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# Parallelism in OCaml Under the JVM

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# Proforma

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## Original Aims of the Project

The aim of this project was to highlight the differences between single and multithreaded OCaml code. This was done by adapting the Lightweight Threading Library (LWT) – a very popular threading library for OCaml – to use the OCaml to Java bytecode compiler OCaml-Java, thus allowing software written with LWT to utilise the multithreading capabilities of the JVM.

## Work Completed

**Pinkbook says at most 100 words summarising work completed, e.g. scheduler of LWT to OCaml-Java threads, worker public/private queue structure, benchmarks, etc.** The LWT threading capabilities have been integrated with OCaml-Java, thus allowing some LWT programs to compile to Java bytecode and run in parallel on the JVM. This is done using a scheduler algorithm which maps LWT threads to Java threads.

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## Special Difficulties

Pinkbook says at most 100 words describing special difficulties, but most should just say "None" None, *possibly*.

## Declaration

I, Dorian Peake of St John's College, being a candidate for Part II of the Computer Science Tripos, hereby declare that this dissertation and the work described in it are my own work, unaided except as may be specified below, and that the dissertation does not contain material that has already been used to any substantial extent for a comparable purpose.

Signed [signature]

Date [date]



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## Acknowledgements

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This document owes much to an earlier version written by Simon Moore . His help, encouragement and advice was greatly appreciated.

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Motivation

Trends current trends in chip advancement have shown that since around 2003 [?], the growth in processor frequency has effectively plateaued and computer architects have had to look for different methods of achieving greater computational power. The diminishing returns of processor frequency have been greatly effected by the amount of energy required to switch a transistor's output – known as the *dynamic energy*. This dynamic energy needs to be dissipated through the side of the chip die at a size of around 1.5cm. Clearly this becomes an increasingly difficult task for processors with greater clock frequencies which generate more heat energy to dissipate. As a result of this and some other unmentioned factors, the focus of achieving greater performance has moved from clock frequency improvements to parallel processing. Therefore it is important for software developers to create software that is able to take full advantage of the hardware of today and estimate ways to make it scale on the hardware of tomorrow.

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Functional Programming concepts have been around since Turing and Church's work in the 1930's [?] but have become more popular in recent times. The expressiveness that functional programming paradigms give the programmer has finally caught on in mainstream development and as such languages such as C++ and Java are incorporating notable functional programming techniques such as type inference [?] and first-class anonymous functions (lambdas) [?]. Notable functional languages include Haskell and ML which have inspired more widely used functional languages such as OCaml [?]. OCaml is a very extensive functional language which also includes an elegant object system, thus incorpor-

ating the best of both functional and imperative programming techniques and making it a very powerful language to develop with. Unfortunately OCaml in it's current vanilla state is unable to compile parallel code, which is becoming an ever more necessary approach to development as systems become more and more parallel.

Java on the other hand is a very good imperative programming language/system. It compiles to bytecode which runs on it's virtual machine which is implemented in everything from ATM's and credit card Chipsto home desktops and servers – leading to one of the slogan's '*write once, run everywhere*'. Over the years the JVM has become highly optimised to the hardware/systems that it runs on such that there is little difference between Java code running on the JVM and natively compiled code. Furthermore, Java supports parallel processing, fully utilising any number of cores/hardware threads that the system has to offer.

A peice of software called OCaml-Java aims to merge best aspects of both languages together to create a better OCaml programming solution. It achieves this by compiling OCaml code to Java bytecode, thus allowing it to run on any JVM. This means two things:

- OCaml can now be written to run on a wide variety of hardware/systems.
- OCaml can use Java's multithreading capabilities to run fully parallel OCaml code [?]

OCaml-Java comes with a basic collection of concurrency tools which are essentially a small subset of Java's own concurrency library, with wrappers which allows access to them from within OCaml. Clearly the concurrency techniques provided by Java do not nicely translate to the way concurrency is done in a functional programming language like OCaml. There already exist extremely good and highly optimised OCaml concurrency libraries such as Async by Jane Street and LWT (Lightweight Threads Library) by Ocsigen, however these will not directly work with OCaml-Java when compiled to Java bytecode. Somehow getting one of these OCaml concurrency libraries working with OCaml-Java would demonstrate OCaml-Java's true potential for parallel OCaml code, written in the functional flavour that works best with the OCaml language – this is the motivation for my project.

My project aims to interface OCaml-Java and the LWT concurrency library in order to demonstrate OCaml-Java's potential for parallelised OCaml

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code. The rest of this document outlines the preparation and research I conducted in order to plan my approach to this project in chapter 2; the methods and processes that were used to implement the project in chapter 3 and the result of the project development and the work process as a whole in chapter 4. My code can also be found in chapter 7.

## 1.2 Related Work

# Chapter 2

## Preparation

The following chapter outlines the processes taken in preparation for the project's implementation. I begin with a look into OCaml's multithreaded capabilities, including the limitations on developing parallel code and why these limitations exist. I also discuss LWT's own asynchronous library in comparison to Java's and the difficulties that may occur when attempting to interface the two. OCaml-Java is overviewed, including what tools become available with it's use and how it manages to provide the user with concurrency when writing parallel OCaml code. Finally the research is concluded with a set of requirements which I believe are representative of what the project should hope to achieve and the tools/software I will be using through it's development.

### 2.1 Investigating Multithreaded OCaml

In order to outline the best implementation plan for the LWT-OCaml-Java interface, it was necessary to understand the limitations that OCaml possessed in compiling parallel code. The OCaml-Java paper from the 2012 'Trends in Functional Programming' collection [?] gives rise to the reason – stating that the Core OCaml library is not reentrant and the OCaml garbage collector is neither parallel nor concurrent. Making the Core library reentrant is a relatively straight forward change to the system, however making the garbage collector parallel is not as simple. Ultimately there are many ways to perform concurrent and parallel garbage collection, however this has proven to be 'too complex' for the current state of the OCaml system. Java's G1 is fully parallel and allows multithreaded support of Java applications, therefore by compiling OCaml code to java bytecode, the language may utilise Java's parallelism capabilities.

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It was necessary to decide which of the popular concurrency libraries available to OCaml I should use for the purposes of this project therefore I researched into OCaml's ability to produce concurrent OCaml code, which lead me to OCaml's own inbuilt threads library. The OCaml manual [?] describes the OCaml threads as being concurrently on a single processor using time sharing. However there exist other concurrency libraries which boast a richer feature set than the one provided by OCaml as default. Examples of these languages are Async – developed by Jane Street Capital– and LWT (Lightweight threads library) – developed by Ocsigen. These are the two main concurrency packages used within OCaml development, choosing one to use within my project was simply a matter of popularity, my reasoning is that they are both extremely good packages and would serve well to demonstrate the capabilities of multithreaded OCaml-Java.

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## 2.2 Investigating LWT

LWT is an extensive concurrency suite for OCaml which is based around the idea of lightweight cooperative threads [?] where cooperative threads manage their own lifecycle as opposed to preemptive threads which are controlled externally, e.g. by the operating system. Creating and destroying a thread in LWT are very cheap operations such that the system will create a thread for every system call that is executed. This idea of lightweight threads with a small lifetime handles itself well to the way OCaml (and languages within the ML family) work which is allocating new data frequently which have a small lifetime. The OCaml garbage collector is also optimised for this by using generational garbage collection techniques to more frequently collect younger data, as data that has survived a garbage collection once or more before is likely to have an extended lifetime. [?]

On the other hand, Java threads have a greater creation overhead and as such cannot be used in a similar fashion to the way LWT threads work without detrimental effects to performance. Java's `java.util.concurrent` implementations avoid the creation overheads by utilising thread pools [?]. This observation lead me to the implementation decision of creating a thread scheduler which maps LWT threads to Java threads as clearly a 1:1 mapping would simply expose great amounts of thread creation overhead, possibly crippling any speedup gains would obtain.

There are many functions within LWT to create threads which have various different effects. One of the most commonly used is the *bind* function, with the following type:

```
val bind : 'a t -> ('a -> 'b t) -> 'b t
```

Essentially the *bind* function takes a thread of generic type, a function which takes the return value of the thread, performs some processing returns a new thread. This processing connects the passed thread and function such that when the thread has finished executing, the function will be run with the return value from the thread. This acts synonymously to the classic ‘sync’ operation within various writings on parallel processing [?]. The new thread returned by the *bind* function is the result of the whole *bind* operation – that is, once the passed thread has executed and the passed function has returned some value.

Since threads in LWT are cooperative, there’s no real notion of spawning, starting or stopping such as in POSIX or Java. Asynchronous execution is achieved by binding some work to a thread which will execute later on. This can be achieved with the ‘Lwt\_main.yield’ function:

```
val yield : unit -> unit Lwt.t
```

The *yield* function returns a thread which simply goes to sleep, then wakes up as soon as possible and terminates. This is entirely useless on its own but binding to this thread will create a situation where you’re able to schedule something to run in the near future – without knowing when it will occur.

## 2.3 Investigating OCaml-Java

Providing the framework to parallel OCaml code in this project, OCaml-Java is a collection of Java programs and libraries that allow you to compile OCaml code to Java bytecode for execution on the JVM; run OCaml bytecode compiled software on the JVM using an interpreter written in Java; and access Java libraries directly from within OCaml code using a specially designed interface that maps Java classes to OCaml types. However most relevant to this project is OCaml-Java’s ability to run OCaml code in parallel using Java threads.



OCaml-Java provides a concurrency module which contains many standard concurrency features such as Locks, atomic variables and condition variables. The locks, for example, can be manipulated as simply as calling ‘make\_reentrant’ to construct a new lock and ‘lock’ and ‘unlock’ to change acquire/release the lock respectively:

```
val make_reentrant : bool -> t  
  
val lock : t -> unit  
  
val unlock : t -> unit
```

Essentially, the concurrency module is just a set of OCaml wrappers around their Java counterparts [?] therefore the OCaml-Java reentrant lock module ‘Concurrent.Lock’ is a wrapper around the Java reentrant lock class ‘java.util.concurrent.locks.ReentrantLock’.

For classes that do not yet have an OCaml wrapper, there is a neat interface which allows direct calls to Java functions and manipulation of Java references, for example object instantiation. Via the Java.make and Java.call functions, you are able to instantiate any Java class or call any Java function:

```
let obj = Java.make "java.lang.Object()  
let itg = Java.make "java.lang.Integer(int)" 1231  
  
let obj_hash = Java.call "java.lang.Object.hashCode():int" obj  
let eq = Java.call "java.lang.Object.equals(java.lang.Object):boolean" obj itg
```

The code above gives an example of using the Java.make and Java.call functions. Two Java objects are created named ‘obj’ and ‘itg’ using different classes via the Java.make function, then their hash values are compared to each other using the Java.call on the hashCode method and the equals method. Whilst the java primitives are easily mapped to OCaml types e.g. a Java int maps directly to an OCaml int32, the types of Java objects need to have their own defining types within OCaml. The typing scheme introduced makes a java Object map to an OCaml type ‘a java\_instance’ where ‘a’ is a Java class. Classes are denoted within OCaml by substituting dots with quotes to abide by the OCaml syntactic rules [?], therefore the equivalent OCaml type for ‘java.lang.Object’ would be ‘java’lang’Object java\_instance’.

## 2.4 Requirements Analysis

As a result of my investigations into OCaml, OCaml-Java and LWT, I believe that the interface between multithreaded OCaml-Java and LWT must meet the following requirements:

**Requirement 1** As discovered in section 2.2 OCaml threads and Java threads behave very differently, especially in terms of thread creation overheads. Therefore it is necessary to create a mapping from LWT threads to Java threads using a scheduler to perform the mapping operations.

**Requirement 2** ??

**Requirement 3** ??

## 2.5 Choice of Tools

My project depends entirely on the use of OCaml and Java therefore there is no real decision relating to the programming languages I will use. Furthermore LWT and OCaml-Java are two libraries that I will be depending on throughout the development of the project. These invariants aside, the following section outlines my choice of development environment, including version control, backup precautions taken/software used and the development and build methods applied.

### 2.5.1 Development Environment

#### Software and Systems

Unlike Java, OCaml has little in the way of a fully supported IDE. There are addons for IDE's such as Eclipse<sup>1</sup> which add syntax highlighting and build functions, however most (including my supervisors) use a text editor such as Emacs or Vim to develop – which both come stock with OCaml syntax highlighting. I am already very familiar with Vim, therefore it was a clear choice to use it. I also used Mac OSX as my host operating system as I am a mac user, however at since there are little restrictions to what operating system OCaml (and in particular Java) can run on therefore I was also able to utilise the Intel Labs PWF machines on occasion which are running Ubuntu version something.

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.eclipse.org>

### Version Control

For version control I used Git since I'm already familiar with it and it has always provided me with the necessary tools I need to work effectively. I also used Github to host my code in the cloud for a few reasons:

- Github provides educational users with free private repositories which I used for this project.
- Storing my code on the cloud means that I can easily access it from anywhere with internet access, with all my revisions.
- My supervisors are also on Github meaning they are easily able to check my progress.

### Backup

In conjunction with Github as my primary backup solution, I also hosted my code on Dropbox in the case I lose work I haven't yet committed. Furthermore I also have mirrors of my Git repository hosted on the PWF facilities which were pushed to frequently.

## 2.6 Summary

Within this chapter I have demonstrated the process of planning and investigation taken in order to prepare for the project's implementation. I have investigated the ways that OCaml and LWT are able to perform asynchronous code execution, including the cause for OCaml's limitations in fully parallel code compilation and the differences between LWT and Java's handling of threads. Furthermore I have demonstrated a few tools that OCaml-Java has introduced which allow parallel OCaml code to be written and run on the JVM. Using this information I constructed a set of requirements that I believe are necessary for this project to adhere to in order to achieve the success criteria. Finally I explained that Vim will be my choice of IDE, running on Mac OSX; Git and Github will be used for version control and in addition the PWF facilities and Dropbox will be used for backup.

# Chapter 3

## Implementation

In this chapter, I outlined the main directions and considerations taken towards developing the asynchronous framework for LWT on OCaml-Java. These are outlined as follows:

1. *Runtime Lock Approach*

Designed as a penultimate stage to full parallelism with LWT on OCaml-Java, the runtime lock approach manages to achieve full cooperation between OCaml-Java and LWT without exploiting parallelism by concentrating on getting the core LWT modules to compile and execute code successfully on the JVM. By wrapping the core LWT functionality within a runtime lock I was able to concentrate on attempting to get LWT and OCaml-Java cooperating without the overheads of thread safety and parallelism.

2. *Coarse Grained Approach*

This section extends the basic functionality of the runtime lock approach to multiple cores by introducing java worker threads. These threads are assigned LWT threads to work on continuously until the entirety of the calculation has completed. Another very important consideration is to ensure that the worker threads are able to cooperate correctly with each other such that each LWT thread may run in isolation, as if it were running in its native single core, asynchronous environment. Some ways that LWT is written (correctly) assume that it will be running on a single processor, resulting in the half-baked thread problem outlined below. Therefore I needed to take these assumptions into account whilst constructing the parallel system.

3. *Profiling*

Profiling the performance gains from introducing parallel computation in-

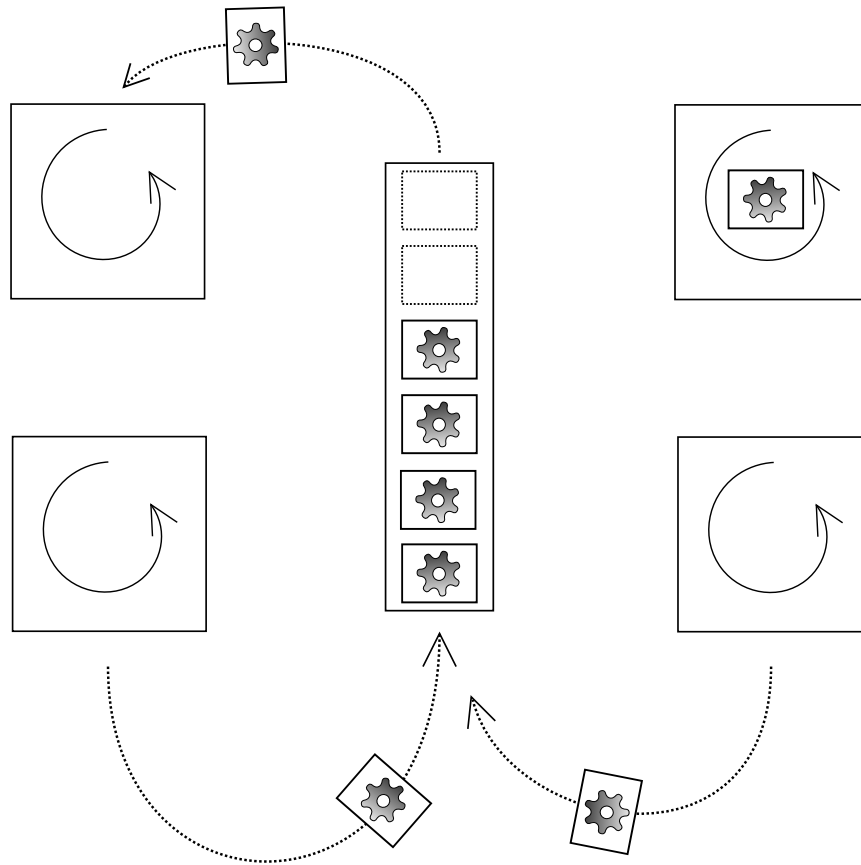
volved choosing appropriate benchmarks and implementing them in an LWT and OCaml-Java compatible manor. Ultimately merge sort and recursive fibonacci were implemented to utilise multiple processors, and this section details the design decisions and their functionality within the system.

## 3.1 Parallelism Overview

The structure that LWT follows in order to create an asynchronous framework ultimately determined what the necessary steps were for me in implementing the LWT – OCaml-Java interface. LWT achieves asynchronous execution by storing yielded threads (mentioned in section 2.2) in a queue which will be referred to as the ‘yield queue’ from this point onwards. The function `Lwt_main.run` runs an algorithm which takes an initial thread and continuously polls this passed thread for completion (at which point a value has been returned). If the thread has not yet returned a value, the algorithm iterates through the yield queue, executing all the threads contained within it until it reaches the top of the queue. The algorithm then re-polls the passed thread for completion again, and cycles through the process of executing threads on the yield queue and polling for completion until a value is returned.

The functions to be executed by the yield threads will most likely add more threads to the yield queue. These threads are added to the bottom of the queue and are not executed until the next polling iteration. Figure [blabla](#) describes the functionality of the yield queue graphically.

draw a  
diagram  
of thread  
queue  
being  
executed



 *Java Worker Thread*

 *LWT Thread*

My approach to parallelising this model was to mimic the functionality of the `Lwt_main.run` function across many Java threads using OCaml-Java. These OCaml-Java threads are known as ‘worker threads’, which perform the process of taking threads off the yield queue and executing them. Listing [blablabla](#) summarises the behaviour of a worker thread. Initially the OCaml thread (that is, the first thread executing the main OCaml code) calls `Lwt_main.run` with an initial (passed) thread to execute – just as normal. However the function now spawns multiple worker threads (dependant on the number of physical threads the system has available) which are set to continually run LWT threads on the yield queue until interrupted. The OCaml thread begins work on the passed thread which will inevitably spawn other threads to be pushed onto the yield queue. Once the initial thread has finished work and is

find out  
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waiting on the spawned threads to complete, the OCaml thread will continuously poll the passed thread for a return value. Once this return value has been received, the OCaml thread sends an interrupt signal to all the other worker threads in order to stop processing yield threads and terminate execution. It is interesting to note that the OCaml thread is governing the other Java threads in a preemptive style whereas (as mentioned in section 2.2), LWT threads are cooperative – there were no problems working with the two threading ideas together.

As an example, listing `blablablais` code that when run, simply outputs what thread it is running on. It does this 20 times before quitting, leaving a trace of all the threads that were executing at that time. The initial passed thread is executed which spawns a yield thread that is placed onto the yield queue, furthermore another function (the waiter function) is bound to the yield thread such that when the thread is awoken and terminates, the function that was bound is then called with the return value of the yield thread. This function simply prints out what thread is currently running this particular code and then adds another thread to the yield queue, making itself the waiter function. This causes a continuous cycle where threads are added to the yield queue, taken off by some worker thread, and the name of the worker thread is printed out. There is a race between the worker threads as to which one picks up the yield thread, therefore the output from running this program is different each time, demonstrating real parallel asynchronous execution.

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With the overview of the idea for implementing parallel thread execution in LWT, my approach took two main paths: a naive approach of using a runtime lock and a coarse grained locking approach. I decided upon these two strategies because considered the first approach to be a relatively straight forward way of getting a result from the project whilst also giving insight into potential problems. The second approach was partly based on the concurrency options that OCaml-Java provided for use: OCaml-Java provides reentrant locks and semaphores amongst the atomic variables within the concurrency module, although I had initially decided to use semaphores with integer values based around the number of threads currently on the queue, as long as there is code running, there will be threads on the yield queue because every call in LWT results in a thread. Implementing semaphores would cause more overheads with little returns, therefore a simple locking scheme was a more sensible idea in this respect.

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### 3.1.1 Naive Runtime Lock Approach

This approach involved having all threads require the ‘global runtime lock’ before attempting to pull anything off the yield queue. The lock is also held all whilst the thread is being processed and is only released when all processing has been finished and the worker thread is about to enter its next iteration of work. All other threads are blocked, waiting on the runtime lock. Figure blablaladescribes this situation graphically. This method, although running in truly in parallel (i.e. many threads performing processing at a time), loses any performance gains from it – in fact it has introduced the overhead of now requiring a lock to be held before every thread is executed. However this approach has created a foundation for a more efficient method to be implemented.

draw a picture of the naive runtime lock situation

### 3.1.2 Coarse Grained Locking Approach

Sustituting a global runtime lock for a coarse grained locking implementation allows the project to take full advantage of the parallelism exposed by OCaml-Java. The aim of the coarse grained lock is to achieve the following requirements over the global runtime lock:

1. The system should prevent unnecessary blocking of threads as much as possible.
2. The system should allow atomic access to shared and mutable data
3. The locks should do something more

Threads in LWT have mutable state, consider a thread state going from ‘Sleep’ with no data to ‘Return’ which lets anything accessing the thread that the thread has finished executing and has returned its value. It is necessary for the old ‘Sleep’ thread state to be removed (and collected by the garbage collector) and the ‘Return’ state to be created so the value can be accessed. Therefore the locking mechanism requires that only one worker thread may be accessing a state at a time to ensure atomic access to the mutable state data (so as to conform to requirement 1). Furthermore, since each thread may have only one state, the best decision was to associate a lock with each thread which is to be acquired by all functions that access the thread.

rule of three, need one more here

### Lock Sharing

Threads in LWT take a further unusual form of ‘thread\_repr’ which are thread indirection types. They provide mutable references to threads (which OCaml does



provide, however this is a wrapper around this functionality) – but ultimately it serves as a method of performing type abstraction to ensure all variations of threads can be thought of as some form of ‘thread representation/thread\_repr’. An interesting result of this is that there may be many layers of redirection within a reference to a thread – as depicted by figure something. Therefore it is important to ensure the behaviour of a thread lock is consistent and sensible when dealing with this layering. In deciding what the best approach for applying the thread locks in this situation, I had two methods to choose between:

draw  
figure of  
layers of  
thread\_repr's

1. Apply a different lock at each individual level, ensuring all locks are acquired and released at all levels below the current ‘thread\_repr’ level before manipulating the thread data.
2. Have a lock at the lowest level only and ensure this is shared correctly between all other layers.

I decided to go with the second option and share the lock between many levels of the thread\_repr chain. This seemed like the cleanest option, adding little overhead to the locking process and moving it to the slightly more infrequent thread creation functions.

## Thread Safety

**Half-Baked Thread Problem** Some aspects of how LWT handles threads did not directly map well to a parallel implementation of the library. In some cases this meant that special care was necessarily taken to handle events in the correct way. One notable example of this is a race condition between threads being placed on and taken off the yield queue before being appropriately initialised.

A visual description of the problem is outline in figure somethingalong with the offending code segment in listing something else. The problem occurs when attempting to bind a thread to a yield thread, so that it may be run asynchronously. The yield function adds a thread onto the yield queue instantly without the waiters being added to a waiter list. This means that any worker thread is able to remove the yield thread from the queue and run it. At the point the bind has added a waiter function to the waiter list, the yield thread has finished executing and will therefore never run the waiters now attached. Finally the garbage collector picks up the yield thread which has finished and it is never to be seen again.

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Although the gap between where this race condition occurs within the code is relatively small, the problem occurs suprisingly frequently. To overcome this

issue, it was necessary to lock the yield thread between the point of creation and the end of the bind. However this fix makes an assumption on how the yield thread is used – it suggests that a yield thread will only ever be used in conjunction with a call to bind. While this isn't strictly true, since a yield thread is a fully qualified thread on its own that simply does nothing, justification to this assumption is that – to my understanding – it is only ever sensibly used in conjunction with bind. To create a yield thread which sleeps and wakes with no functions to run upon termination is – useless. Furthermore the only way to achieve some kind of useful processing with a yield thread is to attach a waiter function which will run when the thread terminates.

To lock and unlock the yield thread separated across two functions, I used an additional thread value containing an option for a bind callback. A thread using bind which requires post bind processing can fill this option value with a function that performs the appropriate post-processing. Bind, upon completing its binding operation, will then execute the callback if it exists, finishing off the thread processing appropriately. Using this new bind callback, the call to yield first locks the yield thread before creation and adds a bind callback function which unlocks the thread. In this state, no worker threads will remove a thread on the yield queue which is currently locked (a requirement for removing a thread from the yield queue is that the worker thread is able to acquire the thread lock). Once the bind operation has completed on the yield thread, the callback is run which unlocks the thread, allowing it to be picked up by a worker thread to begin execution. A visual description of this change is outlined in figure something

**ACID Callbacks** Callbacks in parallel processing can be called by any and all threads that have access to the code and shared data at any time, therefore it was also important to the rewrite the LWT callbacks such that each thread accessing the callback does so in isolation to any other concurrent thread, the shared data is accessed atomically, the shared data remains in a consistent state and the shared data changes remain – which are the so-called ACID properties of database transactions. For two out of four of the ACID properties (consistency and durability) LWT's code already manages well, however atomicity and isolation issues needed to be dealt with. This mainly consisted of converting shared data to their atomic type equivalent, and ensuring data dependencies were kept serialised.

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draw).

## 3.2 Profiling

Assembling an appropriate profiling suite to test the newly implemented functionality of OCaml-Java and LWT was an equally important step as implementation. Vanilla OCaml allows a special flag for compiling native code with gprof profiling compatibility [?], however this is clearly unavailable since we are compiling to java bytecode using OCaml-Java. There is no one single Java profiler tool such as gprof, however there are many open source alternatives. These are highly configurable and complex software suites which allow a lot of configuration – most of which I wouldn’t need. For the purpose of profiling this project, I would simply require an accurate timer to determine the time taken to complete a function so that these times may be compared and the values used in speed up calculations in chapter 4. Taking this into consideration, I wrote a very simple timer module in OCaml using Java’s high-resolution time source via `java.lang.System.nanoTime`, in fact within the Java documentation, example code shows the use of `nanoTime` in determining how long a code segment took to run. Listing something shows some of the commands used within the simple timer module.

To utilise Java functions and references directly through OCaml, I used the interface described in section 2.3. There is no documentation on the speed of executing Java functions via the interface in comparison to direct calls, therefore it is possible that the interface will introduce some systematic errors, however they should not interfere with the results of the project as demonstrated in chapter 4.

Choosing an appropriate set of benchmarks which exploits parallelism well was important to demonstrate the true capabilities of the system. One of my choices for parallel benchmarking was mergesort after investigating the Barcelona OpenMP Task Suite – one of their benchmarks is an integer sort algorithm based on the Cilk sorting algorithm. The Cilk project is a suite for algorithmic multithreaded programming and the Cilk sort performs a mixture of merge sort and insertion sort for arrays smaller than a certain threshold. Furthermore the classic *Introduction to Algorithms* book [?] uses merge sort as an introduction to algorithms that exploit parallelism well. is a mixture of a merge and insertion sort. The mergesort algorithm implemented in OCaml is essentially a mirror of the Cilk algorithm with the exception that the insertion sort in Cilk has been replaced with a simple call to OCaml’s default array sorting algorithm ‘`Array.sort`’.

The merge sort algorithm within the system will continuously add merge sort commands for sub arrays onto the yield queue, where each sub array is of course half the size of its originating array. This will continue until a sub array drops

add listing for .mli of timer module

below the linear sort threshold, at which point OCaml's default array sorting algorithm is called on the sub array. The threads are taken off the yield queue and executed on multiple worker threads as explained in section 3.1. Figure blablabla shows the state of the system in the middle of the algorithm.

Another choice of benchmark which was both easy to implement and also featured within the Introduction to Algorithms book was the recursive fibonacci algorithm adapted for multithreading.

### 3.3 Possible I/O Extensions

LWT has a very large collection of I/O modules which provide asynchronous I/O functionality and bindings to both Unix and Windows. This set of modules provides a generous amount of functionality to the core asynchronous library provided by LWT. Now that the core library has been converted to work in parallel with OCaml-Java, it is also possible to adapt the LWT I/O modules to also utilise the Java I/O classes to provide asynchronous I/O to the system as well.

My approach to this problem would be in three stages:

1. Attempt to compile LWT in its entirety with OCaml-Java.
2. Filter out external functions that will not run.
3. Build up functionality in stages beginning from the filtered functions.

Attempting to compile LWT in it's entirety is a difficult job in itself as LWT relies on other packages such as OCamlbuild and OCamlfind. The most straight forward option to compiling LWT would be to manually extract the build commands from OCamlbuild and output them to a custom build script, which performs the same standard job from a clean build directory. The OCamlfind package acts as an interface which allows easy package linking and more when building OCaml programs. OCamlfind spits out commands which contain all the relevant switches and linked files to compile a peice of OCaml software correctly, therefore by intercepting these commands and replacing them in the build script, I can remove OCamlfind and OCamlbuild support entirely. Furthermore LWT also uses the Camlp4 processor to provide many very useful shorthands when writing asynchronous LWT code. However there are a few bugs with the OCaml-Java Camlp4 system that exist, therefore these files can be manually preprocessed using the default Camlp4 preprocessor which will produce the same output.

do this figure, maybe idk it seems a bit use-less

say something more about fib sort here

link camlp4 bugs in mantis bug tracker

The second stage involves filtering out external commands that will not run. Examples of these commands are calls to system semaphores and mutexes, file manipulation commands and more, and depend on the system that LWT has been compiled for. OCaml-Java does not support any external commands written in C/C++, in fact it expects these external command calls to link to Java functions, existing in Java class files. Removing these external function calls from the OCaml code can be most easily done by replacing the calls with exceptions of the same command name – done with a sed script. This will both allow the code to compile and also make the third stage of the I/O interface creation process much simpler.

The third involves actually converting the external C/C++ commands into Java code so that it may be executed with the same (roughly the same) effect as its C/C++ counterpart. At this stage of the conversion process, the LWT code should be compiling, however no I/O should yet be working but instead terminating with exceptions at the external calls. Depending on what code that I would like to have working first, I would begin with a test LWT program that utilises I/O, compile it and follow the exceptions, implementing each function until the software executes without fail. This may continue to have chunks of the I/O working so that results may be seen sooner than later. An alternate approach would be to just attempt to implement all the functions, followed by testing and debugging – however the codebase is large and being unable to test the functions (unable to test easily) would mean there is a larger codebase to worry about when at the testing phase. The former approach is far more akin to an iterative/agile development process which is far more flexible to work with.

## 3.4 Summary

In this chapter I began with an overview of how parallelism is achieved between OCaml-Java and LWT, which uses worker threads that are fed LWT threads off a yield queue, and explained that the rest of the chapter details the production of this system in its different approaches. The first approach explained was the runtime lock approach which acted mostly as a stepping stone into a stage where LWT was running in parallel on the JVM, whilst abstracting away the problem of thread safety. This was a sensible method of dividing the task of implementing the system as the tasks of attempting to get LWT working on the JVM and exploiting parallelism have minimal overlap. The coarse grained locking approach section described the transition from parallel LWT code with no parallel benefit, to LWT threads being scheduled appropriately to many simultaneously executing

worker threads. This stage introduced thread safety mechanisms based around lock acquisition and also the unforeseen technical details on getting LWT working across multiple threads, including the half-baked thread problem, lock-sharing problem and ensuring callbacks adhered to the ACID concurrency properties. Finally the profiling section details the design decisions taken whilst deciding on an appropriate choice of parallel benchmarks to implement for testing purposes, as well as methods of profiling OCaml running under the JVM without the help of OCaml's default compiler flags and settings.

# Chapter 4

## Evaluation

### 4.1 Speedup

#### 4.1.1 Merge Sort Speedup

#### 4.1.2 Fibonacci Speedup

## Chapter 5

## Conclusions



## Chapter 6

## Bibliography

## Chapter 7

## Appendices

# Chapter 8

## Project Proposal

### 8.1 Introduction

The concept of functional programming is becoming far more widespread and important in recent times. Object orientated and imperative languages like C++ and Java are beginning to use functional concepts such as type inference, first-class functions and more. The C++11 specification defines a new ‘auto’ type which causes the compiler to infer the variable type from its content [?]. Furthermore, Java 1.8 now includes Lambda Expressions in conjunction with a range of modifications to the libraries that allow its use [?]. Companies such as Jane Street – a quantitative trading firm – use OCaml entirely for all their high performance trading software and algorithms [?], and contribute to the advancement of the OCaml language.

OCaml is a great example of a powerful and robust functional language. It includes everything you would expect from a functional language and more such as object orientated and imperative programming paradigms, and is derived from the highly expressive ML programming language. Its powerful type system provides great type safety, eliminating many of the associated runtime errors; automatic memory management through its incremental garbage collector and strict evaluation branching from its ML roots in theorem proving. Parallelism in OCaml is however limited due to a global runtime lock present in the system. The purpose of this lock is to prevent unsafe use of non re-entrant code within the core OCaml library, but more importantly is present due to the fact that the OCaml garbage collector is not multi-core friendly [?]. The resulting issue is that only one piece of OCaml code may be executed at a time leading to very little capacity for parallelism.

Java on the other hand is a widely supported, widely available software plat-

form and programming language used in devices like desktop/laptop PC's, mobile phones, ATM's and even credit/debit cards [?]. Its huge community of developers, wide selection of libraries and ability to write easily portable and distributable software means it has continued to grow rapidly over the years. Java also has a thread safe concurrency library which works in conjunction with its parallel and concurrent G1 garbage collector.

Both languages have their pros and cons however the OCaml-Java project aims to bring the best of both languages together by compiling OCaml to Java bytecode, taking advantage of OCaml's powerful typing system and Java's feature rich library. In addition, OCaml code compiled with OCaml-Java uses Java's G1 garbage collector meaning that the software is able to run in parallel across multiple cores without restriction. OCaml-Java comes with a relatively low-level concurrency library which allows developers to utilise its multi-core capabilities, however these low-level modules can be cumbersome to use frequently, especially considering there are some very popular and powerful concurrency libraries for OCaml – such as Ocsigen's Light Weight Threads (LWT).

## 8.2 Substance and Structure of the Project

The aim of this project is to port the LWT concurrency library to use OCaml-Java's low-level threading library therefore taking advantage of Java's multi-core processing capabilities and providing an easier, more robust means of writing parallelised OCaml code to run on the JVM. LWT is a widely used monadic concurrency library for OCaml with strong emphasis on the 'light' aspect of their threads. Spawning a thread in LWT is a very cheap operation and as such, threading with LWT fits well with the short-lived-data aspect that is well acquainted with functional languages. Furthermore the results of the project will provide some interesting results into the increased scalability of OCaml code running in parallel across multiple cores.

Thinking modularly, the project can be divided into three distinct sections:

**Porting the LWT Library:** Porting the library to use OCaml-Java will allow the execution of software written in LWT under OCaml-Java, running on a single thread. This will mainly consist of writing a back-end to act as a pipeline between LWT and OCaml-Java.

**Making LWT parallel:** Making the ported LWT library parallel will mean utilising many Java threads to execute the LWT threads. These LWT threads are as mentioned very lightweight and are frequently spawned, Java threads

on the other hand are not lightweight and as such a one-to-one mapping of LWT to Java threads will not be possible. To resolve this issue, and thus connect the two sides of the equation, an appropriate scheduler must be written to distribute LWT threads between the fewer Java threads that are active on each core.

**Benchmarking:** The final aspect of the project is to evaluate how the scalability of software written in LWT scales when run under my ported version as opposed to when run under default OCaml. It will be necessary to convert existing parallel processing benchmarks to use the ported LWT library and also test the scalability on hardware of varying parallel processing power, such as on a dual-core, quad-core and 48-core machine.

## 8.3 Success Criteria

For the project to be a success I have set the following requirements:

1. I am able to show the scalability difference between two programs using the same piece of LWT code, one compiled using the original LWT libraries under the normal OCaml compiler and one compiled using my ported LWT libraries under OCaml-Java, running on the JVM.
2. Parallel processing benchmark can be used to determine the scalability using LWT under OCaml-Java and using LWT under the normal OCaml environment.

## 8.4 Starting Point

My experience in functional programming extends as far as the ML courses in Part IA, however I enjoyed completing Project Euler challenges in ML (of which I was normally one of the few people to do so!). Neither have I developed code of a substantial size in ML or OCaml, therefore the best place to begin would be looking into the structure of open source OCaml code and get a feel for how things are laid out in OCaml. In addition the book ‘Real World OCaml’ [?] has a public beta available before publication (lucky for me) which will also provide a solid foundation in producing real world OCaml code.

This project relies on the OCaml-Java project, an OCaml to Java bytecode compiler, developed by Xavier Clerc at INRIA. This project provides the ability to use the numerous Java libraries as well as Java’s already mentioned parallel

processing capabilities. Furthermore the JVM can be found installed on many different types of hardware and systems meaning the target hardware for OCaml code will be greatly increased by using OCaml-Java. Xavier Clerc, having strong connections with the OCaml Labs here in Cambridge, is also keen to support this project. The version of OCaml-Java I will be using is an early preview release of version 2.0.

Finally getting to grips with the innards of LWT will be most easily achievable by experimenting with the software first hand and diving into the source code available on Github.

## 8.5 Optional Extensions

Some ideas for optional extensions include:

- Experiment with different schedulers to see which perform better and investigate why.
- Attempt to get higher compatibility rate than initially decided which would mean ironing out incompatibilities with current software written with LWT when run with my ported libraries.

## 8.6 Timetable and Milestones

**17<sup>th</sup> Oct – 6<sup>th</sup> Nov** Further research into LWT's source. Research OCaml coding techniques.

Milestone: Complete LWT coding tutorial; Read through 'Real World OCaml'; Implement some parallel programs in OCaml-Java 2.0; ready to begin planning.

**7<sup>th</sup> Nov – 27<sup>th</sup> Nov** Continued research into LWT's source. Plan implementation of basic functionality of the ported library.

Milestone: Ready to begin development.

**28<sup>th</sup> Nov – 18<sup>th</sup> Dec** Begin porting LWT to single threaded interfacing with OCaml-Java.

Milestone: Some basic functionality implemented.

**19<sup>th</sup> Dec – 8<sup>th</sup> Jan** Continued porting of LWT to single threaded interfacing with OCaml-Java.

Milestone: Porting complete. Should be able to walk through the LWT tutorial without much/any hassle.

**9<sup>th</sup> Jan – 29<sup>th</sup> Jan** Begin creating the scheduler to manage the distribution of LWT threads to OCaml-Java threads.

Milestone: Fixed number of Java threads are able to be scheduled to, regardless of number of cores on system.

**30<sup>th</sup> Jan – 19<sup>th</sup> Feb** Continued scheduler development.

Milestone: Number of Java threads scales with the number of cores present on the system.

**20<sup>th</sup> Feb – 12<sup>th</sup> Mar** Begin conversion of parallel processing benchmarks.

Milestone: Most of benchmarking software conversion complete, fixed relevant bugs which may arise from testing with the benchmark.

**13<sup>th</sup> Mar – 2<sup>nd</sup> April** Testing with benchmarks, finishing dissertation evaluation and write-up.

Milestone: Relevant scalability graph data accumulated.

**3<sup>rd</sup> April – 23<sup>rd</sup> April** Finalising dissertation write-up.

Milestone: Dissertation complete!

## 8.7 Resources Required and Backup

A list of required resources:

- My own Machines:
  - Macbook Air 13” 2013 (8GB RAM, 512GB Storage, OSX/Windows 8)
  - Desktop Computer (Ubuntu 13.04/Windows 7, Intel Core2 Quad, 5TB Storage)
- Machines in College
- A many-core machine in the SRG (32 - 48 Cores; e.g. ‘Roo’)
- OCaml-Java and Sources<sup>1</sup>
- OCaml<sup>2</sup>
- LWT Sources<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>OCaml-Java: <http://ocamljava.x9c.fr/>

<sup>2</sup>OCaml: <http://ocaml.org>

<sup>3</sup>LWT: <http://ocsigen.org/lwt/>

Backups will be provided by Dropbox, Skydrive, my own personal USB stick and my personal storage on the PWF facilities. Cloud backup will be incredibly useful for keeping my data accessible from many locations and also avoiding local corruption which could occur at any time. Version control (and also the main copy of my dissertation/project) will be provided by Github. I chose Github since I am already very familiar with git version control; Github provides cloud storage so I'm able to retrieve and work on my files from various locations; furthermore Github provides free private repositories for students.