

Temporary Read-Only Permissions for Separation Logic

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(talk delivered by **Armaël Guéneau**)



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Separation Logic: to own, or not to own

The setting is basic (sequential) Separation Logic.

Separation Logic is about **disjointness**, therefore about **unique ownership**.

A dichotomy arises:

*To every memory cell, array, or user-defined data structure,
either we have **no access at all**, or we have **full read-write access**.*

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either we have **no access at all**, or we have **full read-write access**.*

This is visible in the read and write axioms, which both need a **full permission**:

SET

$\{l \hookrightarrow v'\} (\text{set } l \ v) \{\lambda y. l \hookrightarrow v\}$

TRADITIONAL READ AXIOM

$\{l \hookrightarrow v\} (\text{get } l) \{\lambda y. [y = v] \star l \hookrightarrow v\}$

The problem

Suppose we are implementing an abstract data type of mutable sequences.

An abstract predicate $s \rightsquigarrow \text{Seq } L$ represents the **unique ownership** of a sequence.

Here is a typical specification of sequence concatenation:

$$\{s_1 \rightsquigarrow \text{Seq } L_1 \star s_2 \rightsquigarrow \text{Seq } L_2\}$$

(*append* s_1 s_2)

$$\{\lambda s_3. s_3 \rightsquigarrow \text{Seq}(L_1 ++ L_2) \star s_1 \rightsquigarrow \text{Seq } L_1 \star s_2 \rightsquigarrow \text{Seq } L_2\}$$

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Although correct, this style of specification can be criticized on several grounds:

- ▶ It is a bit **noisy**.
- ▶ It requires the permissions $s_1 \rightsquigarrow \text{Seq } L_1 \star s_2 \rightsquigarrow \text{Seq } L_2$ to be **threaded through the proof** of *append*.
- ▶ It actually **does not guarantee that s_1 and s_2 are unmodified** in memory.
- ▶ It requires s_1 and s_2 to be **distinct** data structures. — (next slide)

The problem, focus: sharing is not permitted

This specification requires s_1 and s_2 to be **distinct** (disjoint) data structures:

$$\{s_1 \rightsquigarrow \text{Seq } L_1 \star s_2 \rightsquigarrow \text{Seq } L_2\}$$

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$$\{\lambda s_3. s_3 \rightsquigarrow \text{Seq}(L_1 \uparrow L_2) \star s_1 \rightsquigarrow \text{Seq } L_1 \star s_2 \rightsquigarrow \text{Seq } L_2\}$$

(*append* s s) requires $s \rightsquigarrow \text{Seq } L \star s \rightsquigarrow \text{Seq } L$, which the client cannot produce.

To allow (*append* s s), we must establish **another specification**:

$$\{s \rightsquigarrow \text{Seq } L\}$$

(*append* s s)

$$\{\lambda s_3. s_3 \rightsquigarrow \text{Seq}(L \uparrow L) \star s \rightsquigarrow \text{Seq } L\}$$

Duplicate work and **increased complication** for us and for our clients.

Fractional permissions to the rescue...?

In (some) Concurrent SLs, sequence concatenation can be specified as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} & \forall \pi_1, \pi_2. \{ \pi_1 \cdot (s_1 \rightsquigarrow \text{Seq } L_1) \star \pi_2 \cdot (s_2 \rightsquigarrow \text{Seq } L_2) \} \\ & \quad (\text{appends } s_1 \ s_2) \\ & \quad \{ \lambda s_3. s_3 \rightsquigarrow \text{Seq } (L_1 \text{ ++ } L_2) \star \pi_1 \cdot (s_1 \rightsquigarrow \text{Seq } L_1) \star \pi_2 \cdot (s_2 \rightsquigarrow \text{Seq } L_2) \} \end{aligned}$$

We **scale** an assertion by a fraction: $\pi \cdot H$.

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We **scale** an assertion by a fraction: $\pi \cdot H$.

This addresses the main aspects of the problem,

- ▶ but is still **noisy**,
- ▶ might seem a bit frightening to non-experts,
- ▶ and still requires careful **splitting, threading, and joining** of permissions.
- ▶ “Hiding” fractions (Heule et al, 2013) adds another layer of sophistication.

In this paper

We propose a solution that is:

- ▶ **not as powerful** as fractional permissions (or other share algebras),
- ▶ but significantly **simpler**. (A design “sweet spot”?)

Our contributions:

- ▶ introducing a **read-only modality**, *const* (in the paper: “RO”).
const(H) gives **temporary** read-only access to the memory governed by *H*.
- ▶ finding **simple and sound reasoning rules** for *const*.
- ▶ proposing **a model** that justifies these rules.

Some Intuition

Reasoning Rules

Model

Conclusion

Our solution

We would like the specification of *append* to look like this:

$$\{const(s_1 \rightsquigarrow \text{Seq } L_1) \star const(s_2 \rightsquigarrow \text{Seq } L_2)\}$$
$$(append\ s_1\ s_2)$$
$$\{\lambda s_3. s_3 \rightsquigarrow \text{Seq } (L_1 \uparrow\uparrow L_2)\}$$

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Compared with the earlier specification based on unique read-write permissions,

- ▶ this specification is **more concise**,
- ▶ imposes **fewer proof obligations**,
- ▶ makes it clear that **the data structures cannot be modified** by *append*,
- ▶ and **does not require s_1 and s_2 to be distinct**. — (next slide)
- ▶ Furthermore, this spec **implies** both earlier specs. — (next slide)

The new spec subsumes both earlier specs

$\{\text{const}(s_1 \rightsquigarrow \text{Seq } L_1) \star \text{const}(s_2 \rightsquigarrow \text{Seq } L_2)\}$

$(\text{append } \mathbf{s}_1 \ \mathbf{s}_2)$

$\{\lambda s_3. s_3 \rightsquigarrow \text{Seq}(L_1 ++ L_2)\}$

new spec

The new spec subsumes both earlier specs

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new spec



earlier spec
(without sharing)

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(*appends* s_1 s_2)
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 $\star s_1 \rightsquigarrow \text{Seq } L_1 \star s_2 \rightsquigarrow \text{Seq } L_2\}$

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new spec

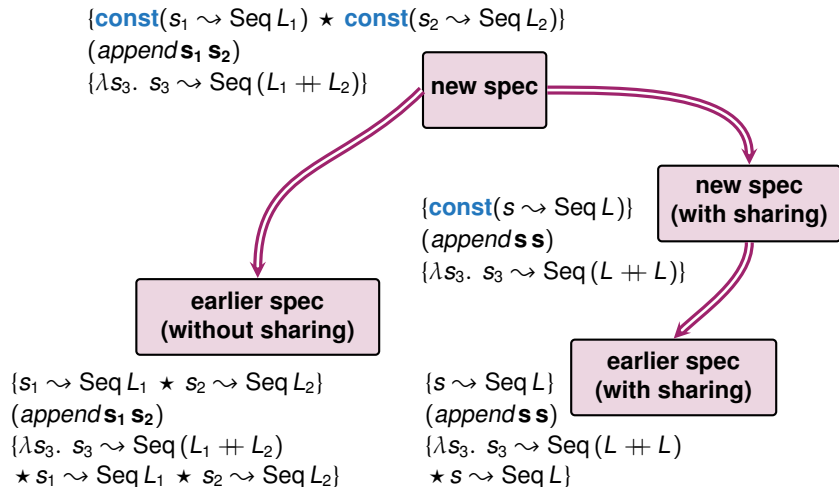
new spec
(with sharing)

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Assertions

The syntax of assertions is extended:

$$H ::= [P] \mid l \hookrightarrow v \mid H_1 \star H_2 \mid H_1 \wp H_2 \mid \exists x. H \mid \mathit{const}(H)$$

Read-only access to a data structure entails **read-only access to its parts**:

$$\mathit{const}(H_1 \star H_2) \Vdash \mathit{const}(H_1) \star \mathit{const}(H_2) \quad (\text{the reverse is false})$$

Read-only access can be **shared**:

$$\mathit{const}(H) = \mathit{const}(H) \star \mathit{const}(H)$$

(A few more axioms, not shown).

A new read axiom

The traditional read axiom:

TRADITIONAL READ AXIOM

$$\{l \hookrightarrow v\} (\text{get } l) \{\lambda y. [y = v] \star l \hookrightarrow v\}$$

is replaced with a “smaller” axiom:

NEW READ AXIOM

$$\{\text{const}(l \hookrightarrow v)\} (\text{get } l) \{\lambda y. [y = v]\}$$

The traditional axiom can be derived from the new axiom.

A new frame rule

The traditional frame rule is subsumed by a new “read-only frame rule”:

FRAME RULE

$$\frac{\{H\} t \{Q\} \quad \textit{normal}(H')}{\{H \star H'\} t \{Q \star H'\}}$$

READ-ONLY FRAME RULE

$$\frac{\{H \star \textit{const}(H')\} t \{Q\} \quad \textit{normal}(H')}{\{H \star H'\} t \{Q \star H'\}}$$

Upon entry into a code block, H' can be **temporarily replaced** with $\textit{const}(H')$, and upon exit, H' **magically re-appears**.

A new frame rule

The traditional frame rule is subsumed by a new “read-only frame rule”:

$$\begin{array}{c} \text{FRAME RULE} \\ \frac{\{H\} t \{Q\} \quad \textit{normal}(H')}{\{H \star H'\} t \{Q \star H'\}} \end{array} \qquad \begin{array}{c} \text{READ-ONLY FRAME RULE} \\ \frac{\{H \star \textit{const}(H')\} t \{Q\} \quad \textit{normal}(H')}{\{H \star H'\} t \{Q \star H'\}} \end{array}$$

Upon entry into a code block, H' can be **temporarily replaced** with $\textit{const}(H')$, and upon exit, H' **magically re-appears**.

The side condition $\textit{normal}(H')$ means roughly that H' has no \textit{const} components.

This means that **read-only permissions cannot be framed out**.

Not a problem, as they are always **passed down**, never returned.

They never appear in postconditions.

Some Intuition

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Interpretation of assertions

In a heap fragment, let every cell be colored **RW** or **RO**.

Let separating conjunction require:

- ▶ **disjointness** of the RW areas;
- ▶ **disjointness** of one side's RW area with the other side's RO area;
- ▶ **agreement** on the content of the heap where the RO areas overlap.

If an assertion H describes a certain set of heaps, then:

- ▶ Let $const(H)$ describe **the same heaps, colored entirely RO**.
- ▶ Let $normal(H)$ mean that every heap in H is colored entirely RW.

Interpretation of triples

The meaning of the Hoare triple $\{H\} t \{Q\}$ is a variant of the usual:

$$\forall h_1 h_2. \left\{ \begin{array}{l} h_1 + h_2 \text{ is defined} \\ H h_1 \end{array} \right\} \Rightarrow \exists v h'_1. \left\{ \begin{array}{l} h'_1 + h_2 \text{ is defined} \\ t / [h_1 + h_2] \Downarrow v / [h'_1 + h_2] \\ (Q \star \text{true}) \vee h'_1 \end{array} \right\}$$

Roughly, “If part of the heap satisfies H , then t runs safely and changes that part of the heap to satisfy Q , leaving the rest untouched.”

We make two changes:

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- ▶ Q describes **a purely RW part** of the final heap.

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Roughly, “If part of the heap satisfies H , then t runs safely and changes that part of the heap to satisfy Q , leaving the rest untouched.”

We make two changes:

- ▶ Q describes a **purely RW part** of the final heap.
- ▶ The RO part of the heap is **preserved**, even though Q says nothing about it.

Soundness

Theorem

With respect to this interpretation of triples, every reasoning rule is sound.

Proof.

“Straightforward”. Machine-checked.



Some Intuition

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What about concurrency?

Our proof is carried out in a **sequential** setting.

- ▶ The proof uses big-step operational semantics.

What about **structured concurrency**, i.e., parallel composition ($e_1 \parallel e_2$)?

- ▶ We believe that *const* permissions remain sound,
- ▶ but do not have a proof – a different proof technique is required.
- ▶ They allow read-only state to be shared between threads.

What about **unstructured concurrency**, i.e., threads and channels?

- ▶ One cannot allow *const* permissions to be sent along channels.
- ▶ More complex machinery is required: fractions, lifetimes, ...

Conclusion

We propose:

- ▶ a **simple extension** of Separation Logic with a read-only modality;
- ▶ a **simple model** that explains why this is sound.

A possible design sweet spot?

- ▶ not so easy to find, worth knowing about;
- ▶ applicable to PL design? (e.g., adding *const* to Mezzo)

Applications:

- ▶ more **concise**, more **accurate**, more **general** specifications;
- ▶ **simpler** proofs.

Pending implementation in CFML (Charguéraud).

Temporary modifications are not forbidden

Repeating “ $s \rightsquigarrow \text{Seq } L$ ” in the pre- and postcondition can be deceiving.

This does **not** forbid changes to the **concrete** data structure in memory.

Here is a function that really just reads the data structure:

$$\{s \rightsquigarrow \text{Seq } L\} (\text{length } s) \{\lambda y. s \rightsquigarrow \text{Seq } L \star [y = |L|]\}$$

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And a function that actually modifies the data structure:

$$\{s \rightsquigarrow \text{Seq } L \star [|L| \leq n]\} (\text{resize } s \ n) \{\lambda(). s \rightsquigarrow \text{Seq } L\}$$

Amnesia (1/2)

Suppose *population* has this specification:

$$\{\text{const}(h \rightsquigarrow \text{HashTable } M)\} (\text{population } h) \{\lambda y. [y = \text{card } M]\}$$

Suppose a hash table is a mutable record whose *data* field points to an array:

$$\begin{aligned} h \rightsquigarrow \text{HashTable } M &:= \\ &\exists! a. \exists! L. (h \rightsquigarrow \{\text{data} = a; \dots\} \star a \rightsquigarrow \text{Array } L \star \dots) \end{aligned}$$

Suppose there is an operation *foo* on hash tables:

```
let foo h =  
  let d = h.data in           – read the address of the array  
  let p = population h in    – call population  
  ...
```

If “const” is sugar for repeating $h \rightsquigarrow \text{HashTable } M$ in the pre and post, then the proof of *foo* runs into a problem...

Amnesia (2/2)

Reasoning about *foo* might go like this:

```
1 let foo h =
2   {h ~ HashTable M}                                – foo's precondition
3   {h ~ {data = a; ...} ★ a ~ Array L ★ ...}        – by unfolding
4   let d = h.data in
5   {h ~ {data = a; ...} ★ a ~ Array L ★ ... ★ [d = a]} – by reading
6   {h ~ HashTable M ★ [d = a]}                     – by folding
7   let p = population h in                          – we have to fold
8   {h ~ HashTable M ★ [d = a] ★ [p = #M]}
9   ...
```

At line 8, the equation $d = a$ is useless.

We have **forgotten** what d represents, and **lost the benefit** of the read at line 4.

If “const” is sugar, the specification of *population* is **weaker** than it seems.

If “const” is native, there is a way around this problem. (Details omitted.)

Our solution, facet 4: sharing is permitted

The top Hoare triple is the new spec of *append*, where s_1 and s_2 are instantiated with s .

$$\frac{\begin{array}{l} \{ \text{const}(s \rightsquigarrow \text{Seq } L) \star \text{const}(s \rightsquigarrow \text{Seq } L) \} \\ (\text{append } s \ s) \\ \{ \lambda s_3. s_3 \rightsquigarrow \text{Seq}(L \ ++ \ L) \} \end{array}}{\begin{array}{l} \{ \text{const}(s \rightsquigarrow \text{Seq } L) \} \\ (\text{append } s \ s) \\ \{ \lambda s_3. s_3 \rightsquigarrow \text{Seq}(L \ ++ \ L) \} \end{array}} \text{CONSEQUENCE}$$

The bottom triple states that, with read-only access to s , *append* $s \ s$ is **permitted**.

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**read-only
permissions are
duplicable**

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The bottom triple states that, with read-only access to s , *append* $s \ s$ is **permitted**.

Our solution, facet 5: the earlier specification can be derived

The Hoare triple at the top is the new spec of *append*.

$$\frac{\begin{array}{l} \{ \text{const}(s_1 \rightsquigarrow \text{Seq } L_1) \star \text{const}(s_2 \rightsquigarrow \text{Seq } L_2) \} \\ (\text{append } s_1 \ s_2) \\ \{ \lambda s_3. s_3 \rightsquigarrow \text{Seq}(L_1 \ ++ \ L_2) \} \end{array}}{\text{CONSEQUENCE}} \quad \frac{\begin{array}{l} \{ \text{const}(s_1 \rightsquigarrow \text{Seq } L_1 \ \star \ s_2 \rightsquigarrow \text{Seq } L_2) \} \\ (\text{append } s_1 \ s_2) \\ \{ \lambda s_3. s_3 \rightsquigarrow \text{Seq}(L_1 \ ++ \ L_2) \} \end{array}}{\text{READ-ONLY FRAME}} \quad \begin{array}{l} \{ s_1 \rightsquigarrow \text{Seq } L_1 \ \star \ s_2 \rightsquigarrow \text{Seq } L_2 \} \\ (\text{append } s_1 \ s_2) \\ \{ \lambda s_3. s_3 \rightsquigarrow \text{Seq}(L_1 \ ++ \ L_2) \ \star \ s_1 \rightsquigarrow \text{Seq } L_1 \ \star \ s_2 \rightsquigarrow \text{Seq } L_2 \} \end{array}$$

The triple at the bottom is the earlier spec of *append*.

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permission
becomes
read-only

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read-only
permission
is split

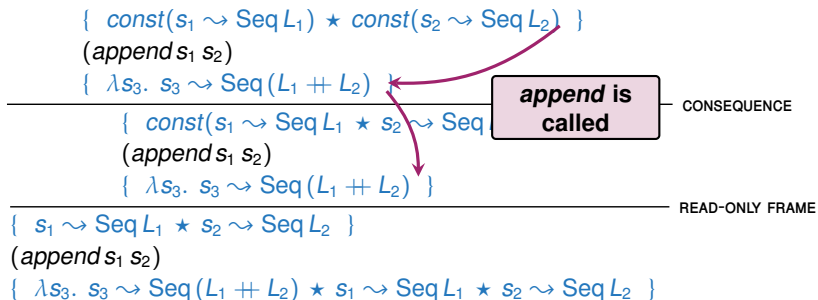
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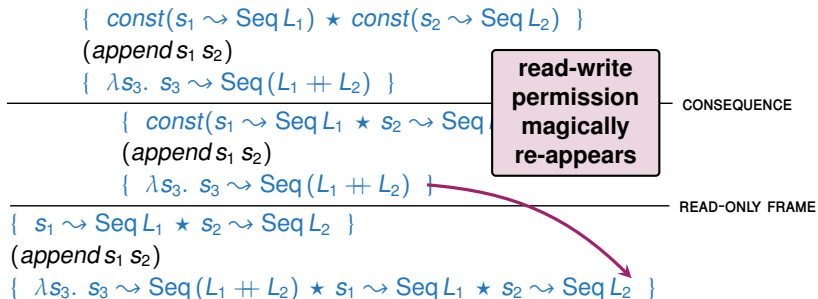
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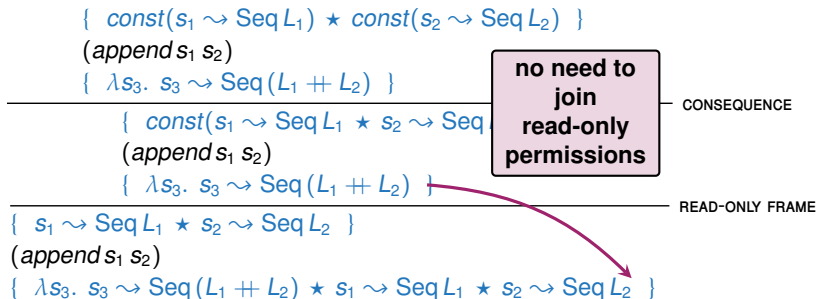
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Assertions

The syntax of assertions is extended:

$$H \quad := \quad [P] \mid l \hookrightarrow v \mid H_1 \star H_2 \mid H_1 \wp H_2 \mid \exists x. H \mid \text{const}(H)$$

Read-only access to a data structure entails read-only access to its parts:

$$\text{const}(H_1 \star H_2) \Vdash \text{const}(H_1) \star \text{const}(H_2) \quad (\text{the reverse is false})$$

Read-only permissions are duplicable (therefore, no need to count them!):

$$\text{const}(H) = \text{const}(H) \star \text{const}(H)$$

Read-only permissions are generally well-behaved:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{const}([P]) &= [P] \\ \text{const}(H_1 \wp H_2) &= \text{const}(H_1) \wp \text{const}(H_2) \\ \text{const}(\exists x. H) &= \exists x. \text{const}(H) \\ \text{const}(\text{const}(H)) &= \text{const}(H) \\ \text{const}(H) \Vdash \text{const}(H') &\quad \text{if } H \Vdash H' \end{aligned}$$

Reasoning rules (structural)

READ-ONLY FRAME RULE

$$\frac{\{H \star \text{const}(H')\} t \{Q\} \quad \text{normal}(H')}{\{H \star H'\} t \{Q \star H'\}}$$

CONSEQUENCE

$$\frac{H \Vdash H' \quad \{H'\} t \{Q'\} \quad Q' \Vdash Q}{\{H\} t \{Q\}}$$

DISCARD-PRE

$$\frac{\{H\} t \{Q\}}{\{H \star \text{GC}\} t \{Q\}}$$

DISCARD-POST

$$\frac{\{H\} t \{Q \star \text{GC}\}}{\{H\} t \{Q\}}$$

EXTRACT-PROP

$$\frac{P \Rightarrow \{H\} t \{Q\}}{\{\{P\} \star H\} t \{Q\}}$$

EXTRACT-OR

$$\frac{\{H_1\} t \{Q\} \quad \{H_2\} t \{Q\}}{\{H_1 \vee H_2\} t \{Q\}}$$

EXTRACT-EXISTS

$$\frac{\forall x. \{H\} t \{Q\}}{\{\exists x. H\} t \{Q\}}$$

Reasoning rules (syntax-directed)

$$\text{VAL} \\ \frac{}{\{\llbracket \cdot \rrbracket\} v \{ \lambda y. [y = v] \}}$$

FRAMED SEQUENCING RULE (LET)

$$\frac{\{H\} t_1 \{Q'\} \quad \forall x. \{Q' x \star H'\} t_2 \{Q\}}{\{H \star H'\} (\text{let } x = t_1 \text{ in } t_2) \{Q\}}$$

REF

$$\{\llbracket \cdot \rrbracket\} (\text{ref } v) \{ \lambda y. \exists l. [y = l] \star l \hookrightarrow v \}$$

SET

$$\{l \hookrightarrow v'\} (\text{set } l \ v) \{ \lambda y. l \hookrightarrow v \}$$

IF

$$\frac{\begin{array}{l} n \neq 0 \Rightarrow \{H\} t_1 \{Q\} \\ n = 0 \Rightarrow \{H\} t_2 \{Q\} \end{array}}{\{H\} (\text{if } n \text{ then } t_1 \text{ else } t_2) \{Q\}}$$

APP

$$\frac{v_1 = \mu f. \lambda x. t \quad \{H\} ([v_1/f] [v_2/x] t) \{Q\}}{\{H\} (v_1 \ v_2) \{Q\}}$$

NEW READ AXIOM (GET)

$$\{\text{const}(l \hookrightarrow v)\} (\text{get } l) \{ \lambda y. [y = v] \}$$

Memories & heaps – a simple model of access rights

A **memory** is a finite map of locations to values.

A **heap** h is a pair of two **disjoint** memories $h.f$ and $h.r$.

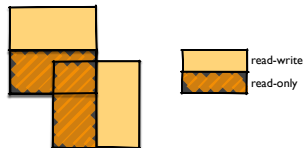
- ▶ $h.f$ represents the locations to which we have **full access**;
- ▶ $h.r$ represents the locations to which we have **read-only access**.

An **assertion**, or **permission**, is a predicate over heaps (or: a set of heaps).

Heap composition & separating conjunction

The combination of two heaps:

$$h_1 + h_2 = (h_1.f \uplus h_2.f, h_1.r \cup h_2.r)$$

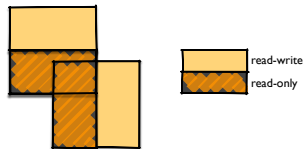


is defined only if:

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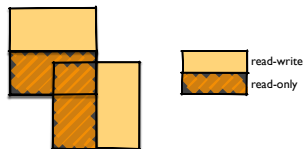
is defined only if:

- ▶ the read-write components $h_1.f$ and $h_2.f$ are **disjoint**;

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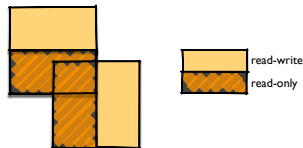
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- ▶ the read-only components $h_1.r$ and $h_2.r$ **agree** where they overlap;

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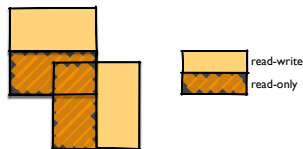
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- ▶ the read-write component $h_1.f$ is **disjoint** with the read-only component $h_2.r$, and vice-versa.

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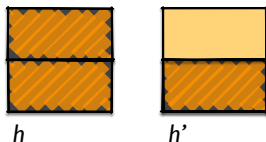
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With this in mind, **separating conjunction** is interpreted as usual:

$$H_1 \star H_2 = \lambda h. \exists h_1 h_2. (h_1 + h_2 \text{ is defined}) \wedge h = h_1 + h_2 \wedge H_1 h_1 \wedge H_2 h_2$$

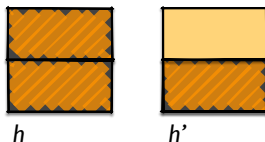
The read-only modality



$const(H)$ is interpreted as follows:

$$const(H) = \lambda h. (h.f = \emptyset) \wedge \exists h'. (h.r = h'.f \uplus h'.r) \wedge H h'$$

The read-only modality



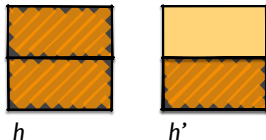
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This means:

- ▶ we have write access to **nothing**.

The read-only modality



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This means:

- ▶ we have write access to **nothing**.
- ▶ **if we had write access** to certain locations for which we have read access, **then** H would hold.

The rest of the connectives

$$[P] = \lambda h. (h.f = \emptyset) \wedge (h.r = \emptyset) \wedge P$$

$$l \leftrightarrow v = \lambda h. (h.f = (l \mapsto v)) \wedge (h.r = \emptyset)$$

$$H_1 \wp H_2 = \lambda h. H_1 h \vee H_2 h$$

$$\exists x. H = \lambda h. \exists x. H h$$

$$\text{normal}(H) = \forall h. H h \Rightarrow h.r = \emptyset$$

Interpretation of triples


The meaning of the Hoare triple $\{H\} t \{Q\}$ is as follows:

$$\forall h_1 h_2. \left\{ \begin{array}{l} h_1 + h_2 \text{ is defined} \\ H h_1 \end{array} \right\} \Rightarrow \exists v h'_1. \left\{ \begin{array}{l} h'_1 + h_2 \text{ is defined} \\ t / [h_1 + h_2] \Downarrow v / [h'_1 + h_2] \\ h'_1.r = h_1.r \\ \text{on-some-rw-frag}(Q v) h'_1 \end{array} \right\}$$

What's nonstandard?

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- ▶ The read-only part of the heap must be **preserved**.

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What's nonstandard?

- ▶ The read-only part of the heap must be **preserved**.
- ▶ The postcondition describes only **a read-write fragment of the final heap**.

$$\begin{aligned} \text{on-some-rw-frag}(H) = \\ \lambda h. \exists h_1 h_2. (h_1 + h_2 \text{ is defined}) \wedge h = h_1 + h_2 \wedge h_1.r = \emptyset \wedge H h_1 \end{aligned}$$