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## Smalltalk — a reflective language

**Oscar Nierstrasz** 



## **Birds-eye view**





Smalltalk is still today one of the few fully reflective, fully dynamic, object-oriented development environments.

We will see how a simple, uniform object model enables live, dynamic, interactive software development.

#### Roadmap



#### > Smalltalk Basics

> Demo: modeling Call Graphs

## The origins of Smalltalk



"simple things should be very simple, ... and, complex things should be very possible"

#### Dynabook project (1968)



Smalltalk was invented to support the development of a new generation of graphical hardware devices. It was designed to be object-oriented "from the ground up".

The DynaBook project imagined a future handheld device that could hold huge libraries of information. The Xerox PARC Smalltalk project started by building graphics workstations, with a view to a DynaBook-like device in the future.

http://esug.org/data/HistoricalDocuments/Smalltalk80/SmalltalkHistory.pdf

Excerpt from Alan Kay. *Personal Computing*. In "Meeting on 20 Years of Computing Science", pp. 2-30, Instituto di Elaborazione della Informazione, Pisa, Italy, 1975:

Smalltalk is a very simple, comprehensive way of simulating dynamic models. The built-in primitives of most programming languages (such as numbers, files, data structures, etc.), in Smalltalk, are actually simulations built from more comprehensive ideas, including states-in-process, communication using messages, and classes and instances.

*Two of its basic goals are that simple things should be very simple*, one should not have to read a manual to do obvious things; *and, complex things should be very possible*, comprehensive interactive systems should be easily programmed without 'hair or prayer'.

http://scgresources.unibe.ch/Literature/Smalltalk/Kay75a.pdf

## What is interesting about Smalltalk?

- > Everything is an object
- > Everything happens by sending messages
- > All the source code is there all the time
- > You can't lose code
- > You can change everything
- > You can change things without restarting the system
- > The Debugger is your Friend

## How does Smalltalk work?



#### A running Smalltalk systems consists of 4 parts:

- 1. The *image* contains all the objects (the "heap")
- 2.The *changes file* logs all the source code changes you make (i.e., classes and methods)
- 3. The virtual machine executes bytecode and manages objects in the image

4. The "sources file" contains all system source code of the base image

Note that the image and changes file must be kept together. Although the VM and sources may be shared by multiple users, nowadays all four files are commonly kept together within a single "one-click" application.

## **Don't panic!**

New Smalltalkers often think they need to understand all the details of a thing before they can use it.

Try to answer the question

"How does this work?"

with

"I don't care".

- Alan Knight. Smalltalk Guru

#### This is actually a paraphrase of:

Try not to care — Beginning Smalltalk programmers often have trouble because they think they need to understand all the details of how a thing works before they can use it. This means it takes quite a while before they can master Transcript show: 'Hello World'. One of the great leaps in OO is to be able to answer the question "How does this work?" with "I don't care".

http://alanknightsblog.blogspot.ch/2011/10/principles-of-oo-design-or-everything-i.html

## Two things to remember ...

## **Everything is an object**

Integers, Booleans, classes, methods, compiled methods, the tools, you name it, they are all objects. When you finally understand deeply that everything in the Smalltalk system is an object, you start to think differently about how to interact with that world.

Here's a relevant fake quote from *A Brief, Incomplete, and Mostly* Wrong History of Programming Languages:

1980 — Alan Kay creates Smalltalk and invents the term "object oriented." When asked what that means he replies, "Smalltalk programs are just objects." When asked what objects are made of he replies, "objects." When asked again he says "look, it's all objects all the way down. Until you reach turtles."

http://james-iry.blogspot.ch/2009/05/brief-incomplete-and-mostly-wrong.html

# Everything happens by sending messages

To understand why something happens, figure out what message was sent. One consequence of this is that anything can be done programmatically. You just have to figure out what objects are involved and what messages they understand.

## The Smalltalk object model

#### > Every object is an instance of one class

- -... which is also an object
- Single inheritance

## > Dynamic binding

- All variables are dynamically typed and bound

#### > State is private to objects

- "Protected" for subclasses
- Encapsulation boundary is the object, not the class!

## > Methods are public

- "private" methods by convention only

## **Smalltalk Syntax**

#### Every expression is a message send

> Unary messages

5 factorial Transcript cr

> Binary messages

> Keyword messages

Transcript show: 'hello world' 2 raisedTo: 32 'hello' at: 1 put: \$y

#### Precedence

#### First unary, then binary, then keyword:

#### Use parentheses to force order:

## **Literals and constants**

Strings & Characters	'hello' \$a
Numbers	1 3.14159
Symbols	#yadayada
Arrays	#(1 2 3)
Pseudo-variables	self super
Constants	true false

There are only 6 keywords in Smalltalk: self, super, true, false, nil and thisContext. (This last one we will encounter in the lecture on reflection.)

### **Blocks**



## Roadmap



> Smalltalk Basics

#### > Demo: modeling Call Graphs

- The call graph model
- Pharo and Glamorous Toolkit
- Implementing the CallGraph class
- Version control in Pharo
- -Modeling Calls, Methods and Classes
- The Debugger is your Friend!
- Expressing queries

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## Task: analyze call graph logs from Javassist



java.lang.String:org.clapper.util.html.HTMLUtil.convertCharacterEntities:java.lang.String STATIC_METHOD	
java.lang.String org.clapper.util.html.test.HTMLEntitiesTest.convertHTMLEntities:47	
org.clapper.util.text.XStringBufBase:org.clapper.util.text.XStringBufBase.append:java.lang.String	
org.clapper.util.text.XStringBuffer java.lang.String org.clapper.util.html.HTMLUtil.convertCharacterEntities:240	
java.lang.Appendable:org.clapper.util.text.XStringBuffer.getBufferAsAppendable org.clapper.util.text.XStringBuffer	
org.clapper.util.text.XStringBufBase.append:469	
java.lang.String:org.clapper.util.html.HTMLUtil.convertEntity:java.lang.String STATIC_METHOD java.lang.String	
org.clapper.util.html.HTMLUtil.convertCharacterEntities:253	
java.util.ResourceBundle:org.clapper.util.html.HTMLUtil.getResourceBundle STATIC_METHOD	
org.clapper.util.html.HTMLUtil.convertEntity:424	
java.lang.String:org.clapper.util.html.HTMLUtil.textFromHTML:java.lang.String STATIC_METHOD java.lang.String	
org.clapper.util.html.test.HTMLEntitiesTest.textFromHTML:82	

18

The data is generated from some Java code instrumented using Javassist and written to a mysql log. This is a dump of the resulting mysql table.

http://jboss-javassist.github.io/javassist/

## How to reconstruct the model from the log?



Our goal is to reconstruct from the run-time log an objectoriented model of the call graph that can be queried to asnwer questions about the calling relationships.

This UML class diagram summarized the information encoded in the log:

A Method is implemented in a Class (its owner). The arguments and return types are also statically-known classes.

A Call is a run-time activation of a specific Method (caller) calling another Method (callee). The receiver and the arguments are instances of specific classes (which may not be identical to the owner or static arguments of the caller!).

There may be multiple Calls of the same Method.

## **Questions of interest**

- > How many calls are there?
- > How many methods are called?
- > How many classes are accessed?
- > Which methods are static?
- > Which methods are called most frequently?
- > What is the depth of the call graph?
- > Which methods are called by more than one caller?
- > Which methods are potentially polymorphic? (multiple receivers/implementations)
- > What are the polymorphic call sites? (methods called with different receiver/argument types)



We would like to build up the model in such a way that such questions can easily be posed as queries, i.e., expressions over the objects representing the model.

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## Pharo — a modern Smalltalk







**Welcome** 

## Pharo is an open-source evolution of Smalltalk-80. Download it from:

http://pharo.org

To learn how to use Pharo, start with the open-source book, *Pharo by Example:* 

http://books.pharo.org

To learn about more advanced features, continue with *Deep into Pharo* 

## Glamorous Toolkit – a moldable Smalltalk



Gt is a "moldable" development environment built on Pharo with native windows, software analysis support, and a visualization engine GT offers a new graphical framework and a new set of tools for software development on top of Pharo.

https://gtoolkit.com/download/

NB: Although GT is quite mature, it does not yet offer replacements for all Pharo tools and features, so it is always possible to escape the the "Morphic World" to access the traditional tool set. As an alternative to the following slides, you can download and run a live version of the demo.

From a Gt Playground, run the following snippet to install the demo examples:

```
Metacello new baseline: 'SMAForGt';
repository: 'github://onierstrasz/sma-examples/src';
load.
```

And run this snippet to start open the slideshow demos: SMAForGt openSlideshowsOverview
# **The Playground**

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Page 'Hello world' • •i • @ eg Inspect	E Q ×		a ByteString String Li Hello world	g (Hello w	world) Items	Tree	Boxes	Raw	Q i Connections
The Playground is a place to evaluate arbitrary Smalltalk expressions			Ev ex an the	valu pre "ir e re	uati ess nsp esu	ng ion ect It	an op tor"	ens on	

You can select an expression in the Workspace and "do it", "print it", "inspect it", or simply "do it and go".

NB: use the keyboard shortcuts instead of the menu or buttons!

# Accessing a file from a Playground

# We can open the file named "Calls.txt" and extract its contents as a String object

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I       J       J       eg         +       +			java.lang.St  org.clapper  java.lang.Ap  org.clapper  java.lang.St  java.util.Res  org.clapper  java.lang.St  java.lang.St  java.lang.Ap  org.clapper  java.lang.Ap  org.clapper  java.lang.Ap  org.clapper  java.lang.Ap	ring:org.a .util.text. opendabl r.util.text. ring:org.a sourceBu r.util.htm ring:org.a .util.text. opendabl r.util.text. opendabl r.util.text. .util.text. opendabl	clapper. XStringE e:org.cla .XStringE clapper. ndle:org l.HTMLU clapper. XStringE e:org.cla .XStringE e:org.cla .XStringE e:org.cla .XStringE e:org.cla	util.html. BufBase:o apper.util BufBase.a util.html. g.clapper. Util.conve util.html. BufBase:o apper.util BufBase.a BufBase.a BufBase.o apper.util BufBase.o	HTMLUtil. org.clappe .text.XStri append:46 HTMLUtil. util.html.1 rtEntity:42 HTMLUtil. HTMLUtil. org.clappe .text.XStri append:26 org.clappe .text.XStri append:26 org.clappe .text.XStri	convertCharacte r.util.text.XString ingBuffer.getBuff 59 convertEntity:jav HTMLUtil.getRese 24 textFromHTML:jav stripHTMLTags:ja r.util.text.XString ingBuilder.getBu 51 r.util.text.XString ingBuilder.getBu 51 r.util.text.XString ingBuilder.getBu	rEntities: BufBase. FerAsAppe va.lang.St ourceBun ava.lang.S ava.lang.S BufBase. fferAsApp BufBase. fferAsApp BufBase. fferAsApp	java.la apper endab ring S dle ST String  String  apper eendal apper eendal apper eendal

We should encapsulate this data in a ClassGraph object

NB: first we must copy the file "Calls.txt" to the folder holding the image.

# Navigating to "impleMentors" or "seNders"

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+ Page 'Calls.txt' asFileReference FileSystem-Core > String asFileReference A FileSystem disk > referenceTo: FileSystem	E Q ×	<pre>     a GtSearchImplementorsFilter (#asFileReference implementor i     i     Live Metrics Raw Print Connections Meta</pre>						

You can explore a method's implementation in place. You can also navigate to iMplementors or seNders by selecting the name and typing <CMD>-M, respectively <CMD>-N.

# Navigating to classes

	Glamorous Toolkit	
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'Calls.txt' asFileReference         ) ) ) () (%)	Contents       Path       Hex       Raw       Print       Connections       Me         FileReference       -	+ ice ice ice ice

#### You can browse the class of an object in its Meta tab

There are many ways to navigate to the class of an object.

From the inspector view of an object, you can browse its class in the "Meta" tab. From there you can click on the "book" icon to open a dedicated code browser.

You can also programmatically obtain the class of any object by sending it the message class:

('Calls.txt' asFileReference) class

There is also a general-purpose search tool called Spotter, which can search for classes, and just about anything else, which we will see later.

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#### **Creating a new class**



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Pragmas Processes Protocols		->	Traits:	+				
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Kernel-BytecodeEnc ► Kernel-Chronology-E Kernel-Rules		· >>>	Class vars: Pools:	+++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++				
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Kernel-Tests-Rules Kernel-Tests-WithCo		acceptDe	corated:		*Pill	lar-Model-Core-	Core instance	

Since *everything happens by sending messages*, it follows that this is also true for creating a class. To create (or update) a class, you simply send a message to its (already existing) superclass. Note that since the new subclass may not exist yet, you must refer to it using a symbol (i.e., #ClassGraph, not CallGraph). In GT, you can also create new classes interactively, using the playground or the class coder.

#### **Class comments**



#### NB: Be sure to write a *class comment*!

In general the idea in Smalltalk is to write literate code that does not require additional comments. Nevertheless, it is very important to *write a class comment for every class you introduce*, and to keep the comment up-to-date.

The class comment is a good place to put some *code snippets* to illustrate how to use the class, or to give pointers to class-side methods to run examples.

# **Defining methods**



Note that in the slides we usually prefix method names with the class name (CallGraph>>from: aString) to make it clear which class it belongs to. This is only a convention for slides, books and papers. It is not needed in the browser because there you can always see what class a method belongs to.

#### How many calls are there in the call graph?

| cg |
cg := CallGraph new from: 'Calls.txt' asFileReference contents.
cg calls size 2476

Let's improve the instantiation interface

# Factory methods and other "static" methods are defined on the *class side*

(CallGraph fromFile: 'Calls.txt') calls size. 2476

Let's turn this into a test!

Now we must define a class-side method. **#fromFile:** is a message understood by the CallGraph class (as opposed it its instance). We click on the "Class" button to switch to the class-side methods.

Note that the method Callgraph class>>#fromFile: must return an instance of CallGraph. Instead of evaluating CallGraph new, we evaluate self new (self is anyway this class, but we would also like the code to work for eventual subclasses!).

#### **Creating a simple test (in Pharo)**

a 5-line excerpt from Calls.txt

TestCase subclass: #CallGraphTest
instanceVariableNames: ''

^ self new from: ' java.lang.String:...'

classVariableNames:

CallGraph class>>example

package: 'CallGraph'

CallGraphTest>>testNumberOfCalls
 self assert: CallGraph example calls size equals: 5



Test classes inherit from TestCase and are usually named after the class they test + "Test".

You can run tests from the TestRunner tool, or directly from the System Browser (by clicking the button next to a test method or a test class).

## **Test examples in GT**



Tests in GT consist of methods containing *assertions* and returning an *example* object. Example objects can be *composed*.

The <gtExample> pragma allows example methods to be run from the browser.

Instead of writing tests, we write examples, which we can inspect, interact with, and compose to form scenarios, or more complex objects.

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# **Version control for Pharo and GT**

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gt Git □ ×		Q =
Image: Git Link         +         a GtGitRepositoryGroup         Repositories       Raw         O Uncommited       O Incoming         O Uncommited       O Incoming         O Uncommited       O Incoming         O Uncommited       O Incoming         O Branch         sma-examples       master	Fetch All O Detached Status Up to dat	<ul> <li>an IceLibgitRepository ( Push Fetch Pull Refresh i</li> <li>Packages Branches Remotes Tags Repository dir Commit</li> <li>src</li> <li>src</li> <li>SMA-CallGraph</li> <li>CallGraph class</li> <li>fromFileNamed:</li> <li>SMA-ForGt</li> <li>CallGraphExamples</li> <li>CallGraphExamples class</li> <li>SMAForGt class</li> </ul>

#### Pharo and GT offer version control via git.

Git integration is provided by a library and tool called Iceberg. To use it, you should adopt the convention that all source files are saved in a subfolder called "src".

You should also define a BaseLineOf... package containing a script to simplify the loading of your packages.

See the SMA demo repo as an example.

https://github.com/onierstrasz/sma-examples

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#### **Modeling Calls, Methods and Classes**

We want to build up a Call object for each line of the log

CallGraph>>from: aString
 calls := (Character cr split: aString)
 collect: [ :each | self createCall: each ]

'hello' collect: [ :each | each uppercase ] 'HELLO'

Let's look at Collections first ...

In order to build up the model, we need to create a Call object from each line of the log file. To do this, we will map the #createCall method to each line using the #OrderedCollection>>collect: method.

## Collections



Resist the temptation to program your own collections!

The Smalltalk collection hierarchy offers a mature library of classes to manage various kinds of collections.

Hint: if you need to manage some kind of ordered list, you should normally use the OrderedCollection class (i.e., rather than Array or LinkedList).

NB: The diagram is an interactive visualization generated from the actual class hierarchy using Mondrian:

GtMondrianDomainExamples new collectionHierarchy The collection hierarchy is described in detail in chapter 9 of *Pharo by Example*:

http://files.pharo.org/books/pharo-by-example/

#### **Common messages**

```
#(1 2 3 4) includes: 5
#(1 2 3 4) size
#(1 2 3 4) isEmpty
#(1 2 3 4) contains: [:some | some < 0 ]
#(1 2 3 4) do:
   [:each | Transcript show: each ]
#(1 2 3 4) with: #(5 6 7 8)
   do: [:x : y | Transcript show: x+y; cr]
#(1 2 3 4) select: [:each | each odd ]
#(1 2 3 4) detect: [:each | each odd ]
#(1 2 3 4) detect: [:each | each odd ]
#(1 2 3 4) collect: [:each | each odd ]
#(1 2 3 4) inject: 0
   into: [:sum :each | sum + each]</pre>
```



Most of these methods should be obvious:

- •#select: and #reject return subcollections matching the block (or not)
- #detect: returns the first matching element or raises an error
- #collect: is more commonly knows as "*map*" it returns a new collection of the same size by mapping the argument block to each element <u>https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Map\_(higher-order\_function)</u>
- #inject:into: is also known as "fold" it takes an initial value and iteratuvely applies the two-argument block to that value and each element in the collection, producing, for example, a sum or a product

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fold\_(higher-order\_function)

## Conditionals



Since *everything is an object* in Smalltalk, it should not come as a surprise that Booleans are objects too. You might ask, "Well, how do you implement Booleans if you don't have them as primitives?"

Actually the implementation closely follows the standard encoding in the lambda calculus. A Boolean is simply an object that can make a choice between two alternatives: true and false just make opposite choices.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church\_encoding

The objects true and false are (unique) instances of the classes True and False. Each implements methods like #ifTrue:ifFalse: in its own way.

Have a look at the implementation of these methods in the system.

#### **Creating Calls, Methods and Classes**



To create the call graph, we must split each line of the log into its individual fields by the \$ | character.

Each Call object stores a reference to its callee, a JMethod object representing the called Java method. Since each method may be called multiple times, but we only want to have a unique JMethod instance representing that method, we cache these objects in a dictionary indexed by the method signature (field 2 of the log).

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### The debugger is your friend!



When we evaluate this snippet, it turns out that we have forgotten to implement some methods. (In this case #JMethod>>name:) The Debugger window pops up and offers us the possibility to create the missing method.

*Aside:* this offers you an effective way to follow TDD (test-driven development) in Pharo — implement some tests, then run them, and use the Debugger to prompt you to implement the missing classes and methods.

From the debugger we can generate both JMethod>>name: and Call>>callee: and proceed with execution!

### Using the debugger

AssertionFailure: Assertion	on failed
ssertionFailure: Assertion failed	
<pre>Kernel &gt; Object assert:description: Kernel &gt; Object assert:  SMA-CallGraph &gt; CallGraph createCall: callString</pre>	Variables       Evaluator       Watches         ©       self       a CallGraph         ©       call       nil         1       callString         ©       callee       nil         ©       calls       nil         The debugger reveals th
<pre>self assert: (fields at: 1) size = 0. callee := self getMethod: (fields at: 2). owner := self getClass: (fields at: 3). callee owner: owner. call := Call new . call callee: callee; args: (fields at: 4); caller: (fields at: 4); caller: (fields at: 5). callee addCall: call. ^ call </pre>	false assumption that ea log line is a complete en
SMA-CallGraph > CallGraph from: Collections-Sequenceable > OrderedCollection collect:	

The standard Pharo debugger shows you the run-time stack of currently executing methods. Here we see that an assertion failed in the #createCall: method. The inspector window below shows that the given fields collection is unexpectedly empty.

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### **Duck Typing in Smalltalk**



Behaves like:

```
CallGraph>>from: aString
    calls := ((Character cr split: aString)
        select: [:each | each notEmpty])
        collect: [ :each | self createCall: each ]
```

since symbols also understand value:

# "Duck typing" refers to one object masquerading as another by implementing its interface. ("If it quacks like a duck, it must be a duck".)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Duck\_test

Here we are using a symbol (#notEmpty) where we would normally expect a one-argument block. This works simply because the Symbol class implements the #value: method used to evaluate a block.

Duck typing is unique to dynamically-typed languages like Smalltalk and Ruby. In a statically-typed language like Java you would achieve the same effect by defining an *interface* for objects that can be evaluated with an argument (e.g.,

IOneArgumentBlock) and ensuring that the relevant classes (Block, Symbol) implement that interface.

#### **Number of methods**

## CallGraphTest>>testNumberOfMethods self assert: CallGraph example methods size equals: 5

(CallGraph fromFile: 'Calls.txt') methods size. 168

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	CallGraph fromFile: \'Calls.txt'		Raw	Connections	Print	Meta		Items Keys Tree Raw Connections Print	
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			{}	calls		an OrderedCollection [2475		java.lang.Object:org.clappe org.clapper.util.misc.FileHas	
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			{}	classes		a Dictionary [67 items] ('STA		int:org.clapper.util.misc.Arr org.clapper.util.misc.ArrayIter	
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		r -					r -	java.lang.Object:org.clappe org.clapper.util.misc.FileHash	
								java.util.Collection:org.clap org.clapper.util.misc.MultiValu	
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								java.lang.String:org.clappe org.clapper.util.text.Duration	
								void:org.clapper.util.misc.L org.clapper.util.misc.LRUMap	
								java.lang.Appendable:org.c org.clapper.util.text.XStringB	
								void:org.clapper.util.misc.F org.clapper.util.misc.FileHash	
								java.lang.Object:org.clappe org.clapper.util.misc.LRUMap	

#### To do ...

- > Model classes (introduce JClass class)
- > Model argument and return types of methods
- > Track which methods are static
- > Determine which methods are polymorphic

To continue from here we introduce a class JClass to represent all the Java classes we encounter as owners of methods, or as argument and return types. ('STATIC\_METHOD' is a dummy class to represent static methods.)

We extend CallGraph>>#createCall: and #CallGraph>>#getMethod: to track classes as well as methods. CallGraph>>#getClass: caches the JClass instances with a dictionary, just as we did with #getMethod.

We can recognize static methods by checking if their owner is static. A *polymorphic* method is one that takes arguments of different types, so we look at the set of arguments from the calls and check if that set is greater than 1.

#### Queries

(CallGraph fromFile: 'Calls.txt') methods size. 168

(CallGraph fromFile: 'Calls.txt') classes size. 67

```
((CallGraph fromFile: 'Calls.txt') methods
    select: [ :m | m calls size > 1 ]) size. 141
```

((CallGraph fromFile: 'Calls.txt') methods
 select: #isPolymorphic) size. 10

### **Navigating the CallGraph**

# The Playground offers a convenient interface to navigate through our CallGraph hierarchy.

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#### What you should know!

- > What's the difference between a *method*, a *selector* and a *message*?
- > What are *categories* and *protocols*? What are they for?
- > How do you create a new class in Smalltalk?
- > What's the difference between CallGraph and CallGraph class?
- > What are "class side" methods for?
- > How is a block like a lambda?
- > What's the difference between a string and a symbol?

#### Can you answer these questions?

- > Can a class access the fields of one of its instances?
- > Can you name something that is not an object in Smalltalk?
- > What happens to existing instances of a class if you add new fields at run time?
- > What will happen if you change the implementation of core classes (like Booleans or Strings)?
- > What's the difference between self and super?



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