A furtive fumble in Hard-Core Obscenity: the misuse of Template Meta-Programming to implement micro-optimisations in HFT.

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Outline

HFT & Low-Latency: Issues

- HFT & low-latency are performance-critical, obviously:
  - provides edge in the market over competition, faster is better.
- Is not rocket-science:
  - Not safety-critical: it's not aeroplanes, rockets nor reactors!
  - Perverse: to be truly fast is to do nothing!
  - It is message passing, copying bytes
    - perhaps with validation, aka risk-checks.
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  - of the hardware & software that interacts with it intimately.
- Apologies if you know this already!

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C++ is THE Answer!

- Like its predecessor C, C++ can be very low-level:
  - Enables the intimacy required between software & hardware.
  - Assembly output tuned directly from C++ statements.
- Yet C++ is high-level: complex abstractions readily modeled.
- Has increasingly capable libraries:
  - E.g. Boost.
  - Especially C++11, 14 & up-coming 17 standards.
- I shall ignore other languages, e.g. D, Functional-Java, etc.
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Oh no, C++ is NOT just the answer!

- There is more to low-latency than just C++:
  - Hardware needs to be considered:
    - multiple-processors (one for O/S, one for the gateway),
    - bus per processor; cores dedicated to tasks,
    - network infrastructure (including co-location), etc.
  - Software issues confound:
    - which O/S, not all distributions are equal,
    - tool-set support is necessary for rapid development,
    - configuration needed: c-groups/isolcpu, performance tuning.
- Not all compilers, or even versions, are equal...
  - Which is faster clang, g++, icc?
    - Focus: g++ C++11 & 14, some results for clang v3.8 & icc.

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Optimization Case Studies.

- Despite the above, we choose to use C++,
  - which we will need to optimize.
- Optimizing C++ is not trivial, some examples shall be provided [1]:
  - Performance quirks in compiler versions.
  - Static branch-prediction: use and abuse.
  - Switch-statements: can these be optimized?
  - Counting the number of set bits.
  - Extreme templating: the case of `memcpy()`.

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Performance quirks in compiler versions.

- Compilers normally improve with versions, don't they?

Example code, using `-O3 -march=native`:

```
#include <string.h>
const char src[20]="0123456789ABCDEFGHI";
char dest[20];
void foo() {
    memcpy(dest, src, sizeof(src));
}
```

Comparison of code generation in g++.

v4.4.7:

```
foo():
    movabsq $3978425819141910832, %rdx
    movabsq $5063528411713059128, %rax
    movl $4802631, dest+16(%rip)
    movq %rdx, dest(%rip)
    movq %rax, dest+8(%rip)
    ret
dest:  .zero 20
```

v4.7.3:

```
foo():
    movq src(%rip), %rax
    movq %rax, dest(%rip)
    movq src+8(%rip), %rax
    movq %rax, dest+8(%rip)
    movl src+16(%rip), %eax
    movl %eax, dest+16(%rip)
    ret
dest:
    .zero 20
src:
    .string "0123456789ABCDEFGHI"
```

- g++ v4.4.7 schedules the movabsq sub-optimally.
- g++ v4.7.3 does not use any sse intructions, and uses the stack, so is sub-optimal.

Comparison of code generation in g++.

v4.8.1 - v5.3.0:

```
foo():
    movabsq $3978425819141910832, %rax
    movl $4802631, dest+16(%rip)
    movq %rax, dest(%rip)
    movabsq $5063528411713059128, %rax
    movq %rax,dest+8(%rip)
    ret
dest:   .zero 20
```

- Notice how the instructions are better scheduled in the newer version, with no use of the stack.

Comparison of code generation in icc & clang.

icc v13.0.1:

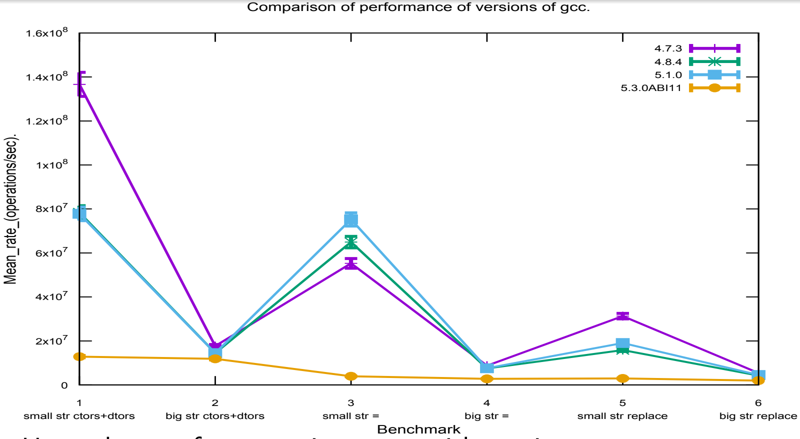
```
foo():
movaps src(%rip), %xmm0 #8.3
movaps %xmm0, dest(%rip) #8.3
movl 16+src(%rip), %eax #8.3
movl %eax, 16+dest(%rip) #8.3
ret #9.1
dest:
src:
.byte 48
XXXsnipXXX
.byte 73
.byte 0
```

clang 3.5.0 & 3.8.0:

```
foo():  # @foo()
    movaps src(%rip), %xmm0
    movaps %xmm0, dest(%rip)
    movl $4802631, dest+16(%rip) # imm=0x494847
    retq
dest:
    .zero 20
src:
    .asciz "0123456789ABCDEFGHI"
```

- Notice fewer instructions, but use of the stack - increases pressure on the cache, and the necessary memory-loads.

Does this matter in reality?



- Hope that performance improves with version...
  - This is not always so: there can be significant differences!

Static branch-prediction: use and abuse.

- Which comes first? The `if() bar1()` or the `else bar2()`?
- Intel [2], ARM [4] & AMD differ: older architectures use BTFNT rule [3, 5].
  - Backward-Taken: for loops that jump backwards. (Not discussed in this talk.)
  - Forward-Not-Taken: for `if-then-else`.
  - Intel added the 0x2e & 0x3e prefixes, but no longer used.
  - But super-scalar architectures still suffer costs of mis-prediction & research into predictors is on-going and highly proprietary.
- `__builtin_expect()` was introduced that emitted these prefixes, now just used to guide the compiler.
- The fall-through should be `bar1()`, not `bar2()`!

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So how well do compilers obey the BTFNT rule?

The following code was examined with various compilers:

```
extern void bar1();
extern void bar2();
void foo(bool i) {
    if (i) bar1();
    else bar2();
}
```

Generated Assembler using g++ v4.8.2, v4.9.0, v5.1.0 & v5.3.0

At -O0 & -O1:

```
foo(bool):
    subq $8, %rsp
    testb %dil, %dil
    je .L2
    call bar1()
    jmp .L1
.L2:
    call bar2()
.L1:
    addq $8, %rsp
    ret
```

At -O2 & -O3:

```
foo(bool):
    testb %dil, %dil
    jne .L4
    jmp bar2()
.L4:
    jmp bar1()
```

- ***Oh no!*** g++ switches the fall-through, so one can't ***consistently*** statically optimize branches in g++...[6]

Generated Assembler using ICC v13.0.1 & CLANG v3.8.0

ICC at -O2 & -O3:

```
foo(bool):
    testb %dil, %dil #5.7
    je ..B1.3 # Prob 50% #5.7
    jmp bar1()    #6.2
..B1.3:    # Preds
..B1.1
    jmp bar2()
```

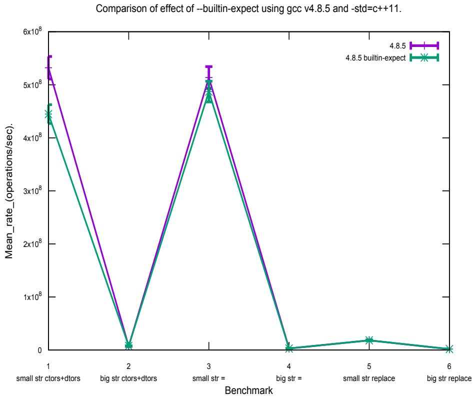
CLANG at -O1, -O2 & -O3:

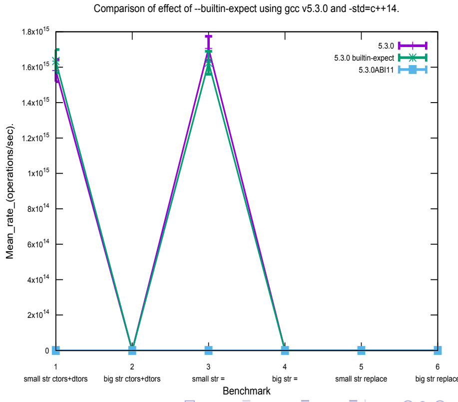
```
foo(bool):    # @foo(bool)
    testb %dil, %dil
    je .LBB0_2
    jmp bar1()    # TAILCALL
.LBB0_2:
    jmp bar2()    # TAILCALL
```

- Lower optimization levels still order the calls to `bar[1|2]()` in the same manner, but the code is unoptimized.
- ***BUT at -O2 & -O3 g++ reverses the order of the calls compared to clang & icc!!!***
    - ***Impossible to optimize for g++ and other compilers!***

Use `__builtin_expect(i, 1)` in g++ for consistency.

- BUT: Adding `__builtin_expect(i, 1)` to the dtor of a stack-based string caused a slowdown in g++ v4.8.5!





Does a `switch`-statement have a preferential case-label?

- Common lore seems to indicate that either the first case-label or the `default` are somehow the statically predicted fall-through.
- For non-contiguous labels in clang, g++ & icc this is not so.
  - g++ uses a decision-tree algorithm[7], basically case labels are clustered numerically, and the correct label is found using a binary-search.
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What does this look like?

Example of simple non-contiguous labels.

```
extern bool bar1();
extern bool bar2();
extern bool bar3();
extern bool bar4();
extern bool bar5();
extern bool bar6();
bool foo(int i) {
    switch (i) {
        case 0:  return bar1();
        case 30:  return bar2();
        case 9:  return bar3();
        case 787:  return bar4();
        case 57689:  return bar5();
        default:  return bar6();
    }
}
```

- Contiguous labels cause a jump-table to be created.

g++ v5.3.0 -O3 generated code.

Without __builtin_expect():

```
foo(int):
    cmpl $30, %edi
    je .L3
    jg .L4
    testl %edi, %edi
    je .L5
    cmpl $9, %edi
    jne .L2
    jmp bar3()
.L4:
    cmpl $787, %edi
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- Identical - it has no effect; icc & clang are likewise unmodified.

An obvious hack:

- One has to hoist the statically-predicted label out in an `if`-statement, and place the switch in the `else`.
  - Modulo what we now know about static branch prediction...Surely compilers simply "get this right"?

Compare various Implementations and their Performance using -O3 -std=c++14.

- A perennial favourite of interviews! Sooooo tedious...
- The obvious implementation:

The while-loop implementation:

```
constexpr inline __attribute__((const))
unsigned long
result() noexcept(true) {
    const uint64_t num=843678937893;
    unsigned long count=0;
    do {
        if (LIKELY(num&1)) {
            ++count;
        }
    } while (num>>=1);
    return count;
}
```

Assembler:

```
    movabsq $843678937893, %rax
.L2:
    movq %rax, %rsi
    shrq %rax
    andl $1, %esi
    addq %rsi, %rcx
    subl $1, %edx
    jne .L2
    movq %rcx, k(%rip)
    xorl %eax, %eax
    ret
```

Part 1: Now using templates to unroll the loop.

The template implementation:

```
template<uint8_t Val, class BitSet>
struct unroller : unroller<Val-1, BitSet>;
XXXsnipXXX
template<class T, T... args> struct
array_t;
XXXsnipXXX
template<unsigned long long Val>
struct shifter;
template<unsigned long long Val,
template<unsigned long long> class Fn,
unsigned long long... bitmasks>
struct gen_bitmasks;
XXXsnipXXX
struct count_setbits {
XXXsnipXXX
    constexpr static element_type
    result() noexcept(true) {
    unsigned long num=843678937893;
    return unroller_t::result(num);
    }
};
```

Assembler:

```
    movq $22, k(%rip)
    xorl %eax, %eax
    ret
```

- Outrageous templating has enabled constexpr!

Part 2: Now using assembly.

The asm POPCNT implementation; -mpopcnt:

```
#include <stdint.h>
inline uint64_t result() noexcept(true) {
    const uint64_t num=843678937893;
    uint64_t count=0;
    __asm__ volatile (
        "POPCNT %1, %0;"
        :"=r"(count)
        :"r"(num)
        :
    );
    return count;
}
```

Assembler:

```
movabsq $843678937893, %rax
POPCNT %rax, %rax;
xorl %eax, %eax
ret
```

- Contrary to popular belief: inlining happens, despite the `__asm__` block.
- Result has to be dynamically computed.

Part 2: Now using builtins.

The `__buiilin_popcountll` implementation; `-mpopcnt`:

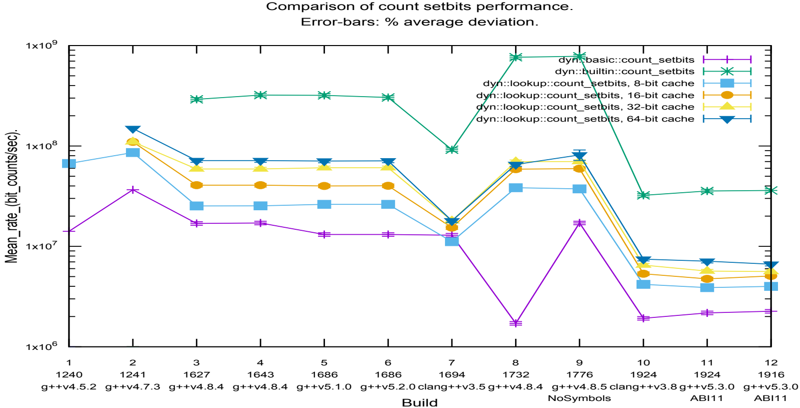
```
#include <stdint.h>
constexpr inline __attribute__((const))
inline uint64_t result(uint64_t num)
noexcept(true) {
    const uint64_t num=843678937893;
    return __builtin_popcountll(num);
}
```

Assembler:

```
    movq $22, k(%rip)
    xorl %eax, %eax
    ret
```

- Note how the builtin enables the result to be computed at compile-time, without that template malarky.
- But requires a suitable ISA.

Does this matter in reality?



- Very variable performance: the latest g++ (v5.1.0 & v5.3.0, with kernels v4.1.15 & v4.4.6) is a disaster!

Counting set bits: conclusion.

- Know thine architecture:
  - Without the right tools for the job, one has to work very hard with complex templates.
  - With the right architecture, and compiler, much more simple code can use builtins.
- One can use assembler, and it will be fast.
  - But not as fast as builtins as compilers can replace code with constants!
- Review your code when updating hardware & compiler.

The Curious Case of `memcpy()` and SSE.

Examined with various compilers with -O3 -std=c++14.

```
__attribute__((aligned(256))) const char s[]=
   "And for something completely different.";
char d[sizeof(s)];
void bar1() {
   std::memcpy(d, s, sizeof(s));
}
```

- Because copying is VERY common.
- Surely compilers simply "get this right"?

Assembly output from g++ v4.9.0-5.3.0.

-mavx has no effect.

```
bar1():
   movabsq $2338053640979508801, %rax
   movq %rax, d(%rip)
   movabsq $7956005065853857651, %rax
   movq %rax, d+8(%rip)
   movabsq $7308339910637985895, %rax
   movq %rax, d+16(%rip)
   movabsq $7379539555062146420, %rax
   movq %rax, d+24(%rip)
   movabsq $1307586642591063O, %rax
   movq %rax, d+32(%rip)
   ret
d:
   .zero 40
```

- Surely use SSE? All other options had no effect.

Assembly output from clang v3.5.0-3.8.0.

No -mavx.

```
bar1():   # @bar1()
    movabsq $13075866425910630, %rax
    movq %rax, d+32(%rip)
    movaps s+16(%rip), %xmm0
    movaps %xmm0, d+16(%rip)
    movaps s(%rip), %xmm0
    movaps %xmm0, d(%rip)
    retq
d:
    .zero 40
s:
    .asciz "And for something completely
different."
```

With -mavx.

```
bar1():   # @bar1()
    vmovaps s(%rip), %ymm0
    vextractf128 $1, %ymm0, d+16(%rip)
    movabsq $13075866425910630, %rax
    movq %rax, d+32(%rip)
    vmovaps %xmm0, d(%rip)
    vzeroupper
    retq
d:
    .zero 40
s:
    .asciz "And for something completely
different."
```

- Note how the SSE registers are now used, unlike g++, although same number of instructions.

Assembly output from icc v13.0.1 -std=c++11.

No -mavx.

```
bar1():
    movaps s(%rip), %xmm0 #205.3
    movaps %xmm0, d(%rip) #205.3
    movaps 16+s(%rip), %xmm1 #205.3
    movaps %xmm1, 16+d(%rip) #205.3
    movq 32+s(%rip), %rax #205.3
    movq %rax, 32+d(%rip) #205.3
    ret #206.1
d:
s:
    .byte 65
    ...
    .byte 0
```

With -mavx.

```
bar1():
    vmovups 16+s(%rip), %xmm0 #205.3
    vmovups %xmm0, 16+d(%rip) #205.3
    movq 32+s(%rip), %rax #205.3
    movq %rax, 32+d(%rip) #205.3
    vmovups s(%rip), %xmm1 #205.3
    vmovups %xmm1, d(%rip) #205.3
    ret #206.1
d:
s:
    .byte 65
    ...
    .byte 0
```

- Like clang, the SSE registers are used, but a totally different schedule.

Let's go Mad...

- Can ***blatant*** templating make an even faster `memcpy()`?

Examined with various compilers with -O3 -std=c++14 -mavx.

```
template<
    std::size_t SrcSz, std::size_t DestSz, class Unit,
    std::size_t SmallestBuff=min<std::size_t, SrcSz, DestSz>::value,
    std::size_t Div=SmallestBuff/sizeof(Unit), std::size_t Rem=SmallestBuff%sizeof(Unit)
> struct aligned_unroller {
    // ...  An awful lot of template insanity.  Omitted to avoid being arrested.
};
template< std::size_t SrcSz, std::size_t DestSz > inline void constexpr
memcpy_opt(char const (&src)[SrcSz], char (&dest)[DestSz]) noexcept(true) {
    using unrolled_256_op_t=private_::aligned_unroller< SrcSz, DestSz, __m256i >;
    using unrolled_128_op_t=private_::aligned_unroller< SrcSz-unrolled_256_op_t::end,
DestSz-unrolled_256_op_t::end, __m128i >;
    // XXXsnipXXX
    // Unroll the copy in the hope that the compiler will notice the sequence of copies and
optimize it.
    unrolled_256_op_t::result(
        [&src, &dest](std::size_t i) {
            reinterpret_cast<__m256i*>(dest)[i]= reinterpret_cast<__m256i const *>(src)[i];
        }
    );
    // XXXsnipXXX
}
```

Assembly output from g++.

v4.9.0.

```
bar():
    movq s+32(%rip), %rax
    vmovdqa s(%rip), %ymm0
    vmovdqa %ymm0, d(%rip)
    movq %rax, d+32(%rip)
    vzeroupper
    ret
s:
    .string "And for something completely
different."
d:
    .zero 40
```

v5.1.0-5.3.0.

```
bar():
    pushq %rbp
    vmovdqa .LC1(%rip), %ymm0
    movabsq $13075866425910630, %rax
    movq %rax, d+32(%rip)
    movq %rsp, %rbp
    pushq %r10
    vmovdqa %ymm0, d(%rip)
    vzeroupper
    popq %r10
    popq %rbp
    ret
d:
    .zero 40
.LC1:
    .quad 2338053640979508801
    .quad 7956005065853857651
    .quad 7308339910637985895
    .quad 7379539555062146420
```

- v4.9.0 is excellent, but 5.3.0 went mad!!!

Assembly output from clang & icc.

clang v3.8.0.

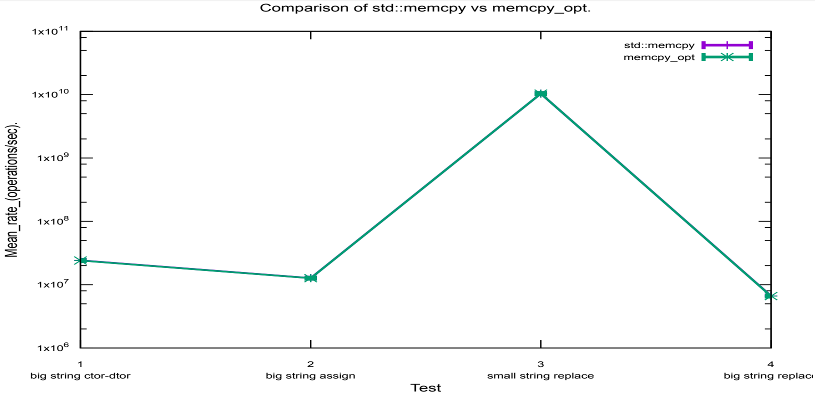
```
.LCPI1_0:
    .quad 2338053640979508801
    .quad 7956005065853857651
    .quad 7308339910637985895
    .quad 7379539555062146420
bar():  # @bar()
    vmovaps .LCPI1_0(%rip), %ymm0
    vmovaps %ymm0, d(%rip)
    movabsq $13075866425910630, %rax
    movq %rax, d+32(%rip)
    vzeroupper
    retq
d:
    .zero 40
```

icc v13.0.1.

```
bar():
    movl $s, %eax #198.14
    movl $d, %ecx #198.17
    vmovdqu (%rax), %ymm0 #154.44
    vmovdqu %ymm0, (%rcx) #153.37
    movq 32(%rax), %rdx #166.44
    movq %rdx, 32(%rcx) #165.37
    vzeroupper #199.1
    ret #199.1
d:
s:
    .byte 65
    ...
    .byte 0
```

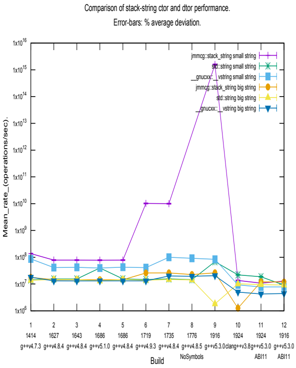
- Judicious use of micro-optimized templates can provide a performance enhancement.

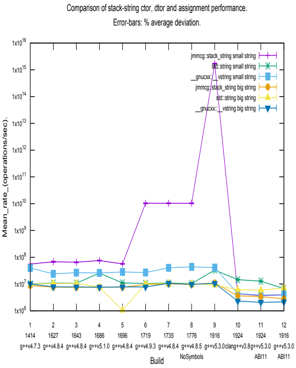
Again, does this matter?

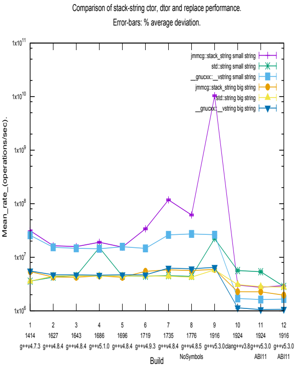


- No statistical difference, but g++ code-gen was indifferent:
  - Excellent optimizations confounded by choice of compiler.
  - Tried clang v3.5.0, but does not compile - not all are equal.

The impact of compiler version on performance.







- Warning! Different y-scales.

The Situation is so Complex...

- One must profile, profile and profile again - takes a lot of time.
  - Time the critical code; experiment with removing parts.
  - Unit tests vital; record performance to maintain SLAs.
- Highly-tuned code is ***very*** sensitive to the version of compiler.
  - Choosing the right compiler is hard: re-optimizations are hugely costly without good tests.
  - The g++ 5.3.0 with ABI11 is in progress: appalling results...
- Outlook:
  - No one compiler appears to be best - choice is crucial.
  - Newer versions of clang have not been investigated.

For Further Reading I

- http://libjmmcg.sf.net/
- Jeff Andrews
  Branch and Loop Reorganization to Prevent Mispredicts
  https://software.intel.com/en-us/articles/branch-and-loop-reorganization-to-prevent-mispredicts/
- Agner Fog
  The microarchitecture of Intel, AMD and VIA CPUs
  http://www.agner.org/optimize/microarchitecture.pdf

For Further Reading II

- *ARM11 MPCore Processor Technical Reference Manual*
  http://infocenter.arm.com/help/index.jsp?topic=/com.arm.doc.ddi0360f/ch06s02s03.html
- Prof. Bhargav C Goradiya, Trusit Shah
  Implementation of Backward Taken and Forward Not Taken Prediction Techniques in SimpleScalar
  http://ijarcsse.com/docs/papers/Volume_3/6_June2013/V3I6-0492.pdf
- https://gcc.gnu.org/bugzilla/show_bug.cgi?id=66573

For Further Reading III

Jasper Neumann and Jens Henrik Gobbert
Improving Switch Statement Performance with Hashing Optimized at Compile Time
`http://programming.sirrida.de/hashsuper.pdf`