 4) (b 3)` is not shown, but it can bee seen with `disassemble-expr`:

```
(disassemble-expr
  '(let ((c 4)
         (b 3))
     (lambda ()
       (let ((a 2))
         c))) #t)
```

```
000:  PREPARE-CALL
001:  INT-PUSH             4
003:  INT-PUSH             3
005:  ENTER-LET            2
```

```
007:  CREATE-CLOSURE       9 0  ;; ==> 018
010:  PREPARE-CALL
011:  INT-PUSH             2
013:  ENTER-TAIL-LET       1
015:  DEEP-LOCAL-REF       513
017:  RETURN
018:  LEAVE-LET
```

Chapter 6. Global variables

Global variables can be read and set with the following opcodes:

```
GLOBAL-REF
GLOBAL-SET
```

Examples:

```
(disassemble-expr 'my-cool-global-variable) #t)
```

```
000:  GLOBAL-REF           0

Constants:
0: my-cool-global-variable
```

```
(disassemble-expr '(set! my-cool-global-variable #f) #t)
```

```
000:  IM-FALSE
001:  GLOBAL-SET           0

Constants:
0: my-cool-global-variable
```

6.1. UGLOBAL_{REF,SET} and the checked global variables

Internally, the global variables values of a program are stored in a unique array called `STk_global_store`.

The instructions `GLOBAL_REF` and `GLOBAL_SET` do the following:

1. Fetch the name of the global variable
2. Lookup the variable in the current environment (that is, consult a hash table in a module)
3. Verify if the variable is mutable or not
4. Finally, do the real get or set operation in `STk_global_store`.

Steps 1-3 are quite expensive, and shouldn't need to be done every time the variable is accessed. Thus, the STklos VM patches the original code when we are sure that the variable used is properly defined. Hence, he first time a variable is referenced, the VM goes through all those steps, adds a final step:

5. **Patch the code**, that is, changing the GLOBAL_REF or GLOBAL_SET instruction into a UGLOBAL_REF or UGLOBAL_SET ('U' prefix here is for already **U**sed vrariable)

For example, in GLOBAL_SET, this step is performed by the following two lines:

```
/* patch the code for optimize next accesses */
vm->pc[-1] = global_var_index(ref); // ref: result of the search in the hash table
vm->pc[-2] = UGLOBAL_SET;
```

See that what is being changed are the two previous bytecode elements, pc[-1] and pc[-2]. Note that the value returned by global_var_index is the index in STk_global_store where the used variable is stored.

So the code:

```
(define (test) (set! a 2))
```

is translated in

```
000:  CREATE-CLOSURE       6 0  ;; ==> 008
003:  SMALL-INT            2
005:  GLOBAL-SET           0
007:  RETURN
008:  DEFINE-SYMBOL        1
010:

Constants:
0: a
1: test
```

The second and third lines are used for doing this assignment. We can see that the parameter of the GLOBAL_SET instruction is the name of the variable to be set.

Then, after the first time the GLOBAL_SET instruction is performed, the code will **patch itself** and changed into

```
000:  SMALL-INT            2
002:  UGLOBAL-SET          n
```

where n is the index of this global variable in the STk_global_store array.

The instruction GLOBAL_SET takes two integers to be represented, so when pc[-1] and pc[-2] are changed, what is being changed is the previous argument (0 → n) and the previous instruction (GLOBAL_SET → UGLOBAL_SET).

And, of course, the n-th element of the table contains the value of the variable to be set. We can see this by disassembling the test function defined before:

```
stklos> (disassemble test)
000:  SMALL-INT           2
002:  GLOBAL-SET          0
004:  RETURN
```

Once test has been called at least one time, its code is:

```
stklos> (disassemble test)
000:  SMALL-INT           2
002:  UGLOBAL-SET         2971
004:  RETURN
```

Here, 2971 is the index of the global variable a in the array of global variables.

Let’s see now the code of UGLOBAL_SET:

```
CASE(UGLOBAL_SET) { /* Never produced by compiler */
  /* Because of optimization, we may get re-dispatched to here. */
  RELEASE_POSSIBLE_LOCK;

  fetch_global() = vm->val; NEXT0;
}
```

The fetch_global macro is defined earlier in vm.c:

```
#define fetch_next()     (*(vm->pc)++)
#define fetch_global()   (STk_global_store[(unsigned) fetch_next()])
```

The RELEASE_POSSIBLE_LOCK used here is a macro which deals with the lock needed to patch the code. This lock is necessary since STklos permits to have several threads to execute the same code. All the stuff about locking in the VM is explained in vm.c source file, and is covered (a bit) below.

Of course, all the work detailed about how we optimize access to global variables is also done in all other UGREF_* instructions in a similar way.

That is why, even using a hash table, access to global variables happens with speed not too far from that of access to local variables in STklos. This can be seen in the following rudimentary benchmark:

```
;;;
;;; Using locals: runs in about 3900ms
;;;
(let ((a 0)
      (b 2))
```

```
  (time
    (repeat 100_000_000
      (set! a b))))

;;;
;;; Using globals: runs in about the same time (probably a bit faster)
;;;
(define a 0)
(define b 2)

(time
  (repeat 100_000_000
     (set! a b)))
```

Chapter 7. Operations

7.1. Arithmetic

The operations take the top of stack and `val` as operands, and leave the result on `val`.

```
IN_ADD2
IN_SUB2
IN_MUL2
IN_DIV2
```

```
(disassemble-expr '(+ a 3) #t)
```

```
000:  GLOBAL-REF           0
002:  IN-SINT-ADD2         3

Constants:
0: a
```

First the value of `a` (which is the zero-th local variable) is pushed onto the stack. Then, `DEEP-LOCAL-REF` brings the value of `x`, and `IM-ADD2` adds the two values, leaving the result on the local variable register.

For fixnums, the analogous opcodes are:

```
IN_FXADD2
IN_FXSUB2
IN_FXMUL2
IN_FXDIV2
```

```
(disassemble-expr '(fx+ v 3))
```

```
000:  GLOBAL-REF           0
002:  IN-SINT-FXADD2       3

Constants:
0: v
```

The following variant of those opcodes do not use the stack. They operate on `val` and an argument:

```
IN_SINT_ADD2
```

```
IN_SINT_SUB2
IN_SINT_MUL2
IN_SINT_DIV2
```

Example:

```
(disassemble-expr '(+ a 2))
```

```
000:  GLOBAL-REF           0
002:  IN-SINT-ADD2         2

Constants:
0: a
```

With a as a local variable:

```
(disassemble (lambda (a) (+ a 2)))
```

```
000:  LOCAL-REF0
001:  IN-SINT-ADD2         2
003:  RETURN
```

First, the value of a is put on val; then it is summed with 2, which comes as an argument to the opcode IN-SINT-ADD2.

These also have fixnum variants:

```
IN_SINT_FXADD2
IN_SINT_FXSUB2
IN_SINT_FXMUL2
IN_SINT_FXDIV2
```

Example:

```
(disassemble-expr '(fx+ a 2))
```

```
000:  GLOBAL-REF           0
002:  IN-SINT-FXADD2       2

Constants:
0: a
```

7.2. Increment and decrement val

```
IN_INCR
IN_DECR
```

7.3. Comparisons

These compare the top of stack with `val`, and leave a boolean on `val`.

```
IN_NUMEQ     ;   pop() == val ?
IN_NUMDIFF   ; ! pop() == val ?
IN_NUMLT     ;   pop < val ?
IN_NUMGT     ;   pop > val ?
IN_NUMLE     ;   pop <= val ?
IN_NUMGE     ;   pop >= val ?
```

Example:

```
(disassemble-expr ' (>= a 2))
```

```
000:  GLOBAL-REF-PUSH      0
002:  SMALL-INT            2
004:  IN-NUMGE

Constants:
0: a
```

There are also opcodes for `equal?`, `eqv?` and `eq?`:

```
IN_EQUAL
IN_EQV
IN_EQ
```

Example:

```
(disassemble-expr '(eq? a 2))
```

```
000:  GLOBAL-REF-PUSH      0
002:  SMALL-INT            2
004:  IN-EQ

Constants:
```

```
0: a
```

The dissassemble procedures will not, however, show the names of symbols or values of strings (disassemble-expr does, when passed the extra #t argument).

```
(disassemble (lambda (a) (eq? a 'hello-i-am-a-symbol)))
```

```
000:  LOCAL-REF0-PUSH
001:  CONSTANT            0
003:  IN-EQ
004:  RETURN
```

```
(disassemble-expr '(eq? a 'hello-i-am-a-symbol) #t)
```

```
000:  GLOBAL-REF-PUSH     0
002:  CONSTANT            1
004:  IN-EQ
005:

Constants:
0: a
1: hello-i-am-a-symbol
```

7.4. Constructors

These will build structures with the value in val and store the structure (that is, the tagged word representing it) again on val.

```
IN_CONS
IN_CAR
IN_CDR
IN_CXR
IN_LIST
```

Examples:

```
(disassemble-expr '(cons "a" "b") #t)
```

```
000:  CONSTANT-PUSH       0
002:  CONSTANT            1
004:  IN-CONS
```

```
005:

Constants:
0: "a"
1: "b"
```

```
(disassemble (lambda (a b) (cons a b)))
```

```
000:  LOCAL-REF1-PUSH
001:  LOCAL-REF0
002:  IN-CONS
003:  RETURN
```

The element to be consed is pushed on the stack; then the second element is loaded on `val`, and then `IN-CONS` is called.

```
(disassemble (lambda (a) (list a)))
```

```
000:  LOCAL-REF0-PUSH
001:  IN-LIST              1
003:  RETURN
```

```
(disassemble-expr '(car a) #t)
```

```
000:  GLOBAL-REF           0
002:  IN-CAR
003:

Constants:
0: a
```

The special accessor `CXR` is used to access list parts, as described in the `cxr` library in the R7RS standard (`caar`, `cadr`, …, up to `cddddr`). The following example illustrates this.

```
(disassemble-expr '(caadr x) #t)

000:  GLOBAL-REF           1
002:  IN-CXR               0
004:

Constants:
0: #:daa
```

```
1: x
```

The constant `#:daa` is the abbreviation of the operations --`(CAADR x) = (CAR (CAR (CDR x)))`, **in reversed order** (because that is the order in which they will be applied, and it is more natural for the VM to go from the beginning of the string towards the end.

See that if we turn off the inlining of functions in the compiler, we get a different output:

```
(compiler:inline-common-functions #f)
(disassemble-expr '(caadr x) #t)

000:  PREPARE-CALL
001:  GLOBAL-REF           0
003:  PUSH
004:  GLOBAL-REF           1
006:  INVOKE               1
008:

Constants:
0: x
1: caadr
```

Not only we have more instructions, but the `PREPARE-CALL` and `INVOKE` instructions above are rather expensive.

7.5. Structure references

The following opcodes access and set elements of strings and vectors.

```
IN_VREF
IN_SREF
IN_VSET
IN_SSET
```

`V` stands for vector, `S` stands for string; then, `REF` and `SET` mean `reference'' and` set''.

The instructions will use the object in the stack and the index from the `val` register.

Examples

```
(disassemble
 (let ((a #(0 1 2 3)))
   (lambda () (vector-ref a 2))))
```

```
000:  DEEP-LOC-REF-PUSH    256
002:  SMALL-INT            2
```

```
004:  IN-VREF
005:  RETURN
```

In the following example, the `CONSTANT-PUSH` is including a reference to the string on the stack.

```
(disassemble-expr '(string-ref "abcde" 3) #t)
```

```
000:  CONSTANT-PUSH        0
002:  SMALL-INT            3
004:  IN-SREF
005:

Constants:
0: "abcde"
```

When setting a value, the reference to the vector or string and the index go on the stack (index below the reference to the object – the index is popped first), and the value goes on `val`, then the setting opcode is used:

```
(disassemble
 (let ((v (vector #a #b #c)))
   (lambda () (vector-set! v 2 10))))
```

```
000:  DEEP-LOC-REF-PUSH    256     ; push ref. to vector
002:  INT-PUSH             2       ; push index
004:  SMALL-INT            10      ; put new value in val
006:  IN-VSET                      ; set it!
007:  RETURN
```

Chapter 8. Control flow

The following opcodes have an argument, which is the offset to be added to the program counter.

```
GOTO           ; unconditionally jump
JUMP_TRUE      ; jump if val is true
JUMP_FALSE     ; jump if val is false
JUMP_NUMDIFF   ; jump if ! pop() = val (for numbers)
JUMP_NUMEQ     ; jump if pop() = val (for numbers)
JUMP_NUMLT     ; jump of pop() <  val
JUMP_NUMLE     ; jump of pop() <= val
JUMP_NUMGT     ; jump of pop() >  val
JUMP_NUMGE     ; jump of pop() >= val
JUMP_NOT_EQ    ; jump if pop() not eq? val
JUMP_NOT_EQV   ; jump if pop() not eqv? val
JUMP_NOT_EQUAL ; jump if pop() not equal? val
```

Example:

```
(disassemble
 (lambda () (if #t 2 4)))
```

```
000:  IM-TRUE
001:  JUMP-FALSE           3    ;; ==> 006
003:  SMALL-INT            2
005:  RETURN
006:  SMALL-INT            4
008:  RETURN
```

STklos' `disassemble` is nice enough to tell you the line number where a jump goes!

Chapter 9. Closures, let, and related

9.1. let

The opcodes for `entering `let□' create new environments and push them on the stack, but do not update activation records, since there is no procedure call happening. Then, the `LEAVE_LET opcode removes the environment from the stack.

```
ENTER_LET
ENTER_LET_STAR
ENTER_TAIL_LET
ENTER_TAIL_LET_STAR
LEAVE_LET
```

Examples:

```
(disassemble-expr '(list (let ((x 1))
                           x)) #t)
```

```
000:  PREPARE-CALL
001:  ONE-PUSH
002:  ENTER-LET            1
004:  LOCAL-REF0
005:  LEAVE-LET
006:  PUSH
007:  IN-LIST              1

Constants:
```

When the `let` is in tail position, then the opcode used is the ordinary `ENTER_TAIL_LET`, and no `LEAVE_LET` is needed:

```
(disassemble
 (lambda ()
   (let ((x 1))
     x)))
```

```
000:  PREPARE-CALL
001:  INT-PUSH             4
002:  ENTER-TAIL-LET       1
004:  LOCAL-REF0
005:  RETURN
```

Chapter 10. Miscelannea

The following opcode does nothing:

```
NOP
```

The following sets the docstring and the formal parameter list documentation for a procedure:

```
DOCSTRG
FORMALS
```

Examples:

```
(disassemble-expr '(define (f) "A well-documented function" 5) #t)
```

```
000:  CREATE-CLOSURE       4 0  ;; ==> 006
003:  SMALL-INT            5
005:  RETURN
006:  DOCSTRG              0
008:  DEFINE-SYMBOL        1
010:

Constants:
0: "A well-documented function"
1: f
```

```
(disassemble
 (lambda ()
   (define (f) "A well-documented function" 5)
   10))
```

```
000:  PREPARE-CALL
001:  FALSE-PUSH
002:  ENTER-TAIL-LET       1
004:  CREATE-CLOSURE       4 0  ;; ==> 010
007:  SMALL-INT            5
009:  RETURN
010:  DOCSTRG              0
012:  LOCAL-SET0
013:  SMALL-INT            10
015:  RETURN
```

Here, `DOCSTRG` seems to have a zero argument because it uses a constant string, and `disassemble` does not show values of strings and symbol names.

The FORMALS opcode is similar to DOCSTRG, except that it expects a list instead of a string.

```
(compiler:keep-formals #t)

(disassemble-expr '(define (f a b . c)
                     "A well-documented function"
                     (* a 3))
                  #t)
```

```
000:  CREATE-CLOSURE       5 -3;; ==> 007
003:  LOCAL-REF2
004:  IN-SINT-MUL2         3
006:  RETURN
007:  FORMALS              0
009:  DOCSTRG              1
011:  DEFINE-SYMBOL        2
013:

Constants:
0: (a b . c)
1: "A well-documented function"
2: f
```

10.1. Creating closures and procedures

The following opcode creates a closure.

```
CREATE_CLOSURE
```

This opcode fetches two parameters:

- the number of instructions ahead that the VM needs to jump to (because what follows is the code of a closure being created, and it should *not* be executed, so the VM wull jump over it)
- the closure arity.

Examples:

```
(disassemble
 (lambda ()
   (lambda () "Hello")))
```

```
000:  CREATE-CLOSURE       4 0  ;; ==> 006
```

```
003:  CONSTANT            0
005:  RETURN
006:  RETURN
```

```
(disassemble
 (lambda ()
   (lambda (x) (* 2 x))))
```

```
000:  CREATE-CLOSURE      5 1  ;; ==> 007
003:  LOCAL-REF0
004:  IN-SINT-MUL2        2
006:  RETURN
007:  RETURN
```

```
(disassemble
 (lambda ()
   (define (g a b c) 10)
   g))
```

```
000:  PREPARE-CALL
001:  FALSE-PUSH
002:  ENTER-TAIL-LET      1
004:  CREATE-CLOSURE      4 3  ;; ==> 010
007:  SMALL-INT           10
009:  RETURN
010:  LOCAL-SET0
011:  LOCAL-REF0
012:  RETURN
```

10.2. Procedure calls

The following opcodes are used to make procedure calls:

```
PREPARE-CALL        ( PREP_CALL() in vm.c )
INVOKE
TAIL_INVOKE
GREF-INVOKE
GREF-TAIL-INVOKE
PUSH_GREF_INVOKE
PUSH_GREF_TAIL_INV
```

- `PREPARE-CALL` pushes an activation record on the stack.
- `INVOKE` opcodes call procedures – local or global; in tail position or not. The ones with the `PUSH_`

prefix also push an argument onto the stack.

These are handled in the VM as states in the state machine (they are labels used in the `CASE`s in `vm/.c`).

In `vm.c`, all these instructions end up sending the control to the `FUNCALL:` label, which will then check what to do depending on the type of call (`tc_instance`, `tc_closure`, `tc_next_method`, `tc_apply`, or some primitive, `tc_subr`…)

The peephole optimizer will combine `PUSH`, `GLOBAL-REF` `INVOKE` instructions, yielding combined instructions. The following is an excerpt from `peephole.stk` where these transformations are documented:

```
;; [GLOBAL-REF, PUSH] => GLOBAL-REF-PUSH
;; [PUSH GLOBAL-REF] => PUSH-GLOBAL-REF
;; [PUSH-GLOBAL-REF, INVOKE] => PUSH-GREF-INVOKE
;; [PUSH-GLOBAL-REF, TAIL-INVOKE] => PUSH-GREF-TAIL-INV
;; [PUSH, PREPARE-CALL] => PUSH-PREPARE-CALL
;; [GLOBAL-REF, INVOKE] => GREF-INVOKE
;; [GLOBAL-REF, INVOKE] => GREF-INVOKE
;; [GLOBAL-REF, TAIL-INVOKE] => GREF-TAIL-INVOKE
;; [LOCAL-REFx, PUSH] => LOCAL-REFx-PUSH
```

The arguments to the `INVOKE`-like instructions are:

- `INVOKE`: `n_args` (the procedure address is the first item on the stack, so it is not passed as argument in the code)
- `GREF-INVOKE`: `proc_addr`, `n_args`
- `PUSH-GREF-INVOKE`: `first_arg`, `proc_addr`, `n_args` (pushes the first and calls the procedure with `n_args` arguments form the stack

```
(disassemble (lambda () (f)))
```

```
000:  PREPARE-CALL
001:  GREF-TAIL-INVOKE     0 0
004:  RETURN
```

```
(disassemble (lambda () (f 3)))
```

```
000:  PREPARE-CALL
001:  INT-PUSH             3
003:  GREF-TAIL-INVOKE     0 1
006:  RETURN
```

In the next example, GREF-INVOKE is called with arguments 0 and 0. The **first** value 0 is the address of the procedure in the stack. The IN-SINT-ADD2 procedure is called afterwards to sum 3 with the return from f.

```
(disassemble (lambda () (+ 3 (f))))
```

```
000:  PREPARE-CALL
001:  GREF-INVOKE         0 0
004:  IN-SINT-ADD2        3
006:  RETURN
```

In the next example, GREF-INVOKE is called with arguments 0 and 2. The value 0 is the address of the procedure in the stack; 2 is the number of arguments given in this procedure call. The IN-SINT-ADD2 procedure is called afterwards to sum 5 with the return from f.

```
(disassemble
 (lambda (x)
   (+ 5 (f x #f))))
```

```
000:  PREPARE-CALL
001:  LOCAL-REF0-PUSH
002:  FALSE-PUSH
003:  GREF-INVOKE         0 2
006:  IN-SINT-ADD2        5
008:  RETURN
```

Now the next example shows how INVOKE is used to call a procedure that is non-global (it is in the local environment). The INVOKE instruction will use the first value on the stack as the address of the procedure (it's DEEP-LOCAL-REF 256, since f is defined inside the let). The other two arguments to be popped from the stack are #f (pushed by the FALSE-PUSH instruction) and the global variable y (pushed by the instruction GLOBAL-REF-PUSH 0). After INVOKE calls f, the instruction IN-SINT-ADD2 3 will sum 3 to the result.

```
(let ((f (lambda (x) x)))
  (disassemble
   (lambda ()
     (+ 3 (f y #f)))))
```

```
000:  PREPARE-CALL
001:  GLOBAL-REF-PUSH     0
003:  FALSE-PUSH
004:  DEEP-LOCAL-REF      256
006:  INVOKE              2
```

```
008:  IN-SINT-ADD2         3
010:  RETURN
```

Chapter 11. Modules

The following opcode enters a given module.

```
SET_CUR_MOD
```

An SCM object of type `module` must be in the `val` resgister.

Example:

```
(disassemble-expr '(select-module m) #t)
```

```
000:  PREPARE-CALL
001:  CONSTANT-PUSH        0
003:  GREF-INVOKE          1 1
006:  SET-CUR-MOD
007:

Constants:
0: m
1: find-module
```

In the above example, the constants were two symbols: `m` and `find-module`. The `find-module` procedure, which is called, will leave module `m` in the `val` register, which is then used by `SET_CUR_MOD`.

The following opcode defines a variable in a module.

```
DEFINE_SYMBOL
```

It will define a variable with name set as symbol fetched after the opcode, and value in the `val` register.

```
(disassemble-expr '(define a "abc") #t)
```

```
000:  CONSTANT             0
002:  DEFINE-SYMBOL        1
004:

Constants:
0: "abc"
1: a
```

```
(disassemble-expr '(define a #f) #t)
```

```
000:  IM-FALSE
001:  DEFINE-SYMBOL        0
003:

Constants:
0: a
```

There is an instruction for returning the value of a symbol in the `SCHEME` module.

```
(disassemble-expr '(%%in-scheme 'a) #t)

000:  CONSTANT             0
002:  INSCHEME
003:

Constants:
0: a
```

Chapter 12. `vm.c`

An important observation:

- `apply` : there **is** a `DEFINE_PRIMITIVE("apply", …)`, but it is **not** used. It is necessary just so there is a primitive of the type `tc_apply`. When the VM finds a primitive of this kind, it'll treat it differently.

Some basic functions in the VM:

- `push(v)`: pushes `v` on the stack (the stack pointer is decreased)
- `pop()`: pops a value from the stack (the stack pointer is increased)
- `fetch_next()` fetches the **next** opcode, increasing the PC
- `fetch_const()` fetches the **next** opcode and uses it as index for a constant
- `look_const()` looks at the **current** opcode and uses it as index for a constant
- `fetch_global()` fetches the **next** opcode and uses it as index for a global variable
- `add_global(ref)` adds `ref` to the list of global variables, and returns its index. If it was already there, the old index is returned. If it was not, a place is allocated for it, and the new index is returned.

Already covered before:

- `SCM STk_C_apply(SCM func, int nargs, …)`: applies `func`, with `nargs` arguments
- `SCM STk_C_apply_list(SCM func, SCM l)`: applies `func`, with a list of arguments
- `SCM STk_n_values(int n, …)`: prepares `n` values in the VM (for the next instruction), and returns a pointer to the `vm→val` register
- `SCM STk_values2vector(SCM obj, SCM vect)`: turns a `values` object into an array with the values

12.1. The global lock

There is one global mutex lock for STklos, called `global_code_lock`, declared in `vm.c`:

```
MUT_DECL(global_code_lock); /* Lock to permit code patching */
```

As per the comment, its purpose is to discipline access to the instructions of the running program. This lock is used when patching code for optimizing further global variables accesses (as explained before). This is necessary since STklos can use several threads. Note that each Scheme thread use its own VM, but the code and the global variables are shared among all the threads.

Three macros are used to control the global lock (a mutex):

- `LOCK_AND_RESTART` will acquire the lock, and decrease the program counter. It will also set a flag that signals to the running VM that the lock has been acquired by this thread, and then call `NEXT`. The name "AND_RESTART" reflects the fact that it decreases the PC and calls `NEXT` (for the next instruction) — so the effect is to start again operating on this instruction, but this time with the lock.

- RELEASE_LOCK will release the lock, regardless of the thread having it or not. The flag indicating ownership by this thread is cleared.
- RELEASE_POSSIBLE_LOCK will release the lock **if** this thread has it.

12.2. run_vm(vm_thread *vm)

After some initial setup, this function will operate as a state machine. Its basic structure is shown below.

The CASE symbol is defined differently, depending on the system, but CASE(x) semantically simialar to case x: (if computed GOTOs are better, then it's defined as a label instead — see its definition in vm.c).

```
for ( ; ; ) {

  byteop = fetch_next();   /* next instruction */

  switch (byteop) {

    CASE(NOP) { NEXT; }
    CASE(IM_FALSE)  { vm->val = STk_false;        NEXT1;}
    CASE(IM_TRUE)   { vm->val = STk_true;         NEXT1;}

    ...

    CASE(PUSH_GLOBAL_REF)
    CASE(GLOBAL_REF) {
      ...
    }

    ... (several cases here)

    FUNCALL:  /* we "goto" here for procedure invoking from
                 other places in the VM */
    {
      ...
    }
    STk_panic("abnormal exit from the VM"); /* went through the switch(byteop) */
  }
```

Chapter 13. Continuations

There are undocumented primitives in `vm.c` that can be used to capture and restore continuations. They are listed here with their undocumented Scheme counterparts:

- `STk_make_continuation()` — `(%make-continuation)`
- `STk_restore_cont(SCM cont, SCM value)` — `(%restore-continuation cont value)`
- `STk_continuationp(SCM obj)` — `(%continuation? obj)`
- `STk_fresh_continuationp(SCM obj)` — `(%fresh-continuation? obj)`

Continuation is a native type (`tc_continuation`). A continuation object (defined in `vm.h`) contains pointers to the C stack, the Scheme stack and several other data.

Capturing a continuation is carried out by the following steps (these are the actual comments in the function `STk_make_continuation`):

1. Determine the size of the C stack and the start address
2. Determine the size of the Scheme stack
3. Allocate a continuation object
4. Save the Scheme stack
5. Save the C stack

Restoring is easier:

1. Restore the Scheme stack
2. Restore the C stack

And, when the C stack is restored, the VM is back to its original state, except for the global variables.

Chapter 14. Verifying the VM configuration

The primitive `%vm-config` returns an association list describing the compile-time configuration of the VM. For example,

```
stklos> (%vm-config )
(#:computed-goto #t #:debug-vm #f #:stat-vm #t)
```

- `#:computed-goto`: was `vm.c` compiled using computed `goto`?
- `#:debug-vm`: does this STklos binary have debugging enabled?
- `#:stat-vm`: was the VM compiled with code for statistics-collecting?

Chapter 15. Collecting statistics

The code in `vm.c` can optionally be compiled to collect statistics. If the symbol `STAT_VM` is defined during compilation, then the statistics-collecting code will be enabled. You can enable it, for example, by configuring STklos as

```
./configure CFLAGS="-DSTAT_VM" ...
```

When the code has been compiled as this, the VM will, at the end of each iteration, check the instruction that was just executed and update:

- The number of times that this instruction was executed
- The number of times that this instruction was executed after the previous one (so it's possible to tell what pairs of instructions are more common)
- The time taken to execute this instruction

This is done in the `tick()` C function (which is compiled conditionally on `STAT_VM`):

```c
static void tick(STk_instr b, STk_instr *previous_op, clock_t *previous_time) {
  static clock_t current_time;
  current_time = clock();
  couple_instr[*previous_op][b]++;
  cpt_inst[b]++;
  *previous_op = b;

  if (*previous_time > 0)
      time_inst[b] += ((double)(current_time - *previous_time)) / CLOCKS_PER_SEC;
  *previous_time = clock();
}
```

Three Scheme primitives are then available:

- `(%vm-dump-stats fname format)` will dump the statistics to a file whose name is `fname`. The file will be opened using plain `fopen`. When the `format` argument is the keyword `:csv`, then the output is in CSV format; otherwise, there will be one single S-expression in the file, readable from Scheme. This S-expression is an alist, documented in the file itself (see below).
- `(%vm-reset-stats)` will reset all counters.
- `(%vm-collect-stats . val)` is a parameter object. When called without value, it returns if statistics are collected or not. If the value `val` is determined, then statistics
  - will start being collected, if `val` is `#t`;
  - will not be collected anymore if `val` is `#f`.

  ```
  Collecting statistics is off by default, especially because compiling STklos
  ```

```
is very slow with statistics gathering. It should be turned on before profiling.
```

The status of "collecting" or "not collecting" reflects what happens internaly in the statistics gathering code, **when it is compiled in**. If STklos was compiled without `STAT_VM`, then those procedures are just not available at all.

The documentation for the Scheme format for the dumped instructions is shown below.

```
;; STklos VM statistics. It can be read in Scheme, and it represents one single
;; object: an alist with the names of instructions, and each CDR is a list
;; containing:
;;
;; * count (the number of times this instruction was executed)
;; * time (the total time the program spent on this instruction)
;; * avg time (the average number of time spent on each execution of this
;;   instruction)
;; * an alist containing, for each OTHER instruction, the number of times they
;;   appeared together in the code.
;;
;; ( (INS1 count1 time1 avgtime1 ( (INS1 . count1) (INS2 . count2) ... (INSn  .
countn))
;;   (INS2 count2 time2 avgtime2 ( (INS1 . count1) (INS2 . count2) ... (INSn  .
countn))
;;   ...
;;   (INSn countn timen avgtimen ( (INS1 . count1) (INS2 . count2) ... (INSn  .
countn))) )
```

The C code for printing the instructions is in the functions `dump_couple_instr_csv` and `dump_couple_instr_scm`.

Note that the `%vm-config` can be used to determine if the system has been compiled with the profiling code. As said before, this primitive returns a property list and `#:stat-vm` can be used here.

To profile some specific code there is the `%with-profile-data` macro:

```
(%with-profile-data "file-name.csv" :csv
  (display 'a)
  (newline)
  (values 1 2 3))
```

This will expand to

```
(receive
  result-4
  (begin (%vm-reset-stats)
         (display 'a)
         (newline)
```

```
           (values 1 2 3))
           (begin (%vm-dump-stats "file-name.csv" #:csv)
                  (apply values result-4)))
```

So the macro will return the same values that the code would, and will profile only that part of the code.