GJ Specification

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1 Summary

We propose to add generic types and methods to the Java™ programming language. These are both explained and implemented by translation into the current language. The translation closely mimics the way generics are emulated by programmers: In a nutshell, it erases all type parameters, maps type variables to their bounds, and inserts casts as needed. Some subtleties of the translation are caused by the handling of overriding.

The main benefit of GJ over the current Java programming language lies in the added expressiveness and safety that stems from making type parameters explicit and making type casts implicit. This is crucial for using libraries such as collections in a flexible, yet safe way.

GJ is designed to be fully backwards compatible with the current language, making the transition from non-generic to generic programming very easy. In particular, one can retrofit existing library classes with generic interfaces without changing their code.

This paper gives a specification for GJ. It has a companion paper which gives an overview and rationale of GJ's concepts [BOSW98]. The present paper is organized as follows. Section 2 explains how parameterized types are declared and used. Section 3 explains polymorphic methods. Section 4 explains how parameterized types integrate with exceptions. Section 5 explains what changes in the Java programming language's expression constructs. Section 6 explains how GJ is translated into the Java virtual machine (JVM). Section 7 explains how generic type information is stored in classfiles. Where possible, we follow the format and conventions the Java Language Specification (JLS) [GLS96].

2 Types

There are two new forms of types in GJ, *parameterized types* and *type variables.*

2.1 Type Syntax

A parameterized type consists of a class or interface type C and a parameter section $\langle T_1, \ldots, T_n \rangle$. C must be the name of a parameterized class or interface, the types in the parameter list $\langle T_1, \ldots, T_n \rangle$ must match the number of declared parameters of C, and each actual parameter must be a subtype of the formal parameter's bound type.

In the following, whenever we speak of a class or interface type, we include the parameterized version as well, unless explicitly excluded.

A type variable is an unqualified identifier. Type variables are introduced by parameterized class and interface declarations (Section 2.2) and by polymorphic method declarations (Section 3.1).

Syntax (see JLS, Sec. 4)

```
ReferenceType        ::= ClassOrInterfaceType
                      |  ArrayType
                      |  TypeVariable

TypeVariable         ::= Identifier

ClassOrInterfaceType ::= ClassOrInterface TypeArgumentsOpt

ClassOrInterface     ::= Identifier
                      |  ClassOrInterfaceType . Identifier

TypeArguments        ::= < ReferenceTypeList >

ReferenceTypeList    ::= ReferenceType
                      |  ReferenceTypeList , ReferenceType
```

Example 1 Parameterized types.

```
Vector<String>
Seq<Seq<A>>
Seq<String>.Zipper<Integer>
Collection<Integer>
Pair<String,String>
```

```
// Vector<int> -- illegal, primitive types cannot be parameters
// Pair<String> -- illegal, not enough parameters
// Pair<String,String,String> -- illegal, too many parameters
```

2.2 Parameterized Type Declarations

A parameterized class or interface declaration defines a set of types, one for each possible instantiation of the type parameter section. All parameterized types share the same class or interface at runtime. For instance, the code

```
Vector<String> x = new Vector<String>();
Vector<Integer> y = new Vector<Integer>();
return x.getClass() == y.getClass();
```

will yield true.

Syntax (see JLS, Secs. 8.1, 9.1)

```
ClassDeclaration     ::= ModifiersOpt class Identifier TypeParametersOpt
          SuperOpt InterfacesOpt ClassBody



InterfaceDeclaration ::= ModifiersOpt interface Identifier
          TypeParametersOpt ExtendsInterfacesOpt
          InterfaceBody



TypeParameters       ::= < TypeParameterList >



TypeParameterList    ::= TypeParameterList , TypeParameter
                      |  TypeParameter



TypeParameter        ::= TypeVariable TypeBoundOpt



TypeBound            ::= extends ClassType
                      |  implements InterfaceType
```

The type parameter section follows the class name and is delimited by `< >` brackets. It defines one or more type variables that act as parameters. Type parameters have an optional class or interface type as a bound; if the bound is missing, `java.lang.Object` is assumed. The scope of a type parameter is all of the declared class, except any static members or initializers, but including the type parameter section itself. Therefore, type parameters can appear as parts of their own bounds, or as bounds of other type parameters declared in the same section.

Example 2 Mutually recursive type variable bounds.

```
interface ConvertibleTo<A> {
   A convert();
}
class ReprChange<A implements ConvertibleTo<B>,
                 B implements ConvertibleTo<A>> {
   A a;
   void set(B x) { a = x.convert(); }
   B get() { return a.convert(); }
}
```

Parameterized declarations can be nested inside other declarations.

Example 3 Nested parameterized class declarations.

```
class Seq<A> {
   A head;
   Seq<A> tail;
   Seq() { this(null, null); }
   boolean isEmpty() { return tail == null; }
   Seq(A head, Seq<A> tail) { this.head = head; this.tail = tail; }
   class Zipper<B> {
      Seq<Pair<A,B>> zip(Seq<B> that) {
     if (this.isEmpty() || that.isEmpty())
             return new Seq<Pair<A,B>>();
     else
             return new Seq<Pair<A,B>>(
                 new Pair<A,B>(this.head, that.head),
             this.tail.zip(that.tail));
      }
   }
}
class Client {{
   Seq<String> strs =
```

```
      new Seq<String>("a", new Seq<String>("b", new Seq<String>()));
   Seq<Number> nums =
      new Seq<Number>(new Integer(1),
                      new Seq<Number>(new Double(1.5),
                                      new Seq<Number>()));
   Seq<String>.Zipper<Number> zipper = strs.new Zipper<Number>();
   Seq<Pair<String,Number>> combined = zipper.zip(nums);
}}
```

2.3 Handling Consecutive Type Parameter Brackets

Consecutive type parameter brackets `<` and `>` do not need to be separated by white-space. This leads to a problem in that the lexical analyzer will map the two consecutive closing angle brackets in a type such as `Vector<Seq<String>>` to the right-shift symbol `>>`. Similarly, three consecutive closing angle brackets would be recognized as a unary right-shift symbol `>>>`. To make up for this irregularity, we refine the grammar for types and type parameters as follows.

Syntax (see JLS, Sec. 4)

```
ReferenceType        ::= ClassOrInterfaceType
                      |  ArrayType
                      |  TypeVariable



ClassOrInterfaceType ::= Name
                      |  Name < ReferenceTypeList1

ReferenceTypeList1   ::= ReferenceType1
                      |  ReferenceTypeList , ReferenceType1



ReferenceType1       ::= ReferenceType >
                      |  Name < ReferenceTypeList2



ReferenceTypeList2   ::= ReferenceType2
                      |  ReferenceTypeList , ReferenceType2



ReferenceType2       ::= ReferenceType >>
                      |  Name < ReferenceTypeList3
```

```
ReferenceTypeList3   ::= ReferenceType3
                      |  ReferenceTypeList , ReferenceType3

ReferenceType3       ::= ReferenceType >>>

TypeParameters       ::= < TypeParameterList1

TypeParameterList1   ::= TypeParameter1
                      |  TypeParameterList , TypeParameter1

TypeParameter1       ::= TypeParameter >
                      |  TypeVariable extends ReferenceType2
                      |  TypeVariable implements ReferenceType2
```

2.4 Subtypes, Supertypes, Member Types

In the following, assume a class declaration C with parameters $A_1, ..., A_n$ which have bounds $S_1, ..., S_n$. That class declaration defines a set of types $C\langle T_1, ..., T_n\rangle$, where each argument type T_i ranges over all subtypes of the corresponding bound type. That is, each T_i is a subtype of

$$S_i[A_1 := T_1, ..., A_n := T_n]$$

where $[A := T]$ denotes substitution of the type variable A with the type T.

The definitions of subtype and supertype are generalized to parameterized types. Given a class or interface declaration for $C\langle A_1, ..., A_n\rangle$, the *direct supertypes* of the parameterized type $C\langle A_1, ..., A_n\rangle$ are

- the type given in the extends clause of the class declaration if an extends clause is present, or `java.lang.Object` otherwise, and
- the set of types given in the implements clause of the class declaration if an implements clause is present.

The direct supertypes of the type $C\langle T_1, ..., T_n\rangle$ are $D\langle U_1\theta, ..., U_k\theta\rangle$, where

- $D\langle U_1, ..., U_k\rangle$ is a direct supertype of $C\langle A_1, ..., A_n\rangle$, and
- θ is the substitution $[A_1 := T_1, ..., A_n := T_n]$.

The *supertypes* of a type are obtained by transitive closure over the direct supertype relation. The *subtypes* of a type T are all types U such that T is a supertype of U.

Subtyping does not extend through parameterized types: T a subtype of U does not imply that $C\langle T\rangle$ is a subtype of $C\langle U\rangle$. To support translation by type erasure, we impose the restriction that a class may not directly or indirectly implement an interface twice such that the two implementations have different parameters. Hence, every superclass and implemented interface of a parameterized type can be augmented by parameterization to exactly one supertype. Here is an example of an illegal multiple inheritance of an interface:

```
class B implements I<Integer>
class C extends B implements I<String>
```

A consequence of the parameterized types concept is that now the type of a class member is no longer fixed, but depends on the concrete arguments substituted for the class parameters. Here are the relevant definitions. Assume again a class or interface declaration of C with parameters $A_1, ..., A_n$.

- Let M be a member declaration in C, whose type as declared is T. Then the type of M in the type $C\langle T_1, ..., T_n\rangle$ is $T[A_1 := T_1, ..., A_n := T_n]$.
- Let M be a member declaration in a supertype of $C\langle T_1, ..., T_n\rangle$. Then the type of M in $C\langle T_1, ..., T_n\rangle$ is the type of M in that supertype.

2.5 Raw Types

To facilitate interfacing with non-generic legacy code, it is also possible to use as a type the erasure of a parameterized class without its parameters. Such a type is called a *raw type*. Variables of a raw type can be assigned from values of any of the type's parametric instances. For instance, it is possible to assign a `Vector<String>` to a `Vector`. The reverse assignment from `Vector` to `Vector<String>` is unsafe from the standpoint of the generic semantics (since the vector might have had a different element type), but is still permitted in order to enable interfacing with legacy code. In this case, compilers for GJ will issue a warning message that the assignment is deprecated.

The superclasses (respectively, interfaces) of a raw type are the raw versions of the superclasses (interfaces) of any of its parameterized instances.

The type of a member declaration M in a raw type C is its erased type (see Section 6.1). However, to make sure that potential violations of GJ's typing rules are always flagged, some accesses to members of a raw type will result in "unchecked" warning messages. The rules for generating unchecked warnings for raw types are as follows:

- A method call to a raw type generates an unchecked warning if the erasure changes the argument types.

- A field assignment to a raw type generates an unchecked warning if erasure changes the field type.

No unchecked warning is required for a method call when only the result type changes, for reading from a field, or for a class instance creation of a raw type.

The supertype of a class may be a raw type. Member accesses for the class are treated as normal, and member accesses for the supertype are treated as for raw types. In the constructor of the class, calls to `super` are treated as method calls on a raw type.

Example 4 Raw types.

```
class Cell<A>
  A value;
  Cell (A v) { value=v; }
  A get() { return value; }
  void set(A v) { value=v; }
}
```

```
Cell x = new Cell<String>("abc");
x.value;          // OK, has type Object
x.get();          // OK, has type Object
x.put("def");     // deprecated
```

3 Polymorphic Methods

3.1 Method Declarations

Syntax (See JLS 8.4)

```
MethodHeader :
        ModifiersOpt TypeParametersOpt Type MethodDeclarator ThrowsOpt
      | ModifiersOpt TypeParametersOpt VOID MethodDeclarator ThrowsOpt
```

Method declarations can have a type parameter section like classes have. The parameter section precedes the result type of the method.

Example 5 Polymorphic methods.

```
static <Elem> void swap(Elem[] a, int i, int j) {
   Elem temp = a[i]; a[i] = a[j]; a[j] = temp;
}
```

```
void <Elem implements Comparable<Elem>> sort(Elem[] a) {
   for (int i = 0; i < xs.length; i++)
      for (int j = 0; j < i; j++)
         if (a[j].compareTo(a[i]) < 0) <Elem>swap(a, i, j);
}
```

```
class Seq<A> {

   <B> Seq<Pair<A,B>> zip(Seq<B> that) {
      if (this.isEmpty() || that.isEmpty())
         return new Seq<Pair<A,B>>();
      else
         return new Seq<Pair<A,B>>(
            new Pair<A,B>(this.head, that.head),
            this.tail.<B>zip(that.tail));
   }
}
```

The definition of "having the same arguments" is extended to polymorphic methods as follows:

Two method declarations M and N *have the same arguments* if either none of them has type parameters and their argument types agree, or they have the same number of type parameters, say $\langle A_1, ..., A_n\rangle$ for M and $\langle B_1, ..., B_n\rangle$ for N, and after renaming each occurrence of a B_i in $N's$ type to A_i the bounds of corresponding type variables are the same and the argument types of M and N agree.

It is illegal to declare two methods with the same name in a class if these methods have the same argument types in some instantiation of the class.

3.2 Overriding

The definition of overriding is adapted straightforwardly to parameterized types:

A class or interface $C\langle A_1, ..., A_n\rangle$ may contain a declaration for a method with the same name and the same argument types as a method declaration in one of the supertypes of $C\langle A_1, ..., A_n\rangle$. In this case, the declaration in C is said to (directly) override the declaration in the supertype.

GJ requires that the result type of a method is a subtype of the result types of all methods it overrides. This is more general than the Java programming language, which requires the result types to be identical. See Section 6.2 for an implementation scheme to support this generalization.

Example 6 The following declarations are legal in GJ.

```
class C implements Cloneable {
   C copy() { return (C)clone(); }
   ...
}
class D extends C implements Cloneable {
   D copy() { return (D)clone(); }
   ...
}
```

4 Exceptions

To enable a direct mapping into the JVM, type parameters are not allowed in `catch` clauses or `throws` lists. It is still possible to have parameterized extensions of `Throwable` but one uses the raw class name of such an extension in a `catch` clause or `throws` list. The name of a parameterized class in a `throws` list indicates that any of its instances might be thrown. Analogously, the name of a parameterized class in a `catch` clause will cover any parameterized instance of the class.

Example 7 Parameterized exceptions.

```
class ExcParam<A> extends Exception {
   A value;
   ExcParam(A value) { this.value = value; }
}
```

```
class ExcInteger extends ExcParam<Integer> {
  ExcInteger (int i) { super(new Integer(i)); }
  int intvalue () { return value.intvalue(); }
}
```

```
class Test {
  void throwExc (int i) throws ExcParam, ExcInteger {
    throw i==0 ? new ExcParam<String>("zero") : new ExcInteger(i);
  }
  int tryExc (int i) {
    try {
      throwExc(i)
    } catch (ExcInteger ex1) {
      return ex1.intvalue();
    } catch (ExcParam ex2) {
```

```
      return 0;
    }
  }
}
```

5 Expressions

5.1 Class Instance Creation Expressions

A class instance creation expression for a parameterized class consists of the fully parameterized type of the instance to be created and arguments to a constructor for that type.

Syntax (see JLS, Sec. 15.8)

```
ClassInstanceCreationExpression ::= new Name TypeArgumentsOpt ( ArgumentListOpt
)
```

Example 8 Class instance creation expressions.

```
// with explicit type parameters
new Vector<String>();
new Pair<Seq<Integer>,Seq<String>>(
   new Seq<Integer>(new Integer(0), new Seq<Integer>()),
   new Seq<String>("abc", new Seq<String>()));
```

5.2 Array Creation Expressions

The element type in an array creation expression is a fully parameterized type. It is deprecated to create an array whose element type is a type variable.

Syntax (see JLS, Sec. 15.9)

```
ArrayCreationExpression ::= new PrimitiveType DimExprs DimsOpt
                         |  new ClassOrInterfaceType DimExprs DimsOpt
                         |  new PrimitiveType Dims ArrayInitializer
                         |  new ClassOrInterfaceType Dims ArrayInitializer
```

Example 9 Array creation expressions.

```
new Vector<String>[n]
new Seq<Character>[10][20][]
```

5.3 Cast Expressions

The target type for a cast can be a parameterized type.

Syntax (see JLS, Sec. 15.15)

```
CastExpression ::= ( PrimitiveType DimsOpt ) UnaryExpression
                |  ( ReferenceType ) UnaryExpressionNotPlusMinus
```

The usual rules for casting conversions (Spec, Sec. 5.5) apply. Since type parameters are not maintained at run-time, we have to require that the correctness of type parameters given in the target type of a cast can be ascertained statically. This is enforced by refining the casting conversion rules as follows:

A value of type S can be cast to a parameterized type T if one of the following two conditions holds:

- T is a subtype of S, and there are no other subtypes of S with the same *erasure* (see Section 6.1) as T.
- T is a supertype of S.

Note that even when parameterized subtypes of a given type are not unique, it will always be possible to cast to the raw type given by their commmon erasure.

Example 10 Assume the declarations

```
class Dictionary<A,B> extends Object { ... }
class Hashtable<A,B> extends Dictionary<A, B> { ... }



Dictionary<String,Integer> d;
Object o;
```

Then the following are legal:

```
(Hashtable<String,Integer>)d   // legal, has type: Hashtable<String,Integer>
(Hashtable)o                   // legal, has type: Hashtable
```

But the following are not:

```
(Hashtable<Float,Double>)d     // illegal, not a subtype
(Hashtable<String,Integer>)o   // illegal, not unique subtype
```

5.4 Type Comparison Operator

Type comparison can involve parameterized types. The rules of casting conversions, as defined in Section 5.3, apply.

Syntax (see JLS, Sec. 15.19)

```
RelationalExpression
             ::= ...
              |  RelationalExpression instanceof Type
```

Example 11 Type comparisons.

```
class Seq<A> implements List<A> {
   static boolean isSeq(List<A> x) {
      return x instanceof Seq<A>
   }
   static boolean isSeq(Object x) {
      return x instanceof Seq
   }
   static boolean isSeqArray(Object x) {
      return x instanceof Seq[]
   }
}
```

Example 12 Type comparisons and type casts with type constructors.

```
class Pair<A, B> {



   A fst; B snd;



   public boolean equals(Object other) {
      return
     other instanceof Pair &&
     equals(fst, ((Pair)other).fst) &&
     equals(snd, ((Pair)other).snd);
   }



   private boolean equals(Object x, Object y) {
      return x == null && y == null || x != null && x.equals(y);
   }
}
```

5.5 Polymorphic Method Invocation

Polymorphic method invocations do not have special syntax. Type parameters of polymorphic methods are elided; they are inferred from value parameters according to the rules given in Section 5.6.

Syntax (See JLS 15.11)

```
MethodInvocation ::= MethodExpr ( ArgumentListOpt )
MethodExpr       ::= MethodName
                  |  Primary . Identifier
                  |  super . Identifier
```

Example 13 Polymorphic method calls with implicit type parameters (see Example 5)

```
swap(ints, 1, 3)            <Integer>swap(ints, 1, 3)
sort(strings)               <String>sort(strings)
strings.zip(ints)           strings.<Integer>zip(ints)
```

Optional Extension. If desired, one can also admit explicit parameterization for methods. In that case, the parameter section of a polymorphic method invocation would immediately precede the method name.

Syntax (See JLS 15.11)

```
MethodInvocation ::= MethodExpr ( ArgumentListOpt )
MethodExpr       ::= MethodId
                  |  Primary . MethodId
                  |  super . MethodId
MethodId         ::= TypeArgumentsOpt MethodName
```

Example 14 Polymorphic method calls with explicit type parameters (see Example 5)

```
<Integer>swap(ints, 1, 3)
<String>sort(strings)
strings.<Integer>zip(ints)
```

The convention of passing parameters before the method name is made necessary by parsing constraints: with the more conventional "type parameters after method name" convention the expression `f (a<b,c>(d))` would have two possible parses. The alternative of using `[ ]` brackets for types poses other problems.

5.6 Type Parameter Inference

Type parameters of a call to a polymorphic method are inferred from the call's value parameters. To make inference work, we make use of a *bottom* type `Null`, which is a subtype of every reference type. This type already exists in the Java programming language as the type of `null`. We postulate that the subtyping relationship between `Null` and reference types is promoted through constructors: If T and U are identical types except that where T has occurrences of `Null` U has occurrences of other reference types, then T is a subtype of U.

Type parameter inference inserts the most specific parameter types such that

1. each actual argument type is a subtype of the corresponding formal argument type,
2. no type variable that occurs more than once in the method's result type is instantiated to a type containing `Null`.

It is an error if most specific parameter types do not exist or are not unique.

Example 15 Type parameter inference.

Assume the polymorphic method declarations:

```
static <A> Seq<A> nil() { return new Seq<A>(); }
static <A> Seq<A> cons(A x, Seq<A> xs) { return new Seq<A>(x, xs); }
```

Then the following are legal expressions:

```
cons("abc", nil())                          // of type:    Seq<String>
cons(new IOException(), cons(new Error(), nil()))
                                            // of type:    Seq<Throwable>
nil();                                      // of type:    Seq<Null>
cons(null, nil());                          // of type:    Seq<Null>
```

The second restriction above needs some explanation. Note that a covariance rule applies to types containing `Null`. For any type context TC, type U, $TC[\texttt{Null}]$ is a subtype of $TC[U]$. General covariance leads to unsound type systems, so we have to argue carefully that our type system with its restricted form of covariance is still sound. The soundness argument goes as follows: since one cannot declare variables of type $TC\langle\texttt{Null}\rangle$, all one can do with a value of that type is assign or pass it once to a variable or parameter of some other type. There are now three possibilities, depending on the variable's type:

- The variable's type is an unparameterized supertype of the raw type TC. In this case the assignment is clearly legal.
- The variable's type is $TC'\langle T\rangle$ for some type T and supertype TC' of TC. Now, the only value of `Null` is `null`, which is also a value of every reference type T. Hence, any value of type $TC\langle\texttt{Null}\rangle$ will also be a value of type $TC'\langle T\rangle$, so the assignment is sound.

- The variable is a parameter p whose type is a type variable, A. Then code that accesses p in the method body is insensitive to the type of the actual parameter, so the method body itself cannot give rise to type errors. Furthermore, by restriction (2.) above, the method's formal result type will contain at most one occurrence of A, so the actual type of the method application is again of the form $TC'\langle\texttt{Null}\rangle$, where TC' is a type context.

Without restriction (2.) type soundness would be compromised, as is shown by the following example.

Example 16 An unsafe situation for type parameter inference.

```
Pair<A,A> duplicate(A x) { return new Pair<A,A>(x, x); }



void crackIt(Pair<Seq<String>,Seq<Integer>> p) {
   p.fst.head := "hello";
   Integer i = p.snd.head;
}



crackIt(duplicate(cons(null, nil()))); // illegal!
```

This will effectively assign a String to an Integer. The problem is that the `duplicate` method returns the same value under two type parameters which then get matched against different types. I.e.

```
duplicate(cons(null, nil()))
```

has type

```
Pair<Seq<Null>,Seq<Null>>
```

but the two `Seq<Null>` parameters really stand for the same object, hence it is unsound to widen these types to different `Seq` types. The GJ compiler will report an error for the call

```
crackIt(duplicate(cons(null, nil())));
```

The error message will state that an uninstantiated type parameter appears several times in the result type of a method.

6 Translation

In the following we explain how GJ programs are translated to JVM bytecodes. In a nutshell, the translation proceeds by erasing all type parameters, mapping type variables to their bounds, and inserting casts as needed. Some subtleties of the translation are caused by the handling of overriding.

6.1 Translation of Types

As part of its translation process, a GJ Compiler will map every parameterized type to its type erasure. *Type erasure* is a mapping from GJ types to conventional (unparameterized) types. We write $|T|$ for the erasure of type T. The erasure mapping is defined as follows.

- The erasure of a parameterized type $C\langle T_1, ..., T_n\rangle$ is C.
- The erasure of a nested type $T.C$ is $|T|.C$.
- The erasure of an array type $T[]$ is $|T|[]$.
- The erasure of a type variable is the erasure of the type variable's bound.
- The erasure of every other type is the type itself.

6.2 Translation of Methods

Each method $T\,m(T_1, ..., T_n)$ is translated to a method with the same name whose return type and argument types are the erasures of the corresponding types in the original method. In addition, if a method declaration $T\,m(T_1, ..., T_n)$ is inherited (and possibly overridden) in an extension where a type parameter of the class or interface is instantiated, such that the method now has a different type erasure, a *bridge method* will be generated. The type of the bridge method is the type erasure of the method in the base class or interface. In the bridge method's body all arguments to the method will be cast to their type erasures in the extending class, after which the call will be forwarded to the original method or an overriding instance.

Example 17 Bridge methods.

```
class C<A> { abstract A id(A x); }
class D extends C { String id(String x) { return x; } }
```

This will be translated to:

```
class C { abstract Object id(Object x); }
class D extends C {
   String id(String x) { return x; }
   Object id(Object x) { return id((String)x);
}
```

Note that the translation scheme can produce methods with identical names and argument types, yet with different result types, all declared in the same class. Here's an example:

Example 18 Bridge methods with the same parameters as normal methods.

```
class C<A> { abstract A next(); }
class D extends C<String> { String next() { return ""; } }
```

This will be translated to:

```
class C { abstract Object next(); }
class D extends C<String> {
   String next/*1*/() { return ""; }
   Object next/*2*/() { return next/*1*/(); }
}
```

A Java compiler would reject that program because of the double declaration of **`next`**. But the bytecode representation of the program is legal, since the bytecode always refers to a method via its the full signature and therefore can distinguish between the two occurrences of **`next`**. Since we cannot make the same distinction in the Java source, we resorted to indices in /* ... */ comments to make clear which method a name refers to.

The same technique is used to implement method overriding with covariant return types[1].

Example 19 Overriding with covariant return types.

```
class C { C dup(){...} }
class D extends C { D dup(){...} }
```

This translates to:

```
class C { C dup(); }
class D {
   D dup/*1*/(){...}
   C dup/*2*/(){ return dup/*1*/(); }
}
```

[1]covariant return types were at some time before version 1.0 part of the Java programming language but got removed later

Since our translation of methods erases types, it is possible that different methods with identical names but different types are mapped to methods with the same type erasure. Such a case, if it arises, is considered to be an error in the original GJ program. There are three rules to prevent signature clashes caused by the translation. Say a method declaration M indirectly overrides a method declaration M' if there is a (possibly empty) path of method declarations

$$M = M_0, M_1, ..., M_n = M'$$

such that M_i overrides M_{i+1}. Then one must have:

Rule 1 Methods declared in the same class with the same name must have different erasures.

Rule 2 If a method declaration M in class C has the same name and type erasure as a method declaration M' in a superclass D of C then M in C must indirectly override M' in D.

Rule 3 If a method declaration M in a superclass D of C has the same name and type erasure as a method declaration M' in an interface I implemented by C then there must be a method declaration M'' in C or one of its superclasses that indirectly overrides M in D and implements M' in I.

Example 20 Name clash excluded by Rule 2.

```
class C<A> { A id (A x) {...} }
class D extends C<String> {
   Object id(Object x) {...}
}
```

This is illegal since `C.id` and `D.id` have the same type erasure, yet `D.id` does not override `C.id`. Hence, Rule 2 is violated.

Example 21 Name clash excluded by Rule 3.

```
class C<A> { A id (A x) {...} }
interface I<A> { A id(A x); }
class D extends C<String> implements I<Integer> {
   String id(String x) {...}
   Integer id(Integer x) {...}
}
```

This is also illegal, since `C.id` and `I.id` have the same type erasure yet there is no single method in `D` that indirectly overrides `C.id` and implements `I.id`. Hence, Rule 3 is violated.

6.3 Translation of Expressions

Expressions are translated unchanged except that casts are inserted where necessary. There are two situations where a cast needs to be inserted.

1. Field access where the field's type is a type parameter. Example:

```
class Cell<A> { A value; A getValue(); }
...
String f(Cell<String> cell) {
   return cell.value;
}
```

Since the type erasure of `cell.value` is `java.lang.Object`, yet `f` returns a `String`, the return statement needs to be translated to

```
return (String)cell.value;
```

2. Method invocation, where the method's return type is a type parameter. For instance, in the context of the above example the statement

```
String x = cell.getValue();
```

needs to be translated to:

```
String x = (String)cell.getValue();
```

7 The `Signature` Classfile Attribute

Classfiles need to carry GJ's additional type information in a backwards compatible way. This is accomplished by introducing a new "Signature" attribute for classes, methods and fields. The structure of this attribute is as follows:

```
"Signature" (u4 attr-length, u2 signature-index)
```

When used as an attribute of a method or field, a signature gives the full GJ type of that method or field. When used as a class attribute, a signature indicates the type parameters of the class, followed by its supertype, followed by all its interfaces.

The type syntax in signatures is extended to parameterized types and type variables. There is also a new signature syntax for formal type parameters. The syntax extensions for signature strings are as follows:

Syntax

```
MethodOrFieldSignature ::= TypeSignature


ClassSignature         ::= ParameterPartOpt
                           super_TypeSignature interface_TypeSignatures


TypeSignatures         ::= TypeSignatures TypeSignature
                        |


TypeSignature          ::= ...
                        |  ClassTypeSignature
                        |  MethodTypeSignature
                        |  TypeVariableSignature


ClassTypeSignature     ::= 'L' Ident TypeArgumentsOpt ';'
                        |  ClassTypeSignature '.' Ident ';' TypeArgumentsOpt


MethodTypeSignature    ::= TypeArgumentsOpt '(' TypeSignatures ')' TypeSignature


TypeVariableSignature  ::= 'T' Ident ';'


TypeArguments          ::= '<' TypeSignature TypeSignatures '>'


ParameterPart          ::= '<' ParameterSignature ParameterSignatures '>'


ParameterSignatures    ::= ParameterSignatures ParameterSignature
                        |


ParameterSignature     ::= Ident ':' bound_TypeSignature
```

References

[BOSW98] Gilad Bracha, Martin Odersky, David Stoutamire, and Philip Wadler. Making the future safe for the past: Adding Genericity to the Java Programming Language. Submiited to OOPSLA98, 1998.

[GLS96] James Gosling, Bill Joy, and Guy Steele. The Java language specification. Java Series, Sun Microsystems, ISBN 0-201-63451-1, 1996.