

## Impact case study (REF3b)

<b>Institution:</b> University of Ulster
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> UOA 29: English Language and Literature
<b>Title of case study:</b> Illuminating The Lives of Modern Writers
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>Bradford's exploration of the lives of modern British writers demonstrates how research can cross over into audiences beyond specialist academic markets. The impact of his research lies in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• providing the ordinary reader with ground breaking insights into key modern British and Irish writers;</li> <li>• offering reinterpretations, new understandings, and critical debate surrounding these writers, thereby contributing to a reframing of such writers in the public eye, with particular reference to the controversial aspects of the modern novel;</li> <li>• his popular reception as a biographer stimulating collaborations with creative industries and providing meaningful commercial sustenance for the independent publishing sector.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>While at Ulster, in 1999, Bradford began research on Kingsley Amis, in his <i>Lucky Him. The Life of Kingsley Amis</i>. Since then his work has focussed upon the ways in which the lives and experiences of a number of important modern writers shaped their work. Granted access to Amis's unpublished letters for <i>Lucky Him</i>, the book is now emblematic of Bradford's twinned scholarly approach to, and public success in, biographical writing. The scholarly undertaking of personal interviews and analysis of extensive personal archival material, alongside a critical narrative on the directions of the modern British novel, combined in <i>Lucky Him</i> to reveal the hitherto little-understood relationship between Amis and Phillip Larkin, and the centrality of that relationship to Amis's career-launching novel, <i>Lucky Jim</i>. Crucially, <i>Lucky Him</i> reinterprets Amis's life as central to understanding his writing, and argues for the autobiographical nature of Amis's fiction. Bradford's subsequent biographies of Philip Larkin (2005), Alan Sillitoe (2008), Martin Amis (2011), and Larkin/Amis (2012) all continue to provide similarly pioneering insights into the lives of these writers for both the general reader and the literary establishment, offering unique accounts of the personalities, experiences, and temperaments of these figures and, as a consequence, showing their work in a new critical light.</p> <p>In recognition of the significance of his research, he received an AHRC Research Leave Grant in 2005-06 (£19,000) to prepare a biography of Sillitoe, as well as a British Academy Small Research Grant in 2009 (£3,500) to facilitate research on his Martin Amis biography. Most recently, Bradford was also awarded the Elizabeth Longford Award for Historical Biography in 2012 (£2,500) by the Society of Authors.</p> <p>Work on Amis (2001) and Larkin (2005) fed into Bradford's now critically-acclaimed <i>The Novel Now</i> (2007), which engages in an account of the current state of the British novel, as well as trends in publishing and marketing. <i>The Novel Now</i> formulates a significant theory about the directions taken by post-1970s writers, examining how a number of writers developed a hybrid form of writing which Bradford calls 'domesticated postmodernism'. While <i>The Novel Now</i> consciously asserts new critical directions for academic scholars of the modern British novel, it also underpins Bradford's thinking for his subsequent biographical work, particularly on Martin Amis (2011), whose eminence as an initiator of such trends in writing of the post-1970s in Britain is complicated by Bradford's in-depth observations about the personal motives which lay behind Amis's public aesthetic developments.</p> <p>Bradford's research also encourages and participates in the broader critical interests in life writing of the English unit at Ulster. Other scholars in the unit have published, or plan to publish, biographical accounts of British and Irish literary and cultural figures. In 2007, Bradford co-organised an interdisciplinary 'Life Writing' conference and subsequently edited a collection of essays: <i>Life Writing</i> (2009). This is characteristic of his wider approach to biography, and illustrates</p>

**Impact case study (REF3b)**

the natural intersections between the trade arm of publishing and academic research and literary biography, all of which shapes much the resulting impact of Bradford's work.

**3. References to the research**

The following texts have been placed with internationally recognised publishers.

1. *Lucky Him. The Life of Kingsley Amis* (London: Peter Owen, 2001), 435pp.  
ISBN-13: 978-0720611175
2. *First Boredom, Then Fear. The Life of Philip Larkin* (London: Peter Owen, 2005), 260pp.  
ISBN-13: 978-0720613254
3. *The Life of A Long Distance Writer. The Biography of Alan Sillitoe* (London: Peter Owen, 2008), 440pp.  
ISBN-13: 978-0720613179
4. *Martin Amis. The Biography* (London: Constable and Robinson, 2011), 420pp.  
ISBN-13: 978-0720613254
5. *The Odd Couple. The Curious Friendship Between Kingsley Amis and Philip Larkin* (London: The Robson Press, 2012), 384pp.  
ISBN-13: 978-1849543750
6. *The Novel Now. Contemporary British Fiction* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2006), 264pp.  
ISBN-13: 978-1405113861

**4. Details of the impact**

Bradford's biographies provide a vital supplement to the reader's experience of literature by offering vivid portraits of their authors, as well as raising fundamental questions on the nature of modern literary writing. His work enhances both the academic and general reader's understanding of individual writers, and the social, personal, and cultural milieus in which they grew up.

Moreover, Bradford's work challenges public opinion and attempts to revise often longstanding perceptions of the key literary figures on which his research is based.

**Influencing public discourse on cultural issues**

Bradford's biographies supplement the general reader's knowledge of key modern literary figures, and offer a reinterpretation of such figure's lives. The impact of these biographies makes fundamental the integral nature of a writer's life and their creative output. Bradford enjoys a longstanding impact as a researcher and critic and his work is quoted in academic and non-academic publications. In 2012, for example, an essay on British author, Zadie Smith, in *Private Eye* argued that Smith's work was emblematic of Bradford's critical definitions of postmodern writing in *The Novel Now*, published in 2006: '[Smith's work] fits squarely into the fictional category defined by Professor Richard Bradford in his seminal work *The Novel Now* as "domesticated postmodernism"'. Bradford has spoken at various important festivals and events throughout the UK, including the Oxford Literary Festival, the Hay on Wye Book Fair, and the Cheltenham Literary Festival. He also appeared on Radio 4's 'Today' programme in 2011 to speak about his Martin Amis biography and Radio 4's 'Bookclub' featured the book (2011). Bradford's impact is thus extended through these invitations, and permits direct interaction with the public, as well as the opportunity to extend the terms of the debate and the context of the impact. Bradford has engaged in media discussions on topics including the 'classless novelist' in 2009 for Nottingham BBC local radio 'experiences as a literary biographer' in 2011 at the Oxford Literary Festival, and 'the

**Impact case study (REF3b)**

contemporary novel' in 2010 for Channel 4. He was also commissioned to write an essay on writing biography, 'A Biographer's Tale', by *The Author*, a trade journal for authors published by the Society of Authors (2012, av. quarterly sales 9200). [See section 5, sources 3 and 4]

**Contributing to cultural enrichment for a non-academic audience** Bradford's work engages with a varied and diverse non-academic audience. The reach of Bradford's work in a variety of different media also impacts upon non-traditional readers, users and practitioners of literary research. For example, Bradford was interviewed in 2012 by *Time Out* magazine on his biography of Martin Amis (av. sales 255,000), and by the New Zealand-based *Listener* (av. sales 64,000). Prior to the publication of the Amis biography, he was also invited in 2011 to write an article on the forthcoming book for *The Sunday Times* (av. sales 2.4 million). In recognition of his work on Sillitoe, Bradford was invited to write the author's obituary for *The Guardian* in 2010 (av. sales 350,000). With regard to *The Odd Couple*, Bradford was commissioned by *The Sunday Times* (av. sales 2.4 million) to write a leading features article on the book and its analysis of Amis's unpublished letters, 'The Lolita Letters of Lucky Jim', (November 2012). [See section 5, sources 1, 2 and 6]

**Contributing to growth of small businesses in the publishing industry**

Bradford contributes to income generation for a range of small to medium-sized publishing houses in Ireland and the UK: Peter Owen, The Robson Press, O'Brien Press, and Constable and Robinson. Several of his biographies have, for example, appeared with Peter Owen, an independent London-based publisher, and the former's published work thus contributes to the lifeblood of small publishing within the UK. *Long Distance Writer* 2129, *Lucky Him* 2823, *First Boredom* 2753 hardback, 1821, paper. These national sales have significant economic benefits; trade books contribute to a £3 billion UK publishing industry which is variously engaged in employing a range of skilled workers who assist in fuelling the creative economy, from editors, publishers, and agents, to typesetters and printers. [See section 5, source 2]

**Citations in reviews outside academic literature**

Bradford has received extensive praise from literary reviewers, with over 30 significant reviews in the mainstream literary and broadsheet press since 2001, including in the *Times Literary Supplement*, *The Spectator*, *The New York Review of Books*, *The Observer*, and *The New Statesman*, and he was awarded the Elizabeth Longford Award for Historical Biography in 2012 by the Society of Authors. [See section 5, sources 4, 5, 6 and 7]

**5. Sources to corroborate the impact**

1. Publishing Director, Constable
2. Publisher, The Robson Press
3. Award Statement by The Society of Authors
4. Director, Oxford Literary Festival
5. Review of Sillitoe book in *New Statesman* <http://www.newstatesman.com/books/2008/10/sillitoe-bradford-class-writer>
6. Peter Owen Publisher blog on Sillitoe Book <http://peterowen.blogspot.co.uk/search?q=bradford>
7. Review of *Odd Couple* in *Spectator*. <http://www.spectator.co.uk/books/8770871/two-angry-old-men/>