

<p>Institution: University of Dundee</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: 29 English Language and Literature</p>
<p>Title of case study: The Cultural and Economic Benefits of Creative Writing Research.</p>
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words) Gunn is a writer of fiction, with works published by commercial literary presses and substantial sales to a general readership. The research constitutes an experiment with artistic form, reworking modernist techniques and themes, such as bricolage, the imitation of musical form and the feminist revaluation of domestic experiences and objects. The underlying research question is: how can the technical resources and cultural preoccupations of modernist literary experiment be deployed to engage and inform a 21st-century reading public? Gunn’s research is communicated to the public through book sales, interviews, readings, and articles in the broadcast and print media, and through the Dundee Literary Festival. These activities enhance public understanding of the creative process for the wider community, providing cultural enrichment and economic benefit at the level of the local, national and international.</p> <p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words) The underpinning research is Gunn’s long-established literary project that constitutes a body of work inviting its audience to read in a new way. Gunn was appointed as Professor of Creative Writing in 2006 and has been a published novelist since 1994; her creative research was undertaken from that period up to the present, with <i>44 Things</i> (2007) and <i>The Big Music</i> (2012) being researched and published at Dundee. The project consists of a series of critically-acclaimed novels published by the major commercial literary presses Faber and Granta; a collection of short fiction; and other literary publications. Gunn’s research project is an innovative experiment with artistic form that defies normative concepts of genre. For example, <i>44 things</i> is neither memoir nor essay, fiction nor non-fiction, but a combination of various kinds of writing, combined to offer a new way of tackling the subject of parenthood and domestic life, encompassing a feminist polemic that calls for the domestic world having its own significance. The book provides a way of discovering a writing of ‘things’. The work was intended as a literary project to run over the course of one year. The overall effect is to champion a new kind of writing; one that is created in the gaps and interstices of a busy life at home, yet is of no less literary significance because of that. Sections of the book were excerpted in <i>The Guardian</i> and several magazines, as were some of the individual stories and poems, thus reaching a substantial, general audience. <i>The Big Music</i> applies the modernist aspiration to the imitation of musical form to the <i>piobaireachd</i> (the formal music of the Scottish Highland bagpipes), using a modernist-style deployment of found texts.</p> <p>Gunn’s research is embedded in Dundee’s established creative writing research unit, through the major showcase of the Dundee Literary Festival. Dundee English Department hosted a series of distinguished poets in residence from 1990 to 2005, part-funded by the then Scottish Arts Council. The creative writing unit which was formed in 2006 was instrumental in establishing the Dundee International Book Prize as a major UK prize for emerging novelists. The Prize is a joint venture between the ‘Dundee – One City, Many Discoveries’ campaign and the University of Dundee and was part of the City’s successful campaign to improve its cultural image. Will Dawson, convener of Dundee City Council’s city development committee, has commented that ‘the book prize has helped to spread the word about the city’s literary and cultural credentials across the globe ... [and is] part of the great range of things happening in Dundee which has led to the city being shortlisted for UK City of Culture 2017’ [Ref. 5.4] Creative researchers have presented their writing or spoken at the Dundee Literary Festival to an audience from the wider community. The research unit publishes a creative writing magazine, directed by Gunn, for the University and the wider community, <i>New Writing Dundee</i>. Celebrating its sixth year, this publication is a Dundee community-based project with an international reputation. The last two issues have gone through two print runs and the magazine has its own event at the Dundee Literary Festival. <i>New Writing Dundee 2010</i> received 560 submissions, mainly from the general public.</p>

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

Between 1997 and 2012, Gunn produced five novels and one substantial collection of fiction with leading British commercial publishers of fiction Granta and Faber. Both publishing houses have stringent selection processes. Gunn's novels have been widely reviewed in the leading book reviews and *Rain* was adapted as a film by Christine Jeffs and a ballet by Pontus Lidberg (2003). [Refs 5.5 and 5.6] Her work is widely internationally broadcast and taught on university programmes and is now the subject of doctoral research. A short film to accompany the publication of *The Big Music*, narrated by the actor Brian Cox, was made by Gary M. Gowans, Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design [Ref. 5.7].

Rain (London: Faber, 1994), 95 pp. Novel

The Keepsake (London: Granta, 1997), 213 pp. Novel

This Place You Return to is Home (London: Granta, 1999), 208 pp. Novel

Featherstone (London: Faber, 2002), 256 pp. Novel

The boy and the sea (London: Faber, 2006) Novel

44 things (London: Atlantic, 2007), 336 pp.

The Big Music (London Faber, 2012), 472 pp. Novel

<http://www.kirsty-gunn.com/>

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Gunn's creative research has been disseminated to a wide non-academic audience through books, newspapers, radio, and magazines, leading to an enhanced public awareness of and engagement with her creative research. Gunn is passionately committed to communicating her work to a wide and general audience as well as to the principle that one of the main functions of literature is to engage with the reading public to stimulate and nurture the creativity of individuals. This engagement and impact is evidenced through her writing, her many interviews in national papers, and her leadership of the Dundee Literary Festival (DLF). Her research has thus achieved significant cultural, economic, and social benefits nationally and internationally. [Refs 5.1 and 5.2]

The **reach** is evidenced by her sales figures of c. 3-10,000 copies of her novels sold internationally, demonstrating one aspect of the impact of her work on commercial publishers. *The Big Music* sold out its first print run of 2,000 in premium first edition format, and has to date (October 2013) sold 2700 hardback, 4700 paperback and 55 ebooks. [Ref. 5.3] Gunn was interviewed about her work in the national press including *The Scotsman* (2012) and the *Scottish Review of Books* (2013). [Refs 5.8 and 5.9] She has organised a number of Writing Workshops and presentations at literary festivals (from 2006 to 2013, ongoing), delivered a series of presentations on writing around the UK and abroad during 2005-2009, and participated in numerous events involving words and music, art and drama, such as 'For A' That' at the Dundee Rep Theatre (2009), and 'LiveWire' at the Dundee Contemporary Arts Centre (DCA) (2009). She has broadcast talks and interviews with national radio, discussing her creative research. She has also been a guest on the Radio 4 programmes *Woman's Hour* and *Front Row*. She appeared on *The Culture Show* (BBC2) in 2012. These events have attracted a large general audience which has been benefitted by her writing and her thoughts about the processes of writing to engage with new cultural understandings and awareness, and in many cases, individuals have been empowered to develop their own writing profiles. Gunn has undertaken readings of her work in London, Paris, Cologne, and New Zealand.

The **significance** of Gunn's impact is thus witnessed by the public recognition of her writing as described above and evidenced by the key indicators of Impact for the Humanities (see below). Gunn's research provides significant **economic benefit** for her commercial literary publishers as well as **cultural benefit** for the readers of her work. She organised and presented a series of Literary Salons at the Dundee Contemporary Arts Centre (DCA) from 2007 to 2013 (ongoing), which have attracted significant and continued attendance from the local community. Entrance is free to the Salons and feedback questionnaires indicate that once someone has attended a salon

Impact case study (REF3b)

they are c. 90% likely to return. Gunn has played a key role in creating the new Dundee Literary Festival (DLF) (from June 2007 to 2013, continuing) which brings together some of the most significant names in the world of literature, journalism, philosophy and politics and which provides **economic and public benefit** to the community through the enhancement of Dundee as a place for visitors to participate in enhanced forms of cultural tourism. The Festival is sponsored by the international Apex Hotel chain and is supported by local partners Dundee City Council, Waterstones bookshop, Dundee Contemporary Arts, *The Courier*, *The List*, and Hospitalfield House, Arbroath. It consists of workshops, talks, film, theatre, book signings, music and parties and has been and is a key forum to bring Gunn's research to a local and national audience. Gunn has led the DLF, chairing many of its events and has also read and discussed her research, most recently *The Big Music* (2012), at the Festival. The Festival, attracting an audience of around 3,000 people, now hosts the award of the long-established and prestigious Dundee International Book Prize, introducing its audience to a new and vibrant cultural experience in Dundee. Feedback from the events has been overwhelmingly positive indicating its clear **cultural impact**. [Ref. 5.10]

Arising from the intersection of feminist autobiography and generic experiment in *44 Things*, Gunn is an International Editorial Adviser for MaMSIE (Mapping Maternal Subjectivities, Identities and Ethics), an international institute of Maternal Studies founded at Birkbeck University, which has influence on policy-making and cultural and political research and activity (www.mamsie.org). She was invited to the position after taking part in the initial conference in 1997 where she addressed maternity in literature and 'writing as making' as a feminist practice – using *44 Things* as a 'workbook'. Gunn has participated in on-the-ground 'beneficial' practical activities that 'speak' to a wide-ranging audience and generate an approach to literature and aesthetics that is demystifying, inspiring, and enabling.

Indicators of Impact: Gunn is a current Judge of the high-profile Scottish Book of the Year, the World Book Night award and also Chair of the Dundee International Book Prize. She has received major national and international prizes for her own fiction, including the Scottish Book of the Year, New York Times Notable Book of the Year, and the Sundial Scottish Arts Council Fiction Book of the Year; all key **indicators** of the substantial **cultural impact** of her creative research and of its significance in enhancing the public understanding of literature and the arts generally. Her novel *Rain* has had a broad impact within the creative industries. It was adapted into a film version by the award-winning New Zealand director, Christine Jeffs (2003), itself winning several film awards, including the Special Jury Award of the Asian-Pacific Film Festival and shown globally, thus bringing a version of her creative vision to a new and international audience. *Rain* was also adapted as a ballet by the leading Swedish choreographer, Pontus Lidberg. Gunn has undertaken numerous invited lectures and readings, including, 'Katherine Mansfield and the Art of Performance', Oxford University (2010); 'Fiction as Art', National Museum of New Zealand, Wellington (2009); 'In Conversation with Jayne Anne Phillips', *London Review of Books* Bookshop event, London (2009). She has given readings at Cologne Literary Festival (2009), Paris (2010) and London (2010). *The Big Music* has received positive review coverage in all major broadsheets, as well as radio, festival appearances, interdisciplinary and university events, and had led to invitation to Melbourne Writers Festival, where Gunn is doing a solo *Big Music* event and a Guardian lecture as well as taking part in a panel on Scottish Literature; also a New Zealand tour and publicity campaign. *The Big Music* is Observer/Guardian Book of the year 2013 and was Fiction and Overall Winner of the *New Zealand Post* Book Awards 2013 [Ref. 5.11]. It is appearing on a number of University reading lists (including University of Glasgow) for the 2013-14 academic year. Gunn is on the Board for Creative Scotland Bursary recommendations and Literature Funding, where her input directly affects policy.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)**Contacts:**

1. Literary Agents, Conville and Walsh (Profile of Gunn as author and cultural impact of work, nationally and internationally)
2. Publisher, Bourgois Editions (Example of international significance of Gunn's work in translation)
3. Editor and Publisher, Faber and Faber (Publishing history and significance of work)

Sources:

4. <http://www.dundee.ac.uk/pressreleases/2010/prfeb10/bookprize.htm>
(Reach and significance of Dundee International Book Prize)
5. <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0287645/>
(Reach and significance of film version of *Rain*)
6. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-XcR5HFZ5ig&list=PL82538B42BF68FE54&index=13>
(Reach and significance of film version of *Rain*)
7. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IXJ64F0uwko&list=PLNaLuoJJIHK1N2rlzFrMwXCxvTy46_g
(Reach and significance of film version of *Big Music*)
8. The Scotsman (2012)
<http://www.scotsman.com/lifestyle/books/interview-kirsty-gunn-author-of-the-big-music-1-2371081>
9. Scottish Review of Books (2013)
<http://www.scottishreviewofbooks.org/index.php/back-issues/2013-03-27-15-25-26/volume-nine-issue-three/563-srb-interview-kirsty-gunn>
10. <http://www.literarydundee.co.uk/>
(Gunn's role in Dundee literary festival)
11. <http://www.booksellers.co.nz/awards/new-zealand-post-book-awards/big-music-kirsty-gunn-takes-top-prize-new-zealand-post-book-awar>
(Literary prizes won as indication of reach and significance of published fiction)