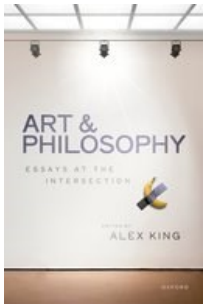

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CHAPTER

3 How to Change an Artwork

David Friedell

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Abstract

The question of how people change artworks is important for the metaphysics of art. It's relatively easy for anyone to change a painting or sculpture, but who may change a literary or musical work is restricted and varies with context. Authors of novels and composers of symphonies often have a special power to change their artworks. Mary Shelley revised *Frankenstein*, and Tchaikovsky revised his *Second Symphony*. People who aren't Shelley or Tchaikovsky cannot change these artworks. In other cases, such as those involving jazz standards and folk songs, performers and ordinary folks have more power to change artworks. This chapter builds on previous work defending the created-abstract-simples view, according to which literary and musical works, unlike paintings and sculptures, are created abstract objects that have no parts. On this view, the way to change a literary or musical work is for an individual, empowered by social practices, to change rules about how a literary work should be published or how a musical work should be performed. A. R. J. Fisher and Caterina Moruzzi object that the created-abstract-simples view doesn't allow for literary and musical works to genuinely change, and Nemesio Garcia-Carríl Puy objects that the view doesn't allow for these artworks to be repeatable. This chapter clarifies the created-abstract-simples view and defends the view against these objections.

Keywords: metaphysics of art, change, musical works, novels, abstract objects, simples

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1 Introduction

In 2012, a parishioner in Borja, Spain, tried to restore a fresco of Jesus. The result was a shocking and comical distortion of the original painting. The botched restoration went viral, boosting tourism in Borja and spurring donations to the church where the fresco remains. The incident also highlighted a mundane, metaphysical fact: paintings are fragile and mutable.

Paintings are *concrete*. So are sculptures, tapestries, cathedrals, and jewelry. I follow many philosophers in thinking that other kinds of artworks are *abstract*.[1] Examples of abstract artworks include novels, poems, symphonies, films, plays, and artistic videogames. I characterize concrete objects as spatially located, and abstract ones as not spatially located.[2]

Here's one reason why I think novels are abstract. I have a copy of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The copy is located in space. If I were to destroy it, Harper Lee fans would have no reason to worry. The novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* would still exist. The novel is distinct from my copy. This suggests that the novel is something non-spatial, distinct from any of its copies. Similar considerations apply to the other artworks I consider abstract.

Abstract artworks, like concrete ones, change. Authors revise novels during the initial writing process and after publication. Mary Shelley published *Frankenstein* in 1818 and made changes with a new edition in 1831. Akhil Sharma radically revised the ending of his novel *An Obedient Father* in 2022, decades after it was first published. Composers revise musical works. Tchaikovsky composed his *Second Symphony* in 1872, and made substantive changes in 1879. Igor Stravinsky revised his orchestral work *Rite of Spring* many times for decades after its 1913 premiere.

There's a peculiar difference, however, between how concrete and abstract artworks change. Anyone can change a painting. It's easy. Splotching orange paint onto a painting will change it. But there's no way for me to
p. 40 change Tchaikovsky's ↳ *Second Symphony*. Suppose I, along with some friends, perform the piece without its opening horn solo. Although my performance lacks this solo, the symphony itself still contains the solo. I can affect a performance of the symphony, but I can't change the symphony. Why?

Elsewhere I have formulated this question more generally:

> *The Revision Puzzle*
>
> Why are some individuals in a privileged position when it comes to changing or revising musical works and other artifacts, such as novels, films, and games? (Friedell 2020, 806–807)

Any solution should account for both the privileged position composers have in Western classical music and cases with more egalitarian practices. Jazz standards, folk songs, and folk tales may all be changed by people other than their creators. The folk tale "Cinderella," for example, originated possibly thousands of years ago in Greece and has changed in ways its first storytellers could not have foreseen.

I have argued for a solution, according to which abstract artworks are created abstract simples (Friedell 2020). All changes abstract artworks undergo are changes to rules about them, such as rules how about how they should be performed (in the case of symphonies) and rules about how they should be published (in the case of novels). Social practices determine who can enact these rules and thus who can change the artworks.

In what follows I will clarify the created-abstract-simples view and respond to two objections. A. R. J. Fisher (2023, 1260) and Caterina Moruzzi (2022, 2–3) object that the view fails because it doesn't allow for abstract artworks to genuinely change. Nemesio Garcia-Carríl Puy (2022, 301–302) objects that the view fails because it doesn't account for the repeatability of abstract artworks. In responding to both challenges, I will provide

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support for the created-abstract-simples view. I will also show why the revision puzzle and the broader topic of change are important to metaphysical theorizing about art.

2 The Created-Abstract-Simples View

On the created-abstract-simples view, symphonies, novels, poems, and similar entities are created abstract objects. They are also metaphysical simples; they have no parts. This lack of parthood might sound surprising. It's natural to think, for instance, that words are parts of novels and that sounds are parts of symphonies. Not so, on my view.

Consider *To Kill a Mockingbird*. It's an abstract simple created by Harper Lee. The novel has words. More technically, the novel has an associated abstract type of sequence of words. Lee picked out this type when
p. 41 writing the novel. We may call ↳ this type a *word-structure*. The word-structure is neither identical to nor part of the novel. The novel has this word-structure. All this means, roughly, is that a standard way to publish the novel is to produce a physical book that instantiates this word-structure. The word-structure is associated with the novel via a rule about how the novel should be published. Likewise, Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony* is an abstract simple created by Beethoven. It has sounds. More technically, it has an associated abstract type of sequence of sounds, a *sound-structure*. All this means, roughly, is that a standard to way to perform the symphony instantiates this sound-structure. The sound-structure is not part of the symphony. It is associated with the symphony via a rule about how to perform the symphony.

Let us see how this view handles change. Consider Shelley's *Frankenstein*. The novel had a particular word-structure when it was first published in 1818. A standard way (indeed, the only standard way at that time) to publish the novel involved that word-structure. In 1831 Shelley published a second edition with various changes. For example, in this edition Elizabeth is no longer Victor's cousin. The novel thereby acquired a new word-structure. The novel's words changed. Although the 1831 edition has become more widely read, the 1818 edition still sees print. Instead of saying that the novel lost its original word-structure, I prefer to say that the novel now has two word-structures. There's nothing metaphysically mysterious on my view about this.[3] There may be two standard ways to publish a novel (albeit one more popular than the other) when previously there was only one. There's also no problem, alternatively, with a novel having one word-structure and then losing it completely and acquiring a different word-structure. Presumably, this happens whenever the first version of a novel falls completely out of favor and is replaced by a later version. The created-abstract-simples view allows for both kinds of changes to a novel's words: changes by addition and changes by replacement.

The created-abstract-simples view solves the revision puzzle. The view explains, for example, why Shelley, but not I, may change *Frankenstein*. Shelley's creative process is embedded in a social practice. Readers typically want to read a novel with the author's chosen words. Readers know that other readers want this, and they all try to coordinate onto the same version of a novel. When Shelley conveys in 1831 how she wants the novel to be read, the community of readers deems that version standard. These social facts make that version standard. If I were to announce that we should read the novel with different words, nobody would care. I can't change the novel's words, because—due to social practices—I can't change how people should publish the novel.[4]

p. 42 These social practices, as reasonable as they are, are contingent (Friedell 2020, 816–817). If readers were to consider me the world's greatest literary mind and were to defer to me on how a novel should be published, then I could change *Frankenstein*'s words. I could change which word-structure copies of the novels should include.

Crucially, the created-abstract-simples view is consistent with a diverse array of social practices (Friedell 2020, 817). For example, Tchaikovsky changed the *Second Symphony*'s melody by changing the sound-structure that performances should include. He changed how the symphony should be performed, because within the

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Western classical tradition people care about the composer's intentions. I can't change the symphony's melody, because nobody cares about my opinion on the matter. A more egalitarian social practice gives performers of jazz standards control over how those songs should be performed. This empowers performers to change melodies and lyrics. One example is Egbert Van Alstyne's "In the Shade of the Old Apple Tree." The song lost its original verse after it was performed by Louis Armstrong, Bing Crosby, Duke Ellington, and others. Folk songs and liturgical songs also have flexible social practices. The Jewish liturgical song "Adon Olam," created in perhaps the eleventh century, is now sung to many different melodies, including the tune of "Yankee Doodle." Even in Western classical music, creators sometimes lose control. Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* has a complex history, due in part to copyright issues. Although Stravinsky approved of some versions of the work, other versions (such as the 1948 version) included adjustments that went against his wishes.

Sometimes fans rebel. In 2023, Puffin Books announced edits to Roald Dahl's books, in order to make them less offensive. Given a social practice in which copyright owners determine how books should be published, they changed the books' words. Fans complained about "censorship" and "woke culture," leading Puffin Books to announce they would reprint the original versions of the books, along with newer versions. The books will each have two word-structures, going forward. There is tension also between fans of *Star Wars: A New Hope* and its creator, George Lucas. Many fans prefer the movie's original version in which Han Solo, without initially being fired upon, shoots a bounty hunter. This version accentuates Solo's character arc from antihero to hero. Lucas prefers versions in which the bounty hunter tries to shoot first, which makes Solo's violence seem less nefarious. The fans have ensured that their preferred version remains prominent. In some cases, and *A New Hope* might be one of them, it's indeterminate which combinations of images and sounds a film has. Such indeterminacy is expected on the created-abstract-simples view. Social practices determine how artworks change, and these practices may be messy and indeterminate.

The created-abstract-simples view explains how different sorts of people (composers, authors, performers, publishers, fans, etc.) in different contexts may change abstract artworks. The view explains also how concrete
p. 43 artworks change ↳ differently from abstracts ones. We change concrete artworks by interacting with their parts. Adding paint to a fresco affects its parts. Whether adding paint engenders change is not socially determined. If everyone were to somehow believe that only a fresco's original artist can change it, everyone would be mistaken. All it takes is paint and *chutzpah*. Abstract artworks, however, are partless. We change them not by changing parts but by changing rules about them. Who is in charge of enacting these rules is precisely the sort of thing that is up to social convention.

3 The Fisher-Moruzzi Objection

Fisher (2023, 1260) and Moruzzi (2022, 2–3) object that the created-abstract-simples view doesn't allow for abstract artworks to genuinely change.[5] Their objection relies on the intrinsic/extrinsic distinction. *Intrinsic* properties are properties an object has just because of how it is. *Extrinsic* properties are properties an object has because of how something else is (Lewis 1983, 197). For example, my dog Karma has the intrinsic properties *is-a-dog*, *is-fluffy*, and *is-angelic*. When I say that Karma is a fluffy angelic dog, I'm talking only about Karma. Conversely, the properties *on-the-couch*, *is-my-dog*, and *is-smaller-than-my-neighbor's-dog* are extrinsic. When I say Karma is on the couch, is my dog, and is smaller than my neighbor's dog, the topic is not only Karma anymore. I'm talking about a couch, me, and my neighbor's dog. Karma has these properties not only because of how she is but also because of how other things are.[6]

Fisher and Moruzzi assume that an object changes only by having a particular *intrinsic* property at one time and lacking that property at another time. This orthodox view of change is usually attributed to Peter Geach (1969). The view is reasonable. Intuitively, Karma changes when she goes from being fluffy to not being fluffy

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(after she bathes). Intuitively, she does not change by getting on the couch, or when my neighbor acquires a bigger dog. Examples like these support Geach's view that change is a change in intrinsic properties.

Fisher and Moruzzi note that, if Geach's view of change is right, then abstract artworks don't change on the created-abstract-simples view. This is because, on the created-abstract-simples view, only extrinsic properties of abstract artworks change. When Shelley in 1831 changed *Frankenstein*'s words she gave the novel an extrinsic
p. 44 property: *is-standard-to-be-published-with-the-1831-word-structure* . ↳ When Tchaikovsky in 1879 changed the *Second Symphony*'s melody, he gave the symphony an extrinsic property: *is-standard-to-be-peformed-with-the-1879-sound-structure*. The artworks have these properties not only because of how they are but because of how structures and rules are.

Fisher and Moruzzi conclude that the created-abstract-simples view doesn't allow for abstract artworks to change. If abstract artworks do in fact change, this is bad enough for my view. Moreover, if Fischer and Moruzzi are right, then my preferred explanation for why only some people may change certain abstract artworks entails that nobody changes them. That is, one might worry that my solution to the revision puzzle fails on its own terms.

We may present Fisher and Moruzzi's objection as follows:

P1: If the created-abstract-simples view is correct, then novels and symphonies change only in extrinsic properties.

P2: If an object changes only in extrinsic properties, then the object does not genuinely change.

P3: If the created-abstract-simples-view is correct, then novels and symphonies do not genuinely change.

P4: Novels and symphonies genuinely change.

C: Therefore, the created-abstract simples view is incorrect.

This argument is valid. P1 is a fact about the created-abstract-simples view. P2 follows straightforwardly from Geach's view of change. P3 follows from P1 and P2. Fisher (2023 1260) and Moruzzi (2022, 6) both accept P4 and think it's intuitively true. Moreover, one might think P4 is a key motivation for the created-abstract-simples view, given the view's purported ability to solve the revision puzzle. C follows from P3 and P4.

4 Response to the Fisher-Moruzzi Objection

I have three points in response. First, I concede that on the created-abstract-simples view only extrinsic properties of abstract artworks change. That is, I concede P1. Second, however, there is reason to doubt Geach's view of change and therefore reason to doubt P2 (and, by extension, P3). Third, even if Geach's view of change and P2 turn out to be correct, the created-abstract-simples view remains intact. I may suppose for the sake of argument that P2 is true and still deny P4, without conceding too much. I will now explain these points in turn.

First, Fisher and Moruzzi are right that on the created-abstract-simples view only extrinsic properties of abstract artworks change. P1 is true. Indeed, this feature helps the view to solve the revision puzzle (Friedell
p. 45 2020, 815). It's easy to explain why Shelley, but not I, can change certain *extrinsic* properties of a novel. ↳ Social practices often restrict who may change certain extrinsic properties of an object. For example, social practices give members of the MacArthur Foundation, but not me, the power to give a painting or sculpture the extrinsic property *is-created-by-a-MacArthur-fellow* .

It would be more puzzling if Shelley, but not I, could change certain *intrinsic* properties of a novel. Recall that any solution to the revision puzzle should account for more egalitarian cases, such as those involving jazz

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standards, folk songs, and folk tales. Given how who has power shifts with context, social practices seem crucial. Shared beliefs, attitudes, and dispositions bestow power onto different people in different contexts. In the jazz community, there's a shared belief that certain performers, such as Louis Armstrong and Ella Fitzgerald, can shape how standards should be performed. The Western classical music community instead prioritizes the preferences of composers. Typically, such social facts cannot prevent someone from changing a particular intrinsic property of an object. For example, regardless of what society believes about my artistic preferences, I can give a painting or sculpture the intrinsic property *has-orange-paint-on-its-surface* . Since it's hard to see how the relevant social practices could prevent someone from changing intrinsic properties of an abstract artwork, I happily accept that only extrinsic properties of abstract artworks change.

Not only do intrinsic properties of abstract artworks not change on my view. I think abstract artworks have no (or almost no) intrinsic properties (Friedell 2020, 812–813). Abstract artworks are simples. They are specks. They are like space-time points, except they're not even in space (though they are in time). Their interesting aesthetic properties are extrinsic. Consider the claim that *Frankenstein* is somber. *Frankenstein*, on my view, has the property *is-standard-to-be-published-with-a-word-structure-with-somber-content* . The novel has this property not just because of how it is, but because of how its word-structure and publication rules are. Likewise, consider the claim that Tchaikovsky's *Second Symphony* is in C minor. On my view the symphony has the property *is-standard-to-be-performed-with-a-sound-structure-that-is-in-C-minor* . The symphony has this property because of how its sound-structure and performance rules are. Whereas Sherri Irvin (2022) thinks rules are constitutive of some artworks, including conceptual artworks, I think rules are external to artworks. Rules apply to artworks; artworks are not made of rules. All of this is to say I accept that only extrinsic properties of abstract artworks change. I accept P1.

So far so good, for the Fisher-Moruzzi objection. My second point, however, is that I have doubts about P2 (and P3 by extension). I doubt Geach's claim that change is a change in intrinsic properties. I concede that my dog doesn't change by getting on the couch or when my neighbor gets a bigger dog. In Geach's (1969, 71–72) terms, these are mere "Cambridge-changes." Perhaps, though, not all changes in extrinsic properties are Cambridge-changes. David Weberman (1999) claims, contra Geach, that some changes in extrinsic properties are genuine
p. 46 changes. ↳ Weberman (1999, 143) thinks that gaining a spouse, losing a spouse, becoming a parent, and becoming a sibling are ways people change. This position is defensible. At least, it sounds reasonable for someone to say, "I changed this year; I got married and became a parent."

One might object that people who talk this way merely convey changes in lifestyle or circumstances, not ways in which they changed per se. One might also object that people who talk this way are conveying genuine changes they underwent (for example, changes in their personality and their fatigue level) that accompanied but are different from the mere change in marital or parental status. After all, it would make sense in certain contexts for someone to say, "Even though I got married, it didn't change me at all." I won't settle this issue here. I'm merely raising doubt about Geach's view. It's at least reasonable to think that there's a relevant metaphysical difference between becoming a parent and becoming such that a neighbor's dog is bigger than you.

An example closer to the topic of this chapter involves words. Words intuitively change as their meaning changes. There's an intuitive sense in which the word "awful" changed when it went from meaning "awe-inspiring" to "very bad." This is presumably not a change in intrinsic properties. It's a change in how "awful" is semantically related to the properties *is-awe-inspiring* and *is-very-bad* . Analogously, it's not an intrinsic property of a red light that it means *stop*.

These cases reveal that there is reason to doubt Geach's orthodox view of change. They also make it seem more plausible that abstract artworks change via changes in certain extrinsic properties. To be clear, I'm not suggesting that all changes in extrinsic properties change abstract artworks. When *Oliver Twist* goes from being my favorite Dickens novel to being my second favorite, it does not change. I am suggesting, for example,

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that when Dickens removed some antisemitic language from the novel, he genuinely changed the novel by changing its extrinsic properties. He changed which word-structure publications of the novel should include.

I suspect the underlying issue is merely terminological about the meaning of "change." Weberman says that becoming a parent by itself changes a person; Fisher and Moruzzi would say it doesn't. I doubt this is a substantive debate about the nature of parenthood or the nature of change. The debate is about what "change" means. Although I'm unconvinced that Fisher and Moruzzi are right, I will suppose now for the sake of argument that they are right that "change" means a change in intrinsic properties. I will suppose for the sake of argument that P2 and P3 are true. This brings me to my third reply.

Fisher and Moruzzi are right that if Geach's view of change is correct, then abstract artworks on my view—the created-abstract-simples view—do not change. That is, P3 is true if Geach's view of change is correct. But the truth of P3 poses no serious problem for my view. I may still reply by denying P4, that abstract artworks genuinely change. Denying P4 is unproblematic for two reasons. First, it's not a big cost in itself to deny that
p. 47 abstract artworks genuinely change. (I apologize, dear ↳ reader, if by now you feel misled by this chapter's title.) Second, everything I have said in favor of the created-abstract-simples view may be rephrased to accommodate Geach's view of change.

Allow me to explain. I have argued that the created-abstract-simples view explains why two sentences are true:

> (1) Novels change.
>
> (2) Shelley, but not I, can change *Frankenstein*.

Supposing that Fisher and Moruzzi are right about what "change" means, these sentences are fine colloquially or when speaking loosely. But they are literally false on the created-abstract-simples view. This is not in itself a big cost. Here's why. Our pre-theoretical intuitions about (1) and (2) being true are no stronger than our intuitions about (3)–(5) being true:

> (3) A person changes by becoming a parent.
>
> (4) A person changes by becoming married.
>
> (5) A word changes by getting a new meaning.

If it turns out that (3)–(5), though reasonable to say when speaking loosely, are literally false, then I am happy to say the same about (1) and (2).

Some philosophers might object that it is a big cost to deny that novels undergo Geachean change. Guy Rohrbaugh (2003), for instance, thinks a desideratum for any theory of novels, musical works, and the like is that such artworks are "temporally flexible," by which he means that they change in intrinsic properties over time. I disagree. We should not start with the fancy metaphysical assumption that intrinsic properties of novels change. We should be open to this being true, but we shouldn't assume it at the start. Instead, we should start with a (defeasible) commitment to it being true that a novel can have different words at different times, and that a musical work can have different melodies at different times.

Let me try to diagnose where Rohrbaugh goes wrong, if I may. My hunch is that, like me, he intuits that a novel can have different words at different times. This is all well and good. He then infers from this intuition that a novel's intrinsic properties change over time. We should not, however, make this inference. Maybe only a novel's extrinsic properties change over time. Analogously, it would be incorrect to infer from the intuition that I have different phone numbers at different times to the claim that this is a change in my intrinsic properties.

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It's important to distinguish my view from other views that deny abstract artworks genuinely change (supposing Geach's view of change is right). Consider a Platonist view on which a novel is identical to a word-structure. It would be natural for the Platonist to deny that novels change. Shelley doesn't change a novel's
p. 48 words when she publishes the second edition of *Frankenstein* in 1831. She instead writes ↳ a novel in 1818 and writes another (albeit similar) novel in 1831. Analogously, Julian Dodd (2007) identifies a musical work with a sound-structure. He would say that there are two similar symphonies composed by Tchaikovsky, both named "*The Second Symphony*." Such Platonist views are defensible. But my view is better in the following respect. Although Platonists and I bite the bullet and accept that novels don't undergo Geachean change (which I've argued is no big bullet to bite), I preserve the intuition that there is only one *Frankenstein* (regardless of whether it literally changes). I don't accept that there are multiple *Frankesnstein*s, one for each revision Shelley makes. That's too many novels! It's a key advantage of my view that I don't have to bite *that* bullet. I think there's one novel that has different words at different times. If Geach's view of change is right, the novel is not literally changing. I can live with that. Crucially, it's still *one* novel with different words at different times.

I've argued that it's not a big cost to deny that novels change. Moreover, everything I've said in favor of my view may be rephrased to accommodate Geach's view of change. I've already hinted at how we may rephrase my prior claim that my view accounts for (1) and (2). Even if Geach's view of change is right and (1) and (2) are false on the created-abstract-simples view, two related sentences are true on the view:

> (1a) Novels have different words at different times.
>
> (2a) Shelley, but not I, can change *Frankenstein*'s words.

Preserving the truth of these sentences should be a desideratum for any theory of novels. (1a) is true on the created-abstract-simples view. *Frankenstein* had words in 1818. It had a particular word-structure, corresponding to the standard way for it to be published. In 1831 it had different words—a different word-structure—because there became a new standard way to publish the novel. (2a) is also true on my view. Shelley, but not I, can change the novel's words. This is because social practices enable Shelley, but not I, to change how the novel should be published.

Before moving on, I will highlight an ambiguity involving "change," in order to clarify what (2a) means. Consider:

> (6) I changed my clothes.

On its most natural reading, (6) conveys that I was wearing clothes and then came to wear different clothes. This would be appropriate to say if I were wearing jeans and then khakis. In other contexts, though, (6) might convey that there are some clothes that I altered—say, if I'm bragging about sewing a patch onto my favorite pair of khakis. To appreciate the ambiguity, consider the difference between typical assertions of "I changed
p. 49 my clothes" and "the tailor changed my clothes." ↳ (2a) should be interpreted in the same way (6) is typically interpreted. When we say that Shelley changed *Frankenstein*'s words, we are not saying that there is a single collection of words out there that Shelley has altered. We're talking about two collections of words. The novel had an old collection of words, and Shelley gave the novel new words. Likewise, when I say that I've changed my phone number, I'm not saying of a particular ten-digit number that it has undergone change. I'm talking about multiple phone numbers. I had one and now have another.

Now, I've argued that my view, even if it cannot account for (1) and (2), explains why (1a) and (2a) are true. This is a big deal. Some views can't easily do this. Dodd and other Platonists cannot preserve (1a) or (2a). Instead of accepting that novels have different words at different times, and that authors sometimes have a special power to change a novel's words, Platonists think that there are multiple *Frankenstein*s, one corresponding to each revision. Each novel has its own unchanging sequence of words for its entire existence. Other views preserve

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(1a) but struggle with (2a). For example, consider Simon Evnine's (2016) hylomorphic view of abstract artworks. Evnine thinks novels and symphonies are like concrete artifacts, such as statues and cars. He thinks a car is *constituted* by (i.e. made of) its parts. Evnine thinks a novel is constituted by a word-structure and a symphony is constituted by a sound-structure. A novel may be constituted by different words at different times, just as a car may be constituted by different tires at different times. Evnine's view explains why (1a) is true—how a novel has different words at different times.[7]

The problem is that it's hard for Evnine to explain why (2a) is true (Friedell 2020, 815). It's hard to explain why Shelley, but not I, can change *Frankenstein*'s words. It won't help Evnine much to appeal to social practices. After all, who may control which objects constitute another object is typically not dependent on social practices.[8] Anyone can replace a car's tires, regardless of social practices. So, the key difference between abstract and concrete artifacts is still mysterious on Evnine's view. As we've seen, the mystery dissipates on the created-abstract-simples view. This view says that people change a novel's words by enacting a rule about that novel. Who gets to be in charge of enacting this rule is unsurprisingly up to social convention. Social practices
p. 50 commonly control who can enact rules. Social practices, for ↳ instance, empower my employer, but not my parents, to give me a new professional email address. Giving me an email address amounts to enacting a rule about how one should use email to contact me. The more a theory compares a novel getting words to a car getting tires (instead of to a person getting an email address), the more that view will struggle to solve the revision puzzle.

If (1) and (2) turn out to be false on my view, we can rephrase the underlying ideas, as in (1a) and (2a), to accommodate Geach's view of change. More generally, everything I've said in favor of the created-abstract-simples view may be rephrased to accommodate Geach's view of change. To appreciate this point, consider again my formulation of the revision puzzle:

> *The Revision Puzzle*
>
> Why are some individuals in a privileged position when it comes to changing or revising musical works and other artifacts, such as novels, films, and games?

If Geach's view of change is correct, then this formulation is flawed. This is because the formulation assumes that abstract artworks change. We may rephrase or, ahem, revise the puzzle as follows.

> *The Revised Revision Puzzle*
>
> Why are some individuals in a privileged position when it comes to changing the melodies of musical works, the words of novels, the images and sounds of films, and so forth?

This formulation of the puzzle does not assume that abstract artworks themselves change. My view solves the puzzle when phrased in this way. My view explains why, for example, Shelley, but not I, can change *Frankenstein*'s words.

In summary, Fisher and Moruzzi object that the created-abstract-simples view doesn't allow abstract artworks to change, since abstract artworks on the view change only in extrinsic properties. I have made three points in response. First, I concede that on the created-abstract-simples view only extrinsic properties of abstract artworks change. Second, I push back on Geach's claim that change is a change in intrinsic properties. If Geach is wrong, then my view allows abstract artworks to change. Third, even if Geach is right and abstract artworks do not change on my view, I stand by my view. This is because denying that abstract artworks change is not in itself a big cost. And, everything I've said in favor of the view can be rephrased to accommodate Geach's view of change. In particular, my view has the advantage of explaining (a) how a novel can have different words at different times, and (b) why only certain individuals can change a novel's words. For these reasons, the Fisher-Moruzzi objection does not undermine the created-abstract-simples view.

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5 Puy's Objection

Puy (2022, 301–302) objects that the created-abstract-simples view doesn't account for the repeatability of abstract artworks. Here's a characterization of repeatability. We may fully encounter repeatable artworks by interacting with any of a plethora of objects or events. I read the novel *Frankenstein* by reading my copy, and you read the same novel by reading a different copy. I listen to Tchaikovsky's *Second Symphony* by listening to a performance, and you may listen to the symphony by listening to a different performance. This is not so with non-repeatable artworks, such as paintings and sculptures. The only way to see Michelangelo's sculpture *La Pietà* or his painting *The Creation of Adam* is to see unique objects at the Vatican. Anything else would be at best a forgery or replica. Not the real McCoy.

Puy contrasts the created-abstract-simples view with a type-token view, such as Dodd's (2007). Dodd identifies a musical work with a sound-structure, construed as a type of sequence of sounds. He thinks each (sufficiently adequate) performance of a symphony produces a token of the relevant type. What explains a symphony's repeatability is that different performances may produce tokens of the same sound-structure. We encounter a symphony by hearing any of its (sufficiently adequate) performances. Analogously, we encounter the word-type "chameleon" by reading any of its tokens. Puy thinks that the created-abstract-simples view fares worse. On this view, performances produce tokens of sound-structures, but sound structures are merely associated with a musical work via performance rules—socially determined rules about how the work should be performed. In a nutshell, Puy's concern is that the work is too removed from its performances for someone to encounter the work via its performances.

Repeatability is a real feature of novels and symphonies. It would be bad enough if my view couldn't explain this feature. To make matters worse, Puy (2022, 302) follows other theorists, including Nicholas Wolterstorff (1980) and Dodd (2007), in treating repeatability as one of the main reasons to think that novels and symphonies are abstract. They think that the best explanation for musical and literary works being repeatable is that they are abstract types—and that repeatability cannot be accounted for if these artworks are concrete. Puy's inquiry suggests that, although the created-abstract-simples view asserts that musical and literary works are abstract, the view misses out on a key motivation for this assertion in the first place.

6 Response to Puy's Objection

I have two main points in response. First, repeatability is not needed to argue that musical and literary works
p. 52 are abstract. It's not my main motivation. The main ↳ reason why I think these objects are abstract is because of my intuitions that sentences like the following are all true:

> (7) Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony* has no weight.
>
> (8) The novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* has no shape.
>
> (9) Ellington's "C Jam Blues" has no color.
>
> (10) If my copy of Ellison's *Invisible Man* were destroyed, the novel would still exist.
>
> (11) When a performance of Beach's *Gaelic Symphony* ends, the symphony still exists.
>
> (12) A symphony can exist even if it has never been performed.

These sentences don't invoke repeatability. While they don't give a knock-down argument for literary and musical works being abstract, they provide evidence for this claim. They suggest that a novel is distinct from any of its copies, and that a musical work is distinct from any of its performances. Given the intuitions in (6)–

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(8) that such objects lack shape, size, or color, it's reasonable to posit that these artworks are abstract. For these reasons, I think we can argue that literary and musical works are abstract without invoking repeatability.

It is still, however, a disadvantage of the created-abstract-simples view if it cannot account for repeatability. This brings me to my second response to Puy. I'm hopeful that my view can account for repeatability. Before stating why, let's clarify Puy's objection. His main concern is that on my view musical works are too distant from their performances for us to explain how someone can encounter a work by listening to its performances. Granted, there's a clear sense in which I concede that a musical work is not present at its performances. Musical works are abstract. As such, they are nowhere, not even in Carnegie Hall. But type/token theorists concede this, too, given that they agree with me that musical works are abstract. Puy and other type/token theorists claim that there is a weaker sense in which a musical work is present during each of its performances. The work, construed as a type, is present indirectly at the locations of its concrete tokens. This is what Dodd (2007, 11) has in mind when he claims that, although we don't directly hear symphonies, we indirectly hear them via hearing their performances. Puy claims that, given the constraints of the created-abstract-simples view, I cannot account for this secondary sense in which a musical work is present during each of its performances.

Let me explain why I remain hopeful. Consider an analogous example regarding email. My email address is not a part of me, nor a type of which I'm a token. It's associated with me. It's mine. It would be strange to say that it follows from these facts that you never email *me*; you merely send an email to an address that is associated with me. But that's just what it is to email me! You email me by sending an email to an address that is associated with me in the appropriate way. Likewise, when people perform a symphony's sound-structure—
p. 53 that is, a sound-structure ↳ that socially determined rules dictate should be performed in order to correctly perform the symphony—that's more or less just what it is to (correctly) perform a symphony.[9] I say "more or less," because I presume there must also be some intentional and causal component. I presume that in order to perform a symphony the performers must intend to perform that symphony and be causally connected in the appropriate way to the composer's compositional activity. Aliens with no contact to Earth cannot perform Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony*, even if they perform something that is sonically equivalent.[10]

My proposal, then, is that when you listen to a performance that produces the *Fifth Symphony*'s sound-structure and whose performers have the right sort of intention and are causally connected to Beethoven's compositional activity in the appropriate way, you thereby listen to the *Fifth Symphony*. That's just what it is to encounter or listen to a symphony (performed correctly), on my view. You email me by interacting in the appropriate way with an email address that is associated with me in the appropriate way. You listen to a symphony by listening to a performance that instantiates a sound-structure, when the performance is connected to the symphony in the appropriate way and when the sound-structure is associated with the symphony in the appropriate way. Puy assumes it's more than this—that the symphony must be a type and that its performances produce tokens. I have argued that this assumption is unwarranted.[11]

Let me give a further analogue from philosophy of language: Gottlob Frege's (1892) groundbreaking theory of sense and reference. When we say "Joan of Arc was courageous" there's a clear sense in which Joan of Arc is not present. She's no longer with us. There's a weaker sense in which she is present. We're talking about her. On one theory of reference, this is possible because we use the name "Joan of Arc" to directly refer to the person Joan of Arc. Frege's theory is more complicated. He claims that we use the name "Joan of Arc" to express a sense, a mode of presentation, often construed as a description, that in turn picks out the person Joan of Arc. He doesn't make this claim for complexity's sake. His theory has explanatory value. It explains why, for example, "Joan of Arc is Joan of Arc" is less informative than "Joan of Arc is the Maid of Orleans." The sense of "Joan of Arc" is, say, "the most famous French military leader in the 1400s." The sense of "the Maid of Orleans" is, say, "the most famous woman associated with Orleans in the 1400s." This difference, for Frege, explains why it's
p. 54 more interesting to learn that Joan of ↳ Arc is the Maid of Orleans than it is to learn that Joan of Arc is Joan of Arc. If all there were to the meaning of a name were its referent, this discrepancy would be harder to explain.

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Frege thinks we use names to talk about people, albeit less directly than you might have assumed. I think, in listening to performances of a symphony, we listen to the symphony, albeit less directly than you might have assumed. Like Frege, I don't add complications for complexity's sake. The created-abstract-simples view has explanatory value. It solves the revision puzzle.[12]

Perhaps Puy would object that I have stipulated that we encounter symphonies by listening to their performances but that I have not sufficiently explained how this is possible. This issue is subtle. Still, I hope to have shown that the burden of proof is now on Puy to show that the created-abstract-simples view cannot account for repeatability—even if I have not settled this issue here.

In summary, Puy objects that the created-abstract-simples view cannot account for repeatability. He thinks musical works on my view are too far removed from performances for it to be true that we encounter works by engaging with their performances. He thinks also that repeatability is a key reason to accept that musical and literary works are abstract in the first place. In response, I have made two claims. First, we can argue that musical and literary works are abstract without mentioning repeatability. Second, I have explained why my view can potentially account for repeatability.

7 Conclusion

I have clarified the created-abstract-simples view and how it solves the revision puzzle. I have also responded to two challenges: the Fisher-Moruzzi objection and Puy's objection. Regardless of whether my view is correct,
p. 55 the topic of how ↳ artworks change is worthy of further attention. Although much of the literature has focused on repeatability, the revision puzzle presents striking facts that any ontology of art should explain. It's easy for anyone to change a painting or sculpture. Conversely, often people are in a privileged position when it comes to giving a novel words, giving a song melodies and lyrics, and giving a film sounds and images. Who has the power varies, depending on context. Metaphysicians of art should continue to think about how to best explain these facts.[13]

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Notes

Footnotes

1 Examples include Jerrold Levinson (1980), Amie Thomasson (1998), Simon Evnine (2016), Sherri Irvin (2013), Zsofia Zvolensky (2015), and Nurbay Irmak (2021).

2 There are issues with characterizing the abstract/concrete distinction in terms of spatial location. See, for instance, Juvshik (2020).

3 This is a slight departure from how I’ve construed this sort of case previously (Friedell 2020). Note, further, that accepting a novel as having two word-structures would be a problem for a Platonist view on which novels simply are word-structures.

4 I am inspired here by increasing attention in the metaphysics of art to social practices. For example, Xhignesse (2020), building on work by Lopes (2014), argues that social conventions and practices explain why paintings, sculptures, novels and other art-kinds are *art*-kinds.

5 Moruzzi is less committed to the objection than Fisher is, mainly because she is less committed to Geach’s view of change (which as explained below is a crucial step in the objection). Still, for ease of exposition, I refer to it as the Fisher-Moruzzi objection. In an interview with Brandon Polite, Julian Dodd raises similar concerns (Dodd 2020).

6 It’s not obvious whether *is-a-dog* is intrinsic. Arguably, being a dog or a member of any species amounts to having a

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certain kind of causal history, which would suggest the property is extrinsic. There are less controversial examples. For example, *has-mass* is paradigmatically intrinsic.

7 I'm unsure, though, whether Evnine can account for a case (like I've claimed is true of *Frankenstein*) where a novel has two different word-structures at the same time. That is, he can more easily explain how a novel may have its old words replaced by new ones, rather than how a novel may gain new words and keep the old.

8 There might be important exceptions. Arguably, social practices determine which pieces of paper constitute dollar bills. But it's unclear whether this is a genuine case of constitution. Plausibly, a piece of paper *becomes* a dollar bill and thus acquires a new social status without constituting a further object. Analogously, when a person becomes a dentist this dentisthood is merely a new status or phase for the pre-existent person; the person doesn't constitute a distinct object that is the dentist. Moreover, even if we grant that pieces of paper constitute (in Evnine's sense) dollar bills, anyone can make changes to which parts of the paper constitute the dollar by e.g. cutting its corner. So, the case is still importantly different from novels and symphonies.

9 In taking social norms to affect what counts as performing a particular musical work, I'm aligned with Thi Nguyen (2019; 2020, 121–134) who, inspired by Sherri Irvin (2005), takes social norms to affect what counts as playing a particular game.

10 Dodd disagrees. He thinks only sonic properties matter in determining whether a performance is of a particular musical work. I side here with Levinson (1980) in thinking that sonic equivalence is not sufficient. See Juvshik (2021) for discussion and an argument for why Dodd should accept that intentions and causation are important.

11 See Alward (2020) and Davies (2021) for further argumentation that type/token theories do not have a monopoly on repeatability.

12 Incidentally, Puy (2019), with motivations similar to my own, adds complications to traditional type/token theories. On his view, a musical work is a second-order type. It's a type of which different versions of a musical work are tokens. Each version is in turn a type with a unique sound-structure as its token. He asserts that tokenhood is transitive, which means that the sound-structures are all tokens of the second-order types, the works themselves. His theory elegantly solves the revision puzzle. When Tchaikovsky changes the notes to his *Second Symphony* he does so by changing which version is standard. This is a change in extrinsic properties, not intrinsic properties (Puy 2019, 303). Puy can thus explain how social practices give Tchaikovsky, but not ordinary folks, this power. One reason, however, to prefer the created-abstract-simples view is the case of incomplete musical works. My intuition is that the *Second Symphony* existed before it was complete. It existed during the creative process when Tchaikovsky was still figuring things out. This is easy to explain on the created-abstract-simples view. A work is a metaphysical simple that comes into existence sometime during the creative process, perhaps even early in the process. Symphonies have sound-structures, but they needn't have them at all moments of their existence. It's harder to see how this would be true on Puy's theory, given that the work at every moment of its existence includes all of its versions. All that changes for Puy is which version is standard, but the versions are always tokens of the higher-order type. Moreover, I suspect that my view can more easily handle a case where, after many gradual changes, a work's final sound-structure is radically different from its original stound-structure.

13 I am grateful to Michael Della Rocca, Tim Juvshik, Caterina Moruzzi, and Elliot Paul for helpful comments and discussion.

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