

Arvon Report to the Barbara and Philip Denny Charitable Trust, December 2021



Arvon's Grant Fund 2021



"The Arvon course was an absolute privilege and has changed my life. Without a grant I would never have been able to experience something that truly guided me into new ground as a writer and has opened up the future for me. To whoever funded the course for me to attend I am forever grateful." – Grant recipient, 2021

Arvon continues to be indebted to the Barbara and Philip Denny Charitable Trust for their unstinting support of our Grant Fund, especially during a pandemic that has been difficult for funders as well as for charities. Over a decade since your first grant, your support could not have been more welcome than this year, when we finally reopened our writing houses to great demand for grants. The Barbara and Philip Denny Charitable Trust's generosity has given writers on low incomes a week of inspiration, community and joy after a year that lacked all three.

Arvon's Grant Fund in 2021

As we mentioned in our August report, we reopened our writing houses for residential courses in the summer, and immediately saw increased demand for grants. We ended up awarding 81 grants this year in less than six months, compared to 130 over the whole of 2019.

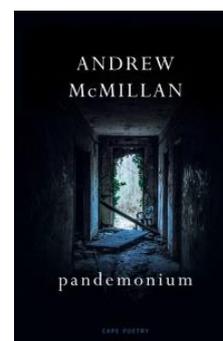
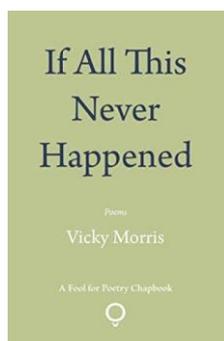
This year, 34% of grant applicants were disabled, 43% were BAME, and 42% had an income of less than £11,000. Surveyed before their courses, 42% of applicants said they felt confident about developing a piece of writing. Surveyed after their courses, this percentage had more than doubled to 94%. Even more impressively, surveyed before their courses, only 16% of grant applicants reported feeling confident about knowing how to improve their writing. Following their courses, this had climbed to 85%. Following is an account of one grant recipient who benefitted from your kind support this year (name has been changed):

Nicola is a self-employed performer and theatre-maker from Sussex. She received an £850 grant covering the full cost of a nature writing course at The Hurst. Much of Nicola's work from March 2020 was cancelled due to COVID-19. Although her work has now resumed, Nicola is still paying off business debt accrued during the pandemic. Nicola expressed her wish to "focus on creating local work that is important to community, provides opportunities for local creatives, and open's people's eyes to the wonderful resources and landscapes we share in our home areas". Following her course, she fed back, "My time at Arvon was one of the most incredible weeks. [...] This course has improved my confidence in writing and creating. In the new year, I will be taking the skills I have learnt and applying them to connecting with local writers and creatives, sharing work and offering feedback, and creating new work for our local community to enjoy."

Achievements of Grant Fund Alumni

We enjoy following the careers of our grant recipients, many of whom have benefitted from your support over the years. Many Grant Fund alumni have been busy with work despite the pandemic, and you can see a selection of recent achievements below. It was also wonderful to welcome back six previous grant recipients to Arvon this year as tutors; these include Booker-longlisted novelist Wyl Menmuir, Costa Prize-winning novelist Monique Roffey, and Forward Prize-shortlisted poet Fiona Benson.

- **Andrew McMillan's** third poetry collection, *pandemonium*, was published in May 2021
- **Janice Okoh** won the Silver Award for Best Fictional Storytelling at the ARIAS Awards 2021 for her BBC Radio 4 audio drama *Red Earth Red Sky*
- **Vicky Morris'** debut poetry chapbook, *If All This Never Happened*, was published in January 2021
- **Tice Cin's** debut novel, *Keeping the House*, was published in September 2021



Tice Cin, who was awarded a grant to attend a 'Prepare for Publication' course in 2019, told us just how valuable her Arvon experience was:

"My time on Arvon was a restorative and mind-opening opportunity. It is often difficult for people from my socio-economic background to have the ease to invest in their personal projects outside of other daily responsibilities, so when I was given the opportunity to go on Arvon courses by Spread the Word, it was the beginning of so much goodness. I think that there is a structure to an Arvon that rewards a creative mind, you are given the flexibility to muse and write while also taking in information from inspiring and key industry figures. In my case, I have a notebook full of inspiring notes from Max Porter and James Spackman. My novel is now out in the world, and as I think about Book 2, I'm already missing the nature, expansive conversations, and headspace that Arvon allows you."

Future Plans

Our digital programme, Arvon at Home, has become an integral part of our work, offering a more accessible and flexible way to engage with Arvon. Through online activity, we can reach people who cannot take part in our traditional residencies due to access needs, caring responsibilities, cost, and other reasons. Next year, we will expand our Grant Fund to make grants available for week-long Arvon at Home online courses too. We believe that for Arvon to be truly open to all, financial assistance must be available for all our activity, and we look forward to this being the case.

Thank You

Arvon is deeply grateful to the Trustees of the Barbara and Philip Denny Charitable Trust for their committed support of writers on low incomes through our Grant Fund. Over the last ten years, you have given valuable, frequently life-changing, experiences to writers in a range of circumstances who would not otherwise have been able to take part in an Arvon course. Thank you for playing such a big part in keeping Arvon open to all.



If you have any questions about Arvon and our Grant Fund, please contact Dean Stigwood, Head of Development, at dean.stigwood@arvon.org