

# Grant Fund Report, August-December 2017

## The Barbara and Philip Denny Charitable Trust



*"Thank you so much for dreaming up this place and keeping the dream going. This grant made the difference between me being able to attend or not." – Grant recipient 2017*

*"Many thanks to Arvon, my belief in my skills and my confidence in myself as a writer has increased." – Grant recipient 2017*

We are incredibly grateful to the Trustees of The Barbara and Philip Denny Charitable Trust for your unstinting commitment to Arvon. Your support helps to ensure that the most diverse range of voices possible can attend our courses providing writers on a low income access to specialist tuition and the opportunity to develop their writing and potential.

### Impact on grant beneficiaries

In 2017, we delivered over 80 courses across our three rural centres developing writers' skills in a variety of forms, ranging from Fiction to Poetry, Playwriting to TV Screenwriting. There continues to be a high demand for financial assistance and the average size of grant awarded also continues to rise. Thanks to your generous support, alongside other donors towards Arvon's Grant Fund, we awarded grants to over 120 writers in 2017. Below is a selection of individuals who have benefited from your generous support this year:

A beneficiary from Hampshire was awarded a grant to attend a poetry course in August. The grant recipient explained that owing to her high levels of debt she required financial assistance to attend the course: *"I fled domestic violence in 2014 and have experienced difficult times. I reconnected with poetry at the start of this year and writing has not only been therapeutic, it has also helped me rebuild my confidence and reconnected me with reading which I had struggled with due to stress. Since starting to write I have found new motivation and passion. The course has had a significant impact on my writing and on my confidence as a writer. Following the course I now identify myself publicly as a writer and the quality of my writing has improved greatly; the course has opened my mind... I had a great time."* In September she read her work at a short story festival.

A woman from London was awarded a grant to attend the Writing for TV course in October. In her grant application she explained that she would be unable to attend without financial assistance: *"Without this grant there is no way I could afford an Arvon course. I applied for the grant because I have been struggling with health issues for a number of years. I am recovering from cancer treatment. Now I have been given the all clear I have more time and energy to [focus on my writing]... To have a week away somewhere beautiful to learn new skills and to develop as a writer would be very special and would mean a lot to me."* The grant recipient valued the opportunity to meet and build networks with other aspiring screenwriters: *"The course was amazing. I learned so much. Before going to Lumb Bank I had no idea where to start with writing for TV. I didn't even know what a treatment was so it was great to learn about all the practical side of things... but also to learn about the industry and how to get into it. The tutors were brilliant. Funny, entertaining but really kept it simple and it was a lovely mix of lesson type sessions and time to write. I was given confidence, courage, clarity and inspiration and also it was great to connect with other writers – some of which I am still in touch with and have met up with in a supportive capacity so that is great. I am so very grateful for the opportunity to write in such a beautiful place and to meet people on a similar journey. Thank you."*

A self-employed painter and decorator from Bristol was awarded a grant to attend a screenwriting course in September. He found the course enabled him to make great progress on rewriting his screenplay: *"Without the incredibly generous grant, I simply could not have attended the course. For many people, the grant isn't a vast sum, but for me it might as well have had a few more zeros attached; I just didn't have it... I felt supported and encouraged. The atmosphere and approach of Arvon staff and tutors eradicated my apprehensions. Both tutors were exceptional in their time, care, interest, knowledge and teaching. Both were an absolute joy to meet, spend time with and learn from. The workshops in the mornings were remarkably useful... the individual tutorials were equally constructive."*

### Achievements of Grant Fund Alumni

Arvon's Grant Fund has provided financial assistance to writers for over 20 years. Many grant recipients show great promise and go on to publish or produce their work, achieving recognition for their writing. Below is a selection of recent achievements by Grant Fund alumni:

- **Guy Stagg's** part travel, part memoir, *The Crossway* will be published by Picador UK in May.
- **Jessica Swale** has written a new adaptation of *The Jungle Book*, which premiered at Royal & Derngate Northampton in November continuing with a major national tour in 2018.
- **Romlayn Ante** won a Platinum Creative Future Literary Award – a national competition for under-represented writers. Romalyn was joint winner of the Manchester Writing Competition Poetry Prize.
- **Inua Ellams** has won a Liberty Human Rights award for his play *An Evening with an Immigrant*. The play was shortlisted for Best Play at the Writers Guild of Great Britain Awards 2017.

### Further support for grant recipients

We are delighted to continue our partnership with The Literary Consultancy (TLC) and in November offered 17 grant recipients the invaluable opportunity to receive free professional manuscript assessment as part of TLC's Free Read Scheme. Over 70 grant recipients have benefited from this Scheme to date including:

- **Winnie M Li** whose debut novel *Dark Chapter*, won The Guardian's Not the Booker Prize 2017.
- **Hannah Lowe** who was named a 2014 Poetry Book Society Next Generation Poet.
- **Ella Frears** who was shortlisted for the Manchester Writing Competition Poetry Prize 2017.
- **Kate Simant** whose novel *Lock Me In* was shortlisted for Crime Writers' Association Debut Dagger 2015.
- **CJ Flood** whose debut novel *Infinite Sky* won the 2014 Branford Boase Award, a prize given annually to the author of the outstanding debut novel for children.

Feedback from grant recipients shows that they are particularly inspired by those tutors whose writing journey they can relate to and learn from. We are delighted to welcome eight Grant Fund alumni writers back to Arvon as tutors and guest readers on our 2018 programme including novelists **Tiffany Murray**, **Winnie M Li**, **Wyl Menmuir**, poets **Rachel Long**, **Zaffar Kunial**, **Andrew McMillan** and playwrights **Ishy Din** and **Inua Ellams**. Many of these writers have benefited from your generous support. Over the past year Arvon has been building an extensive online resource of writing tips and exercises. Several Grant Fund alumni who are professional writers have contributed tips and exercises including the novelist **CJ Flood**, poet **Hannah Lowe** and playwright **Ishy Din**.

*Thank you for your ongoing support which continues to make a substantial contribution to the Grant Fund.*