Classless Java: Interface-based Programming for the Masses

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Motivation

1. Multiple inheritance with state is hard.
   - Trait is a nice model but without state.
   - Multiple inheritance in C++ is complex. Scala traits have fields but no constructors.
   - Java supports multiple inheritance with default methods in a limited way.
2. Fields usually cannot be type-refined, which prevents easy solutions to the Expression Problem.

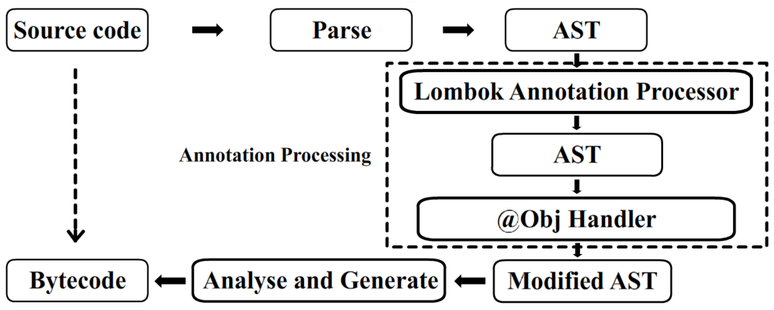
Contributions

1. Abstract state operations:
   - a new way to think about state, via operations instead of fields directly
   - easy to combine with *multiple (trait) inheritance*
   - supports constructors, co-variant type-refinement of state
2. Classless Java: a practical realization of IB in Java.

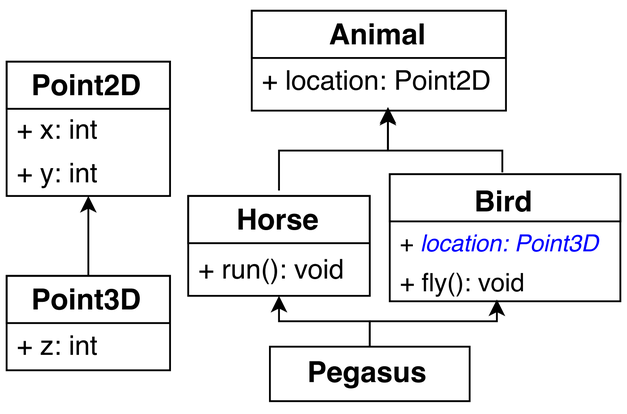
Implementation

Java supports compilation agents, where Java libraries can interact with the Java compilation process, acting as a man in the middle between the generation of AST and bytecode.

This process is facilitated by frameworks like Lombok: a Java library that aims at reducing Java boilerplate code via annotations. `@Obj` was created using Lombok.



UML Diagram



Results (Partial)

In the maze game case study, both SLOC and # of interfaces are greatly reduced:

	SLOC	# of classes/interfaces
Bono et al.	335	14
Ours	199	11
Reduced by	40.6%	21.4%

Object Interfaces and Instantiation

```
@Obj interface Horse extends Animal {
  default void run() {out.println("running!");} }
@Obj interface Bird extends Animal {
  default void fly() {out.println("flying!");} }
@Obj interface Pegasus extends Horse, Bird {}
```

```
Pegasus p = Pegasus.of();
interface Pegasus extends Horse, Bird {
  // generated code not visible to users
  static Pegasus of() { return new Pegasus() {}; }
}
```

Object Interfaces with State (immutable data)

```
interface Point2D { int x(); int y(); }
Point2D p = new Point2D() {
   public int x() {return 4;}
   public int y() {return 2;}
}
```

```
@Obj interface Point2D { int x(); int y(); }
Point2D myPoint = Point2D.of(4, 2);
Point2D p = Point2D.of(42, myPoint.y());
```

with- Methods

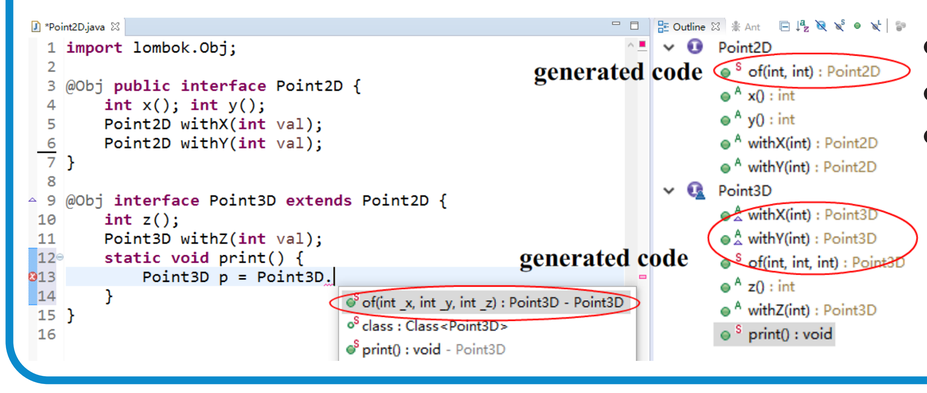
```
@Obj interface Point2D {
   int x(); int y(); // getters
   // with- methods
   Point2D withX(int val); Point2D withY(int val); }
Point2D p = myPoint.withX(42);
```

Mutable Data & Field Type Refinement

```
@Obj interface Bird extends Animal {
   Point3D location(); void location(Point3D val);
   default void location(Point2D val) { location(location().with(val));}
   default void fly() { location(location().withX(location().x() + 40));} }
```

More in the paper

	Operation	Example	Description
State operations (for a field x)	**"fields"/getters**	`int x()`	Retrieves value from field x.
	withers	`Point2D withX(int val)`	Clones object; updates field x to val.
	setters	`void x(int val)`	Sets the field x to a new value val.
	fluent setters	`Point2D x(int val)`	Sets the field x to val and returns **this**.
Other operations	**factory methods**	`static Point2D of(int _x,int _y)`	Factory method (generated).
	functional updaters	`Point3D with(Point2D val)`	Updates all matching fields in val.



- Techniques for field type refinement.
- Formalization and proofs.
- Case studies and applications.
  [The Expression Problem]
  [Embedded DSLs with Fluent Interfaces]
  [A Maze Game]
  [Refactoring an Interpreter]

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