Copywrong: Dennis Duncan interviews A T Kabe Wilson

A T Kabe Wilson's vast artwork of word-based recycling, *Olivia N'Gowfri – Of One Woman or So* (2014), broke new ground in creative adaptation and storytelling, displaying each and every word of Woolf's 1928 classic *A Room of One's Own* in a new order on a 1 × 4 m sheet of paper to become a collaged and anagrammatical novella. First covered by *The Guardian* in 2014, it was later made the centrepiece in an exhibition of literary artwork arranged by novelist Ali Smith, who called it 'one of the most inspiring things I've ever seen'. Studied at universities across the world, the project has become a key work in the field of modernist studies, inspiring many books, exhibitions, doctoral theses and an international literary conference, with a film adaptation now in the works.

Over a decade after Dennis Duncan first interviewed Kabe for the launch of *Of One Woman or So* in Woolf's former Bloomsbury drawing room, the two reunite here to discuss Kabe's new project *Copywrong* (exhibited at Shandy Hall, Coxwold in the spring of 2026), and his continued interest in making art by cutting up books.

D: Well, firstly I wonder if you would just describe what you've done with *Copywrong*. What *is* it?

K: *Copywrong* is my latest literary installation, another work in paper, or of paper. I call it a *conceptual translation* because it has been an attempt to translate a book according to the conceptual framing of the story, and the story I chose was Graham Greene's World War II thriller, *The Tenth Man* (1985). It's a novel about how paper can change someone's life story, and so in my translation the paper that makes up the book itself – the pages – are doctored to reflect what happens in the plot. Greene's title refers to the military practice of decimation – killing one man in ten – but when this happens in the novel the fated tenth man makes a pact to switch places with another to avoid death, and this sets off a chain of events that drastically affects the course of his life. In my translation the language stays the same, and the vast majority of the novel stays the same, but every tenth word is physically cut out from the text and another is switched in to replace it. That was the conceptual constraint: I had to remove every tenth word but then aim to replace it with something passably equivalent so as not to disrupt the meaning, grammar or plot. The difficulty of this task then mirrors the reality of the plot, where one man has changed places with another and is trying to make his life, or the lie of his life, make sense.

D: It's interesting that you describe it as a 'work in paper'. I mean, we're actually talking about a novella that's over a hundred pages long. Could you say something about the materiality of the piece and how a book becomes an installation?

K: I think what fascinated me most about *The Tenth Man* is how often paper played a part as documents, in relation to the setting of the novel – during and post World War II. As well as the torn-up slips of paper drawn from a shoe at the start to determine which of the French POWs will face the Nazi firing squad, there are so many formal pieces of paper referred to as having significant roles in the lives of the characters, and the legitimacy of these documents is regularly called into question. So I wanted to channel that sensibility by presenting each page of Greene's book as an altered legal document in my translation, and as such every page is separated from the book as whole and placed in a small manilla document folder, held open with a paperclip. These pages are placed in order with every tenth word cut out, and then through each little window created by this removal you can see my substitution words, which are printed onto a new sheet of paper behind Greene's page, in a slightly different font and varying in size, to fit the window space.

D: Could you explain the title *Copywrong* and the work's engagement with the legality – or misconceptions about the legality – of reproducing other people's work?

K: Drawing visual attention to the legal status of paper in this way underlines the title, which is a pun on the false but often repeated belief that if you change ten percent of a work of art you have created a new work that is exempt from laws around copyright. By changing one word in ten, my translation is trying to make a new piece of art by seeking to reach this figure of ten percent of the original work being altered. I wanted to play on this idea of the book as an adaptable work of art in different ways, and so this translation isn't a publication, or even a book, it's a hundred or so visibly doctored pages that have been presented as documents mounted onto a gallery wall so that people can look at them.

D: Right – a format it shares with your earlier work, *Of One Woman or So*, which we'll come to later.

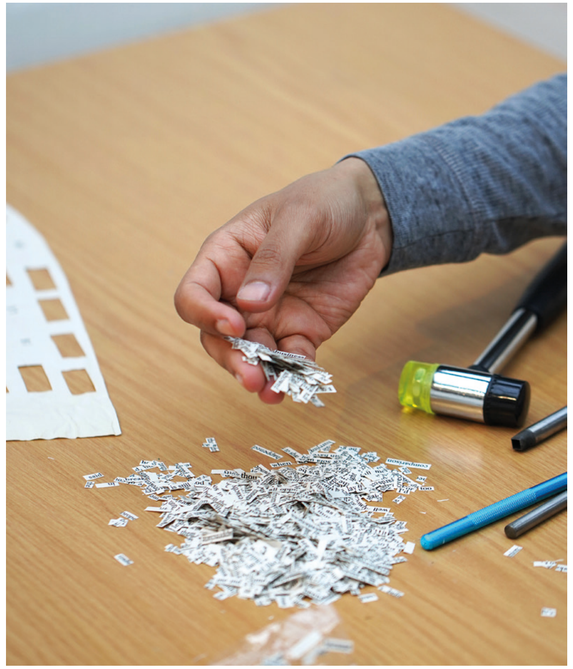
K: Yes, although differently rendered. In both cases there's a methodology that uses the visuality of cut-up paper to make a point unique to the source text you're working with. In the case of *Copywrong* that's an acknowledgement of the fact that at the very heart of Greene's novel there's this major question about legality and falsehood, or if not falsehood then miscommunicating reality. The central figure, Chavel, successfully switches places with another man before the firing squad, and this is a pact that they agree to in prison with their fellow inmates as witnesses, so there's some semblance of legality, again put to paper, but it's also clearly a dubious agreement. Chavel has cheated death, that's the way he sees it himself. He's then using some falsified or inaccurate documents – under a different name – to live out the rest of his life in the shadow of that pact, living out the lie. If copyright is a law of rightness, correctness, accuracy of ownership, then *Copywrong* is about misattribution, unlawful changes and literally copying something wrongly. You might be reproducing it with a gesture toward faithfulness, but you're not doing it right, you're doing it wrong.

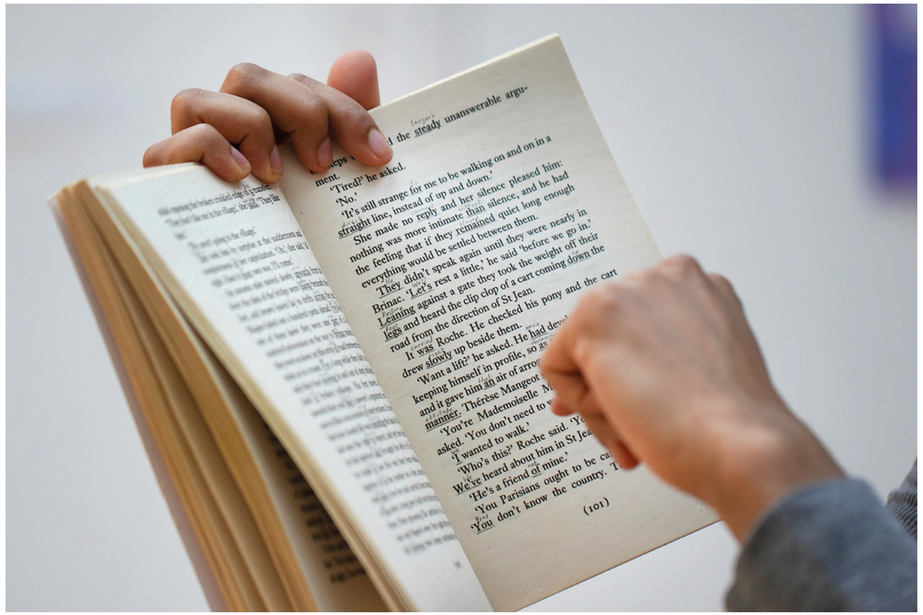
D: Let's also push at that word 'translation'. The work's subtitle is 'A Conceptual Translation'. Can you say a little about how it relates to what we might ordinarily think of as translation?

K: I guess what stood out for me in the process was that unlike *adapting* the source text, to expand it poetically, I was having to work hard to replace like for like. At the level of word meaning there was a mechanics of semantic exchange that, as a constraint, meant I could only view it as an act of translation. Which on some level I do think of as necessarily copying wrongly whilst trying not to. I'm a pretty monolingual person, but I really felt I was getting to experience the excitement of translating, and the difficulties, which then taught me so much about the language I was working with. Your work on translation and Oulipo has always fascinated me. I know we've talked before about this sense of what is lost within an act of translation. With *Copywrong* that loss is made manifest, as I've quite literally excised the words by blade edge, they no longer exist on the pages of the book and you have to reckon with their absence. That's the conceptual form, partially using visual art as a space to make it perceptible and accessible. It's a way to show the act, to say: 'I'm changing the text whilst attempting to keep it the same. I'm removing the original words and offering alternatives'. Is that what translation is?

D: Yes, certainly that's one thing that translation is. (An Oulipian might say that *Of One Woman Or So* was a kind of translation where the 'invariant' was the words of the source text, while in everything else – but especially their *order* – you allowed yourself free rein.) But another important thing about translation is that, as you bring another person into the creative act, another subjectivity, it is *inevitable* that the text cannot stay the same. So we can speak of loss – or betrayal – if we like, but we might just as well say, *What has the translator brought?* With this in mind, could you perhaps give us a couple of examples of where you feel you betrayed Greene's text – where you perhaps feel dissatisfied with your replacement – but also some of the places where your substitutions have given you delight?

K: I had so much fun with these little acts of betrayal, especially because they were inevitable in that way. It was inescapable. The rule of the concept meant that however perfect the original word was I still had to cut it out and replace it, even if the replacement was a bad idea – be that grammatically flawed, semantically inconsistent, or a complete mismatch in terms of how it would physically look as an addition to the page. So each time one of those bad ideas is imposed onto the text, it recalls, echoes, and highlights Chavel's original bad idea in the story. This is the linguistic version of telling a lie that has gotten out of control which you have to then keep desperately embellishing in the hope it might work. You can imagine the issues it presented. Any time the tenth word landed on a pronoun you likely have to substitute it either with a different





Photographs by Tom Rodgers

pronoun, which complicates the scene, or you have to use a name. The result of that was that I was having to add or invent lots of made-up names to the story. There's a priest described as a youngish man, where 'man' is the tenth word, so I leant on the French to make it 'youngish fiston', and then a few sentences later I'm having to refer to him as Fiston, capitalised, as if the narrator is riffing on that original designation and turning it into his earned name.

D: Right, names must present their own special problem – a deviation from ordinary translation practice where proper nouns have a kind of special status. They're sort of a relief because they have a direct, more or less singular relation to their referent, so you can often leave them intact, untranslated. They remind me a bit of that scene in *Gulliver's Travels* where the academicians of Lagado have invented a perfect form of language where you don't need words – which as we know are slippery and unreliable – you just have to carry around a big bag containing all the things you might possibly want to discuss, and then you take them out and point to them as necessary. But you've set yourself a constraint where, if the counter falls on a proper noun, you're not allowed to just leave it unchanged.

K: It's certainly a challenge. Usefully in Greene's text he makes an art of both using colloquial nicknames among his characters and leaning on French as a reserve language in the text. He does this early on by naming the swapped-in fated man by 'the odd sobriquet Janvier'. So in a way I could be faithful to the narrative style rather than the content, and of course plotwise it's perfect because Chavel later changes his name to Charlot in order to conceal his identity. But then there's the famed clarity in Greene's writing which stylistically I'm altering by neccesarily having to make it more poetic in order to copywrong. Sometimes that is delightful though, as you say.

D: Do you have a favourite example?

K: In one sentence, Chavel, whilst pretending to be Charlot, is asked to describe the guilty Chavel and says 'He was just a man like the rest of us'. The tenth word landed on 'rest', and I changed it to 'lot'. So with that simple synonymic substitution I'm able to poetically allude to or play on the fact that those men had their lives turned into no more than *lots* of paper drawn to decide their fate. Similarly there's a later moment where one character recounts the original story and says 'the tenth man he called him: quite a good title, that', which is of course a witty way of breaking the fourth wall on Greene's part. Usefully the tenth word lands on 'man' in that sentence, so I had to change it to 'the tenth gentleman', and so driven by the predetermined or chaotic fate of this concept, I have then alluded to an implied change of the title itself.

D: Which goes back to the play on copyright law, right?

K: Exactly, and changing the title or name of something is both a trait of translation and also of avoiding copyright restrictions. I'm thinking about how different supermarket brands alter the names of well-known products to create their own 'dupes'. That's a fascinating act of translation I think, to move away from the original, not so far that it becomes unrecognisable, but enough that you can pass it off as different. Much like being named Chavel and pretending you're named Charlot. It's funny that there's this prevalent misinterpretation that the precise quantitive rule on this is ten percent, which is widely accepted but apparently completely fictitious. If you google it then almost all the results are from legal blogs or lawyers' websites debunking the myth. I love the way that underlines what laws seem to be – they are rules that have been agreed to, somewhere, by someone, but we don't really know who. We know or imagine that they exist on paper that we can't see, and we know they are subject to change, and that we are subject to them. Other than the big obvious ones, how conscious are we of the particulars of most laws? In *The Tenth Man* there are laws that are changed according to the changing status of France during and after the war. There's a moment of uncertainty about whether or not the laws enshrined under German occupation still legally apply. The more criminally dubious characters actually make use of the fact that laws are presently changing to dupe people. It's an era of bits of paper being changed or allegedly being changed having massive effects on people's lives, a reiteration of the first rule imposed in the novel, that one in ten of the prisoners must be shot.

D: Decimation, though, the idea of collective punishment by executing one in ten, goes right back to Roman times. There's something interesting about the convenience of round numbers (or not round numbers for the Romans, but still a ten-based system) being the determining factor in such extreme, cruel behaviour. It exposes an arbitrariness which is then shocking.

K: Yes, it's interesting that comes back to ten, from Roman times, to World War II and then to perceptions of copyright. I sort of wonder if there's a link; no one seems to know where the copyright rule idea came from, but to me there's a bit of an eerie echo. Decimation as military punishment almost seems to say 'we're not really killing you, just a little bit to make a point, we're killing you *enough*', and then in the ten percent rule you have this sense that you're making *enough* of a change to get away with it. As if they are little crimes. But killing ten percent of a population isn't a little crime. I suppose there's something to be probed there about whether changing a work of art is comparable to killing part of it – whether it's an act of violence...

D: Going back to that question of 'bits of paper being changed', could you say something about the format of the work. With *Of One Woman Or So* – a work where you had cut up Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* into its individual words then rearranged them into a completely different text – it always fascinated me that you were resistant to presenting this as a *book*, as a codex, i.e. printed, bound, multiply reproduced as a pocket-sized edition. Conceptually, it seemed to lend itself to the artists' book genre. But you've chosen to keep it as a one-off, the original treated pages placed side-by-side as a wall-sized artwork that hangs in galleries. So I wondered if you could say something, firstly about how *Copywrong* is presented – materially I mean – and then perhaps some thoughts about aura versus reproducibility?

K: Like *Of One Woman or So*, it's set up for a viewer/reader to walk along with the pages on a wall, although this time they are separated into their individual open folders. I suppose that difference speaks to the difference in what is happening to the source text. *A Room of One's Own* being scrambled meant that its reassembly as a single piece felt necessary in order to tell the story of how the words were sourced. Whereas *The Tenth Man* isn't really changing that much, just ten percent as we know, so there felt like more freedom to separate the pages whilst keeping them together – no longer joined at the binding, which has been sliced away, but still in their original order. That way the gallery space itself becomes the book – to walk around inside it is to inhabit the space of the text. The artist Ane Thon Knutsen did something startling in this regard using Woolf's essay 'The Mark on the Wall' – she separated the entire essay into one, two, three or four word sections, typeset them onto pieces of paper and then fully and perfectly filled every single space of wall in a gallery. Marks on a wall.

D: Good! One of the perennial problems for curators when it comes to artists' books is how to display them in an exhibition space. Do you present them closed, so visitors can see the cover but nothing else? Or do you choose one particular opening that will just have to be representative of the rest? You can't typically *read* a whole book if it's being displayed.

K: Exactly, I think about this dilemma a lot. I'm obviously drawn to this use of gallery space with text, and I think that has something to do with a frustration at the limitations of each. As much as I love books, I sometimes don't feel

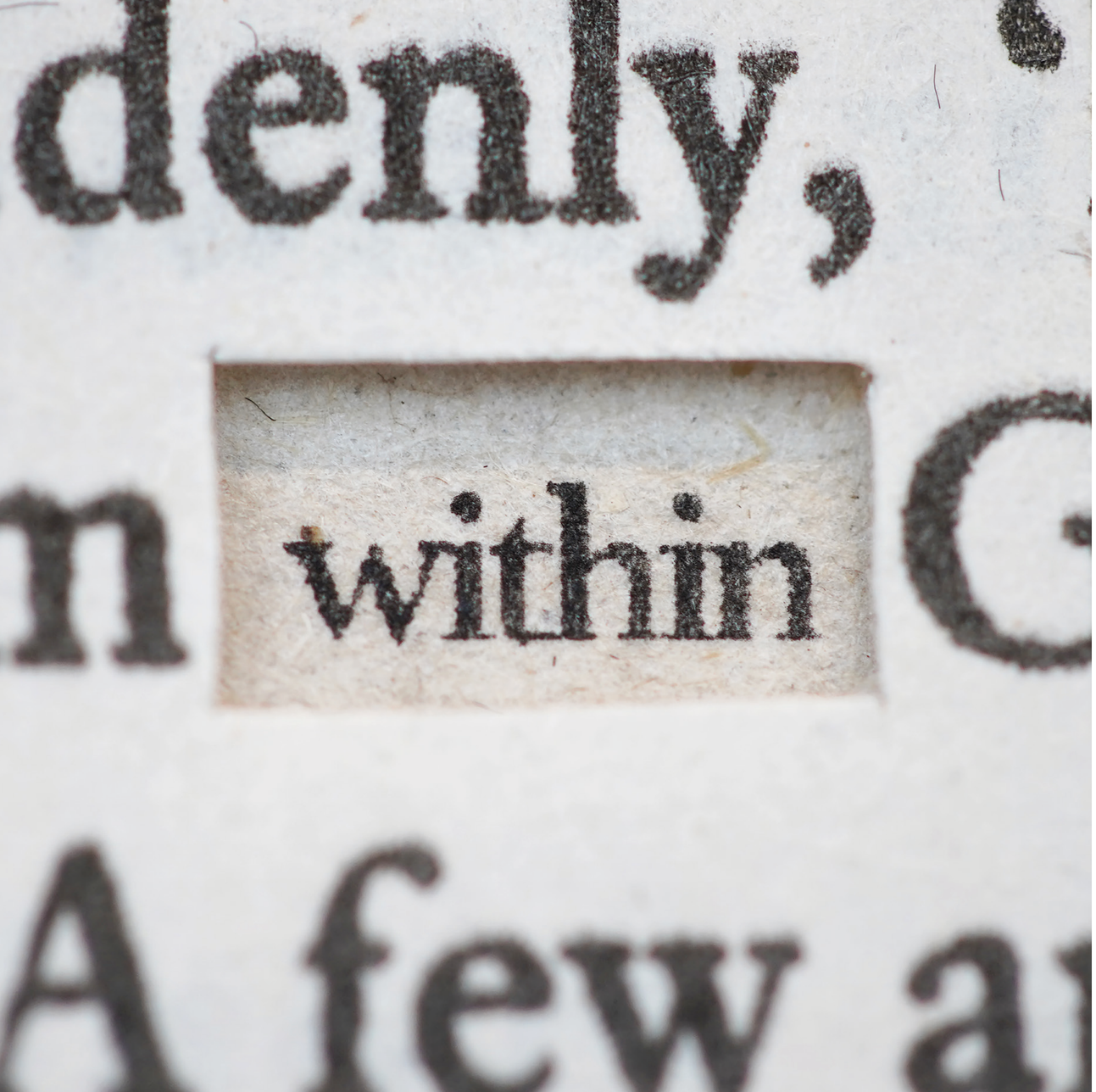
that a book is satisfactory to tell a story, especially a story about books themselves. And gallery spaces, why does the act of reading have to be so often limited to the curatorial interventions on cards next to artworks? One of the most satisfying things for me about *Of One Woman or So* is that I have spoken to people who actually have read the entire text on the gallery wall. Sometimes returning day after day until they completed it. You phrase that as aura – I think that's it. *A Room of One's Own* is a book about books, and *Of One Woman or So* then becomes a mirror text but about *A Room of One's Own* (and other books), specifically the original manuscript of Woolf's text, an artefact of significant aura. I really feel that the potential uniqueness of a work of art gets closer toward something I am often thinking about in relation to the vulnerability of books, the sacred status of manuscripts and the creation of both.

D: So how would you situate yourself in terms of something like the artists' book genre?

K: I appreciate the artistry and complexity of conception and production of so many artists' books, but I do find the idea of their reproduction a bit hands off. Much like the artist's print compared to the original painting – and I'll note that I do have a series of prints of my paintings – but I want an interaction with paper to be specific, that matters to me. I want to create something both from the *idea* of a book, and literally with a book that I have purchased or found, to bring the new artwork to life. Though of course you were the first person to flag that with *Of One Woman or So* I was cutting up not one but two copies of the source text – the recto/verso problem – and the same is naturally true with *Copywrong*. I also love that difficulty and the way it speaks to the relationship with the materiality of what a book literally is, and then what it can be. If you devise an artists' book based on the idea of cutting up a text, and then make a publication run of that work, presumably you are not then still going to be actually cutting up a text to produce it. So something is lost, something in the primacy of that engagement with paper.

D: Speaking of engagement with paper, let's talk about your relationship to the writers that you're cutting up. Every year, I show *Of One Woman Or So* to my MA students, and while most of them usually love it, there have been one or two who have been genuinely outraged that you have taken a scalpel and cut up a Virginia Woolf book. It's about gender – that you, a man, should carry out 'an act of violence' as you put it a moment ago on one of the founding texts of modern feminism. And now you're at it again. I'm not sure my students would stand up for Graham Greene in the same way, but it does raise an interesting question, I think, about your practice which is about an engagement with the canon, or with canonical writers, and altering their work – by means of a scalpel. Could you say something about your relationship to Woolf, to Greene, and to this kind of practice whose starting point is an already-canonical text?

K: 'Now you're at it again' speaks pretty perfectly to something that has become more prominent in my mind since working on *Copywrong* and in relation to *Of One Woman or So*, something I noticed when I started comparing and contrasting the works, which are very different but also have a lot of overlap. The most startling overlap



I think is that they are both about crime – the criminality of engagement with paper. In the prologue to *Of One Woman or So* we're told essentially that this 'suspect' with a 'foreign' name – who we later learn to be Olivia N'Gowfri, the young mixed-race Nigerian woman whose name is in fact an anagram of Virginia Woolf – is on the run for having committed these acts of arson and book theft. And then the story plays out as a mystery about how that happened, which is a sort of radical post-colonial feminist heist. Well *Copywrong* is another mystery story with a conceptual overlaying of paper being cut up or words being cut out and changed. This time the mystery story is not my own invention or intervention because it's just what Greene has written, but I've been drawn to it in the same way.

D: Why is that?

K: I would say there's something affectively compelling about crime and paper. Which is to say I felt compelled to engage (first) and then reengage with what it means to destroy or alter a book, and deconstruct what the significance of that act is. The first time round I was taking a risk with the affect of the act – as you say within the gendered dimension of what Woolf's book represents, and what it says for a man to cut it up in that way, but that risk was part of the literary hoax aspect of the project, in that ultimately we know that Olivia realises that *A Room of One's Own*, despite what she has perceived as its political flaws in relation to race and class, has been significantly inspirational to her and that is why she seeks to remake it. So it was almost a danger-play, to present this scene of contesting *A Room of One's Own*, but then to make the whole piece about the *importance* of *A Room of One's Own*, and of Woolf, by restructuring the words. Which, despite being in such a different space, is again what happens with *Copywrong*. It's all danger-play here too – from the paper death pact in the story's opening, to Chavel/Charlot's attempts to conceal his identity, to the translational attempt to beat this rule of copyright in reediting the story. In both projects there's a sense of holding up a mirror to a canonical text or author to say: 'you exist in such a way within this culture that to enter into a conversation with your legacy can be both homage and shocking criminal act, ideally working together'. Whether the criminal act is stealing and defacing a famous manuscript or breaking copyright, or whether the homage is in modernising a text to show that it's not as limited as its detractors have claimed, or in translating a novel poetically to underline the distinctness of its plot.

D: Haha – that's interesting that you think of the act of cutting as potentially a sympathetic or recuperative one! A way of revealing that an old text might still have new things to tell us. It reminds me of how your work often gets described as 'remixing'. There's actually quite a serious, fertile analogy going on there.

K: Which raises something strange about how life, new life, relates to death, ecologically. But if that's part of the wider concept of these works, then on a more micro or plot level there's still the question of the legal ramifications of these acts. I feel that what is most fascinating about criminality and text is that putting words to a page of fiction has this strange effect of de-intensifying crime, especially violent crime. That's so much the case with certain forms of detective fiction, if we think of Arthur Conan Doyle or Agatha Christie as canonical examples. It's odd that books describing brutal or gruesome murders can be seen as somehow twee. I'm intrigued by that. As well as by the fact that those stories themselves often involve the criminality of paper. In *The Hound of the Baskervilles* they receive that threatening note written by cutting up different words from a newspaper. And like *The Tenth Man*, many of Christie's novels are written in post-war periods where there's a sort of social chaos playing out with an air of distrust and disreputable actions involving legal wrangling, bigamy, cheating people out of inheritance, etc. In fact going back to Poirot's first appearance, in *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, we hear that he had previously solved a forgery case in Brussels, and the case in the novel itself then pivots around a hidden and torn-up letter. Paper is often the crime, and paper is often the evidence. It clearly has a fascinating place in the criminal psyche.

D: Well Freud was a great fan of detective fiction – Agatha Christie, Dorothy L. Sayers, G. K. Chesterton. And Freud, in 'Note on the "Mystic Writing Pad"' has an intuition that feels very like the plot of one of these writers: that when you write, you not only leave a visible mark on the page, but an invisible one – a blind impression – on the sheet beneath. You see this as a plot device in all of these writers. Meanwhile, one of the founding texts of the detective genre – Poe's 'Purloin'd Letter' – is all about the incriminating piece of paper that hides in plain sight. And this story then becomes the subject of commentaries by Lacan, Derrida, and goodness knows who else. Paper, crime and psychoanalysis – there's a whole book to be written there...

K: I had lunch with Juliet Mitchell (Professor of Psychoanalysis and Gender Studies) recently and she related Freud's interest in the genre to his considerations of murder as universally prohibited. In my work though, as well as paper being the site and evidence of crime, I'm also very interested in paper as the *victim* of crime. This is historically common in many stories, but is especially the case with stories about book-burning, like *Of One Woman or So*. Thematically it's another ironic danger-play, because we know the real life history of book-burning, and so often in literature when someone plays with the idea of this act, the message of the piece inevitably lands as 'don't burn books'. *Fahrenheit 451* and the Lemony Snicket books jump to mind. That was the sensibility within which *Of One Woman or So* was created, which is why Olivia's political trajectory is to eventually reject the violent and radical idea of destroying books, and to come to an understanding that reworking or recycling the past is the way to make your peace with it. That's her parable. *Copywrong* is maybe less didactic. I don't know that it is a parable in the same way. It's just a translation with a conceptual twist. It was easier to create though!

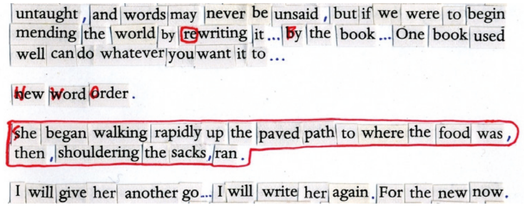
D: But let's get back to that issue of the way that your work takes other writing as its starting point, then cuts into it. I guess we're back with this idea of translation?

K: Having this conversation is highlighting all the ways that our language as a culture is distracted by knives and cutting. If someone produces a bad translation, or a bad cover version or adaptation we say 'they've butchered it!'. I suppose with *Copywrong* I've made that literal. When we analyse a text we 'dissect' it. You mentioned a scalpel before; the funny thing is that while it seems obvious or maybe poetic that that would be the tool used, in reality it hasn't always been. Not primarily at least. The mode of working with *Of One Woman or So* meant I was using scissors in the most part. Indeed Olivia N'Gowfri herself notes 'I could take some scissors to it', using the word as inherited from Woolf's invocation of making clothes. And with *Copywrong* it's often these cool leather-cutting singular die punch tools I've used to remove the tenth words. So although I may have *butchered* it in the sense of it being a strange and perhaps failing translation, even when I have used a scalpel I've been quite delicate with how the paper was treated. Ideally I'd have used a specially designed hole-punch. Which doesn't really seem to have the same vibe as a poetic tool...

A T Kabe Wilson, *Frankenspine* (2015), photomontage.

D: It's not that long since every new book was sold with its pages uncut. Cutting, with a paper knife, was just a part of the way you read. There's that line about Gatsby's library – 'Knew when to stop too – didn't cut the pages'. He's such a canny impersonator of old money, he's not going to make the mistake of pretending that he actually *reads* his book collection!

K: Right, so in fact in order to read a book we actually *have* to cut it, and in book production paper is regularly being sliced. Perhaps this structures our sensibilities around paper being severely altered. Maybe this is a generalisation but I think that book art always looks aesthetically pleasing. Doesn't it? There's something about paper cut up or scribbled over or redacted or torn that makes it look like physical poetry, a poetic artwork, and that's why so many artists and poets use that form. Which I don't think is true for most materials when you're talking about slicing or cutting them up. It doesn't always look pleasing and it can be quite macabre. Remember the toys owned and operated on by the neighbour kid in *Toy Story*? At first they appear pretty scary. They are animate toys obviously, which heightens the uncanny element, but it makes me think that most cutting-based interactions with materials do end up invoking Frankenstein's monster. Yet that doesn't happen as easily in playing around with paper I don't think – even though with various paper-based pieces I've created I have really actively *tried* to invoke Frankenstein's monster! I especially noticed this when I started *Frankenspine*, which is a long-term project I've been working on using words taken from book spines to recreate the entirety of *Frankenstein*. It's admittedly a photo assemblage rather than them all being physically cut up, but even so, despite the literary context and the implication of body parts – spines – stitched together, it looks more like an attractive mosaic, or an alternative bookshelf. So why doesn't it appear grotesque? Why is it so easy to make something charming or beautiful or whimsical by cutting up or tearing paper? It's one of the first ways we learn to play with paper isn't it? I'm thinking of pop-up books and paper chains, origami. None of which cast the same shadow of violence as those poor cut-up and stitched-up toys. Maybe we should get Freud back in...


untaught, and words may never be unsaid, but if we were to begin mending the world by rewriting it ... by the book ... One book used well can do whatever you want it to ...

New word order.

She began walking rapidly up the paved path to where the food was, then, shouldering the sacks, ran.

I will give her another go ... I will write her again. For the new now.

A T Kabe Wilson, *Olivia N'Gowfri – Of One Woman or So* (2014), mixed media. Page 138 of the manuscript.

D: I know you're working on another piece that uses Freud's work as its starting point. So we have Woolf, Greene, Freud... something of a modernist / late modernist canon. What is it about this period that you find so fertile?

K: That's something I feel very conscious of in my work, and I don't think I can just put it down to artistic sensibilities. Despite the political intentions, or pretensions, of something like *Of One Woman or So*, I can't entirely disconnect from the reality of there being a Eurocentric conception of time there – because I do fundamentally find that period of European modernity fascinating, and the presence and afterlives of paper in that era, before the digital revolution started to move it out of the centre of cultural production. It's especially true of the first half of the twentieth century, and indeed although it was published later, Greene's novel was written and is set in the war and post-war era. I'm definitely drawn to this 'recent but not quite present' cultural moment. It always gives me a thrill and a sense of confusion when I meet someone who was immediately connected to Woolf, or met Leonard, which has happened more than once in the last few years. It acts as a reminder that they are not quite from the past. There's that famous line from Faulkner about the past. I was about to say it here, then thought I'd check when he died and do the copyright maths: 1962+70, so one can't freely make use of that quote until 2032. Which adds another dimension to my engagement with works from this period – whether or not they are out of copyright varies so much, and it varies, grimly, in relation to when the writer died. This means that responding to work from this era of canonical literature is again itself a sort of danger play – will it be in the public domain or not? A rule about paper interacting with the chaotic reality of fate and death, just like the start of *The Tenth Man*.

D: When do Woolf and Greene come out of copyright?

K: You know it's interesting – Virginia Woolf's work entered the public domain within the years I was actually working on *Of One Woman or So*. I remember finding that out at some point in the process and thinking 'shame, it would have been a fascinating discussion to determine whether it was breaking copyright to use each and every word exactly, but in a completely different order'. Ultimately it was moot. Graham Greene died in 1991, so *The Tenth Man* will not reach the public domain until 2061. You asked about artists' books before, well my conceptual translation of the novel will be published on the day *The Tenth Man* comes out of copyright. I'm already in conversations with publishers. Until then, the work must exist as *Copywrong*, this gallery wall contestation of what it means to work around those laws and limitations. Another way of looking at it is that I cannot republish those words onto paper until 2061, and until then I must work with the pieces of paper that the author has had created – the copy (or two copies) of the book I have purchased to cut ten percent out of, leaving those little windows.

D: If not the artists' book tradition then, perhaps what you're describing is something more like that Bauhaus / Josef Albers idea of getting people to think of the sheet of paper as a 3D object?

K: Yes exactly, the adaptation of how we understand what a piece of paper can be. There's a line in *Of One Woman or So*: 'One book used well can do whatever you want it to', so I've always appreciated this idea of moving paper beyond its assumed limits. To turn a piece of paper into a sculpture is another way of approaching and drawing attention to the beauty of paper as a form, by physically altering its state. I like the idea that I'm creating flat paper sculptures. In those Bauhaus instances the paper tends to be blank, just material, and so the acts of cutting or folding aren't always seen as interventive acts, which I find interesting. Does that come from the sense of paper only becoming sacred once it has had someone else's thoughts or words added to it? Certainly copyright law adds something to that consideration. But then within that there's a quite fascinating affective space we might be overlooking, almost a loophole. You might run afoul of copyright restrictions if you cut sections out of a book and put it in another book, but what if you take the first book and use the pages for papier mâché art? If you make a sculpture from it. What's the rule there? I find it funny to talk about *breaking* copyright – *breaking* the law, given we have this sense of laws not actually being solid entities, and in their material form they are made of paper, so why don't we talk about *tearing* the law, or *slicing* the law? I suppose we talk about 'tearing up the rule book', but that's more specific and literal because it invokes the idea of a book.

D: Do you see these works as tearing up the rule book?

K: Or tearing up the book's rule! It's funny, before beginning the work I needed to get the pages of the two copies of *The Tenth Man* separated for use, so I took them to my local printer to ask if he could quickly do it on his guillotine. Then part of me was wondering: 'Is there a law against this? Or is he going to say he can't?' Would it contravene some law that I don't know about, something similar to the Currency and Banknotes Act of 1928 that makes it illegal to deface a UK banknote? Later, when planning the trip to Shandy Hall for my residency with the Laurence Sterne Trust where I cut the window holes in the text, it suddenly occurred to me that I would therefore be travelling with a knife in my bag, as there is a scalpel included in the craft kit that has my die punches and a little rubber mallet. Being a Black man travelling with a knife in this country is enough of a social taboo that it makes you feel anxious about being viewed or treated with suspicion, so I decided to check what the laws are. Apparently it is illegal to carry a knife in public without a 'good reason'.

D: Does it give any sense of what a 'good reason' might be?

K: Well the first point on the list is 'for your work'. It's a short list and unsurprisingly doesn't include 'being on your way to Laurence Sterne's old house to cut out 5000 words of a novel by Graham Greene'. So my anxious mind started conjuring up scenarios where I was having to explain this context and justify it as a 'good reason'. Like the famous court case of Brancusi v United States, where his iconic *Bird in Space* sculpture had to be legally acknowledged as a work of art to be imported without taxation. Art coming up against laws is such a fascinating space. M. NourbeSe Philip's *Zong!* – a work that *Of One Woman or So* often gets compared to – sources its words from a legal case about the Zong massacre. There's something about the authority of legal documents, or indeed laws, that creativity is perhaps compelled to set itself against. *The Tenth Man* is already a piece of art about legality, but with *Copywrong* in some sense I've extended that and turned the novel into an open legal case, where each page becomes a piece of evidence on display and asks the viewer to become witness or jury to the proceedings. That is, witness to both the translational act of evading the ten percent rule by means of doctoring book pages, and to Chavel's attempts to escape denunciation for evading the other ten percent rule in his tale, which he does by relying on various alterations of paper on the way. So bringing them together in this manner it's ultimately a way of raising the question: what is legally at stake when we disobey the rule of paper, and when we make changes to a story?