

<b>Institution:</b> <b>University of Glasgow</b>
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> <b>D28A: Modern Languages and Linguistics</b>
<b>Title of case study:</b> <b>Breaking down the wall: introducing the works of Ivan Bunin to a new generation</b>
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b>

Previously unexplored aspects of the life and works of Russia’s first Nobel Prize winner for literature, Ivan Bunin (1870-1953), were used in supporting new translations of the author’s books, *Dark Avenues* and *The Village*. Glasgow researcher Andrei Rogatchevski supplied the key supplements to what were the first new translations of Bunin’s work in three decades. These volumes, published by Alma Classics, have sold a combined total of 3,433 copies in the UK and overseas, exceeding the publisher’s sales target and garnering positive critical acclaim.

<b>2. Underpinning research</b>
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Andrei Rogatchevski (Senior Lecturer in Russian 2006-; University of Glasgow staff since 1995) has research expertise in Russian literature, film and culture. He has been instrumental in the first attempt in decades to introduce the works of Ivan Bunin to new audiences through the inclusion of his research-driven insight into Bunin’s work and life in texts supporting new translations of the author’s short stories and novel.

Rogatchevski’s input to *Dark Avenues* and *The Village* was, to a significant degree, informed and inspired by the Bunin-related archival findings that he made in early 2000. These resulted from a research trip by Rogatchevski to the University of Reading in autumn 1999, supported by an Arts & Humanities Research Council grant, ‘S S Koteliansky and the Hogarth Press’. Whilst searching for Koteliansky-related material – Koteliansky was a translator from Russian who frequently collaborated with the Hogarth Press proprietors – Dr Rogatchevski undertook a systematic investigation and appraisal of the material in all the Russian files in the Hogarth Press archive. He located previously unknown letters from Bunin to the Hogarth Press staff in files no. 39 (related to the publication in English of Bunin’s *Grammar of Love*), no. 40 (Bunin’s *The Well of Days*) and no. 590 (*Elaghin’s Affair* by Bunin).

Bunin’s association with the Hogarth Press, who had chosen to publish the author’s work in English more than a decade before he won a Nobel Prize in 1933, was known but under-researched. Rogatchevski’s access to Bunin’s correspondence with the Hogarth Press, as well as the publisher’s accounts, afforded insights into the guiding principles of choosing particular pieces for translation and suitable translators – not to mention the publishing costs including Bunin’s royalties. An article on the history of Bunin’s communications with the Hogarth Press, as well as his published translations, followed in the first of a series of volumes, produced in Russia by a commercial press and devoted to the recently discovered data about Bunin, archival and otherwise, supplied with a scholarly apparatus.

In a parallel development, a separate article on Bunin’s life and *oeuvre*, appeared in *The Slavonic and East European Review*. The essay was aimed at specialist Anglophone audiences and sought to re-contextualise Bunin after years of insufficient interest. In addition it sought to revise perceptions of Bunin by various scholars and biographers in late- and post-Soviet Russia and elsewhere, after the censorship restrictions on his works had been completely removed.

### 3. References to the research

Andrei Rogatchevski, 'Bunin Reincarnate', *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 80.3 (July, 2002), pp.487-96. [\[link\]](#)

Andrei Rogatchevski, 'I.A. Bunin i "Khogart Press"', in Davies, R.D. and Korostelev, O (eds.) *I.A. Bunin: Novye materialy*, vyp. I (Moscow: Russkii put', 2004), pp.333-53. ISBN: 5858871763 [available from HEI]

### 4. Details of the impact

Ivan Bunin (1870-1953) was the first Russian writer to win the Nobel Prize for literature (1933), but he is not particularly well known to readers in the West. His works were banned in the former Soviet Union for many years, due to his anti-Communist views. Even after immigrating to France, Bunin's writing style – not heavily based on narrative as better-known Russian writers were – made it difficult for translations to satisfactorily recreate his works, and so they remained relatively unknown. According to Rogatchevski's research the challenge in reading Bunin's works has always been his focus on the 'minute psychological movement of the human soul' and the difficulties this presents to translators. As language evolves and changes over time, so does the translation of a unique writing style focusing on characters' inner worlds rather than their actions.

Rogatchevski is one of only a handful of experts on Bunin in UK higher education. In 2007 he was commissioned by the London-based independent publishing company [Alma Books](#) (established in 2005) to contribute to its [Alma Classics](#) catalogue. Named Independent Publisher of the Year in 2013 at the Bookseller Industry Awards, at least 40% of Alma's published titles are translations from languages including French, Spanish, Italian, German and Japanese. Alma wanted to be the first publisher to reintroduce Bunin to contemporary audiences. Editors were introduced to Rogatchevski's research (1999-2004) into the Bunin archives and correspondence, including the writer's interwar publishers Hogarth Press, by the Curator of the Leeds Russian Archive (LRA), Richard Davies MBE (the LRA has significant Bunin-related holdings in its possession, and Davies and Rogatchevski are currently preparing for publication Bunin's correspondence with the Russian émigré author Aleksandr Amfiteatrov; Rogatchevski gave a talk on some aspects of this correspondence in November 2009 at the 41st National Convention of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies in Boston).

Alma Classics commissioned Rogatchevski to contribute a substantial section of over 20 pages on Bunin's life and works, along with a discussion of film adaptations to be included as an afterword in *Dark Avenues*, translated by Hugh Aplin and published by Alma Classics in 2008 as part of their OneWorld Classics series. The 'extra material' section is a feature of the Oneworld Classics books and constitutes one of their unique selling points. For less widely known authors such as Bunin, the added information and insight can make a significant contribution to readers' knowledge. Bunin's reintroduction to UK readers (the last British translation in book form before Oneworld Classics was in 1984) required a reassessment of his art, and Rogatchevski's research expertise in Bunin's life and works served as a specialist foundation.

## Impact case study (REF3b)



These Alma Classics publications are the only English-language versions of Bunin's work available. To date (July 2013), 2,266 copies of *Dark Avenues* have been sold, and it was named as one of the *New Statesman's* 'Books of the Year' in 2008, with a special commentary by John Gray. *The East-West Review* (the journal of the Great Britain-Russia Society) identified Rogatchevski's contribution to the volume 'extensive' (issue 19, 2008, p. 35). The book was also launched at a public talk at the Glasgow University Literary Society focusing on Bunin's life and work, delivered by Rogatchevski on 27 October 2008, with some 30 people attending.



The dedicated section on Bunin was reproduced in *The Village*, translated by Hugh and Galya Aplin and published by Alma Classics in 2009, also as part of their OneWorld Classics series. The afterword was particularly praised by the *Times Literary Supplement* reviewer, Donald Rayfield, in a review published on 4 September 2009: 'The valuable part of this book is the 20-page sketch by Andrei Rogatchevski of Bunin's life and works; rarely is so much information and appreciation neatly packed into an afterword.' As of July 2013, this book has sold 1,167 copies.

The Managing Director of Alma Classics wrote:

Our editions of Bunin's above-mentioned works are the only ones available to English-speaking readers, and they are an invaluable resource to students of Russian literature the world over, especially thanks to the critical material compiled by Dr Rogatchevski, which forms an important part of our volumes and is one of our unique selling points. *Dark Avenues* and *The Village* have been distributed throughout the world and sales have been superior to our expectations and those of the Bunin Estate, prompting us to commission the translation of another title by Bunin, *The Life of Arsenyev*, which will also include Dr Rogatchevski's critical apparatus.

## 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

### Critical success and recognition of Rogatchevski's contribution

- *New Statesman* 2008 Books of the Year:  
<http://www.newstatesman.com/books/2008/11/book-life-world-love-novel>
- *Times Literary Supplement*, book review by Donald Rayfield of *The Village* (09/2009, Issue 5553, p. 26) [available from HEI]
- *East-West Review: Journal of the Great Britain-Russia Society*, book review by Michael Pursglove of *Dark Avenues*, (Winter Edition 2008, Issue 9) [available from HEI]

### Publisher's recognition of commercial/literary contribution

- Sales figures from OneWorld Classics (available from HEI)
- Letter from Managing Director, Alma Books (available from HEI)