THE ALASDAIR GRAY ARCHIVE

THE Agnes Owens ARCHIVE

CREATIVE SCOTLAND

ALBA | CHRUTHACHAIL

CREATIVE PRACITIONER CASE STUDY

WRITING IN THE MARGINS*

* TWO LITERARY RESIDENCIES

NAME

KIRSTIN INNES



CREATIVE DISCIPLINE

Writer

PROJECT SCOPE

8 months

YEAR

2026

OUTCOME

New Fiction: Novel

FUNDER(S)

Supported by The National Lottery through Creative Scotland

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The Alasdair Gray Archive and The Agnes Owens Archive appointed Kirstin Innes and Heather Parry as Writers-in-Residence for 2026, following a highly competitive open-call process. The eight-month residency programme, *Writing in the Margins*, invited the writers to explore how class, gender, and societal expectations intersect across the works of Alasdair Gray and Agnes Owens, under the overarching theme of 'neglected voices'.

How did this opportunity support the generation of new creative ideas or material in your practice? The absolute freedom to take inspiration from wherever it might spark, anywhere across the archive, and then the space and time to follow that up at my own pace was transformational; I don't think I've ever had such a freeing creative experience. It also felt like a very fertile working time; I came up with an idea for a fourth novel, planned it and wrote two chapters while in there - unprecendented in my practice to date.

Did the experience lead to experimentation or risk-taking in your work that you might not have otherwise pursued? Yes, because of the sense that there were no limits, and because I was engaging with two the working methods of two different creative minds, examining how they approached things and then trying their methods out for myself.

What kinds of themes, methods, or approaches emerged in your creative process as a direct result of your engagement? I have been very inspired by Alasdair Gray's deep engagement with classical/classic texts, and his being in constant dialogue with them, almost like a continual retranslation of these older texts to find their revelevance to the current day is happening. I looked deep into Agnes Owens' writing around motherhood, grief and female rage; I also looked at the anti-war work of both writers. From this has come a contemporary novelised reintepretation of *The Women Of Troy*.



Kirstin Innes Working in The Alasdair Gray Archive Estate Library, 2026. Photograph by Alan Dimmick

In what way(s) did your involvement support your financial stability (e.g. through fees, sales, exposure, or follow-on opportunities)? The fee was a lifeline at a financially precarious time; in terms of exposure I have felt very much part of the Archive family and very represented both on their social media and in events around the archive.

Did the opportunity lead to any additional paid work, commissions, or invitations? If yes, please describe. Yes - my interest in running writing workshops in Alexandria as part of the Agnes Owens centenary was additionally supported by Scottish Book Trust's Live Literature fund; my appearances at Byres Road Book Festival were also paid.

What financial or professional support structures were most beneficial to you during the project? The holistic nurture and care for artistic practice (and the humans who make it) which has been built into the organisational make up of the Archive. It's a hugely supportive environment (the only comparable experience I can think of is the Moniack Mhor Creative Care professional residency which was aimed at writers with children and looked after the mothers as much as the children). An understanding that feeling supported and cared for is hugely beneficial for artistic output and the artists themselves.

Do you feel this opportunity helped widen access to professional development or creative networks for you? If so, how? It's been enormously beneficial to be able to be in ongoing conversation with the various visitors to the archive, with visual artists engaging with the archived material in different ways, with the embedded researchers and with my fellow writer-in-residence.

What barriers (if any) did the project help you overcome — creative, professional, financial, or otherwise? I'm still absolutely amazed that this experience has resulted in me knowing what my fourth novel will be and being so well started upon it, particularly given that my work outwith the archive this year has been stalled creatively, professionally and financially for reasons out of my control.

Were there particular aspects of inclusion, care, or accessibility in the project that supported your engagement? As a primary carer of school-age children, and someone who lives rurally, not in the city, I really appreciated the understanding and flexibility around my time when it was encroached upon by childcare or transport issues.



Kirstin Innes at the *People Like This* publication launch at Hillhead Library, Byres Road Book Festival, 2026. Photograph by Alasdair Watson.

New works or creative projects developed: Fourth novel, working title *The Trojan Wummin*, an adaption of Euripides' play set in a contemporary landscape somewhere between Gaza and Glasgow, planned and a draft begun.

Events, workshops, or public outcomes delivered: A month-long series of open-access creative workshops run in Alexandria Library in May 2026 to celebrate Agnes Owens' centenary, resulted in the creation of a small pamphlet (*People Like This*) of stories. Three events (discussion, creative writing workshop and *People Like This* showcase) delivered at Byres Road Book Festival. I also delivered one of the *Writing In The Margins* workshops for the ongoing course held within the archive itself.

Collaborations or partnerships formed: Ongoing partnership with AGA as we look for an illustrator for me to work with ahead of debuting sections of *The Trojan Wummin* (wt) at Gray Day in February 2027.

Find out more about The Alasdair Gray Archive and The Agnes Owens Archive by visiting our website:
www.thealasdairgrayarchive.org