

The Meaning of Memory in Bunin and Hippius

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Summary. This paper illustrates the meaning of memory by the fate and change in spiritual orientation of Ivan Bunin and Zinaida Hippius, two prominent literary figures of the late tsarist Russia and interbellum émigré Paris. Most importantly, it examines the post-revolutionary transformation of values and reconciliation with external circumstances and internal afflictions of these two writers. The significance of memory becomes prominent in Bunin after his realization of the tragic and frightening consequences of the revolution, which results in his turn to the past as the source of tranquility and comfort. Hippius's diaries and poetry, especially after her husband's death, also show her turn toward eternal values and away from the hitherto paramount terrestrial, fleeting aspirations. The oeuvres of both writers are placed in the context of pre-revolutionary orientation towards the past that is contrary to the modernist shift to the future, which announced and precipitated the Russian Revolution of 1917.

Keywords: memory, recollection, Ivan Bunin, Zinaida Hippius, revolution, Russian religious mind.

Значение памяти у И. Бунина и З. Гиппиус

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Аннотация. Эта статья иллюстрирует значение памяти через обращение к судьбам и переменам в духовной ориентации Ивана Бунина и Зинаиды Гиппиус – двух выдающихся литературных деятелей поздней царской России и эмигрантского Парижа межвоенной эпохи. Прежде всего в статье рассматривается послереволюционная трансформация ценностей и примирение с внешними обстоятельствами и внутренними страданиями этих двух писателей. Значение памяти становится очевидным в миросозерцании и творчестве Бунина после осознания им трагических и пугающих последствий революции, что заставило писателя обратиться к прошлому как к источнику покоя и утешения. Дневники и поэзия Гиппиус, особенно после смерти мужа, также свидетельствуют о ее обращении к вечным ценностям и отходе от ранее доминирующих в ее сознании и творчестве земных, мимолетных устремлений. Творчество обоих писателей размещается в контексте дореволюционной ориентации на прошлое, что контрастирует с провозглашенной модернизмом устремленностью в будущее, ускорившей русскую революцию 1917 года.

Ключевые слова: память, воспоминание, Иван Бунин, Зинаида Гиппиус, революция, русское религиозное сознание.

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Introduction

A lot of the Russian writers who entered the literary scene at the end of the 19th century were aesthetically and psychologically driven by some kind of mysticism and a pursuit of higher, sublime goals. Most of them were also hoping for a political and social change, generally for the sake of novelty and variety. No matter how deep their yearning for an ideological turnaround was, almost all of them were shocked by the February revolution and disturbed by the October coup. Quite a few writers felt responsible for igniting the fire¹. As repression, fear of the future and famine creeped in, a minority conformed to the “new normal,” countless others decided to lay low and make some sort of compromise, and a great many left the country, the majority of whom ended up in Paris. Fully aware of the tragedy that beset their country and unable to do anything about it, they turned to ruminating about the past, searching for the reasons and consequences of the tragic upheaval and their role in it. They reconsidered and redefined the meaning and significance of recollection.

This paper analyses the place and importance of memory and remembrance in the personal and literary world of two Russian émigré writers who had achieved fame before the revolution and their flight from the homeland – Ivan Bunin and Zinaida Hippus. The introductory part examines the significance of the concept of memory (*pamiat'*) in Russian spiritual and literary tradition. It also juxtaposes the pre-revolutionary orientation toward the past and the Bolshevik focus on the “bright future” and their readiness to usher it in through terror and fear. Next, Bunin’s realization about the extent of the national and personal catastrophe of 1917 and the ensuing civil war, especially in his book *Cursed Days* (*Окаянные дни*), is examined through his turn toward religious experience and lament over the cultural wealth of the past. Finally, Hippus’s existential restlessness is presented in the light of her soul-searching pretensions and the subsequent rejection of her attention-seeking self-centeredness. The principle aim of this work is to depict the post-revolutionary transformation of values and reconciliation with external circumstances and internal afflictions by presenting the fate and sentiment of two prominent literary figures of the late tsarist Russia and the interbellum émigré Paris.

The Meaning of the Word *Pamiat'* in Russian Cultural Tradition

The semantic significance of the cultural context in which a term is used can sometimes be illustrated by the richness of meaning found in a single word. The Russian lexeme *pamiat'* can be translated into English as memory, remembrance or recollection. When used to denote one’s ability to recall events from the past, or the capacity to store information, as in a computer, the two words have a similar, if not identical meaning in both languages. Rus-

¹ Refers to the title and the first verse of the famous poem by Viacheslav Ivanov, “Yes, we have ignited this fire” (*Da, sei pozhar my podzhigali*, 1918), in which he assumes the responsibility for stimulating the revolution with his fellow writers and intellectuals, and ends the first stanza by acknowledging that their heart has burned in the fire: <...> premonitions have not deceived / That our hearts in it will burn (...predchuvstia ne lgali / chto serdtse v nem sgorit) (Ivanov 2020).

sian cultural history and religious tradition, however, paint the meaning of *pamiat'* with a particular hue, which is often not consciously comprehended, but implied, suggested and perhaps perceived on a subconscious level, depending on the context in which it is used.

In his seminal book about Russian culture, *The Icon and the Axe: An Interpretive History of Russian Culture*, James H. Billington (Billington 1970, 62) tells us that the victory of the Christian East, exemplified by veneration of ideal forms in the icons, led Russians of the Muscovite period to look for an ideal prince who would be “the living icon of God”². The ideal Russian prince was not to be a philosopher, as Plato proposes, but a guardian of tradition. “The highest good in Muscovy was not knowledge, but memory, *pamiat'*”, Billington writes (Ibid). Where one today would say “I know,” one then said “I remember.” Official documents and laws were known as “memories” (*pamiati*). All the epic tales were transferred from one generation to the next “for the old to hear, and the young to remember.” “Memory important, good and firm” was considered the highest mental gift and talent (Shchapov 1906, 596).

Billington further explains:

Thus, Muscovy was bound together not primarily by formal codes and definitions or rational procedures, but by an uncritical and unreflective collective memory. Special authority tended to devolve on those local “elders” whose memory went back furthest toward the apostolic age and whose experience made them most knowledgeable in Christian tradition: the ascetic starets [“elder”] in the monastery, the respected starosta in the city, and the epic stariny (tales of old) for the popular imagination. Rarely has a society been more attached to the antiquity, but Muscovy looked to the past for tales of heroism rather than forms of thought, rhetoric rather than dialectic, the “golden-tongued” sermons of St. John Chrysostom rather than the “cursed logic” of Aristotle.

(Billington 1970, 62)

The worldview expressed in the meaning of this word has been largely conveyed by the Orthodox Christian faith. Unlike Roman Catholics, who were more prone to the introduction of novelties that culminated with the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), and Protestants, who rejected the ecclesiastical tradition and the imperative of good deeds in favor of a “direct experience of Christ” and Bible study primarily based on human reason, Orthodox Christians have humbly and fearfully conserved the inherited practices and accepted only the interpretation of the scripture by the Early Church Fathers. They have primarily relied on divine revelations bestowed upon the canonized saints. Distrust in one’s own reasoning was considered a virtue, and a desire for original interpretation of faith was deemed the fruit of pride and spiritual deception. In the “Holy Rus” (*Sviataia Rus'*) innovations and arbitrary inventions were regarded as signs of the approach of the Antichrist and the end of the world³.

² Billington quotes here from G. P. Fedotov’s *The Russian Religious Mind* (New York: Harper, 1960, 208), an insightful study of Russian religious sentiment in the Middle Ages.

³ The great significance Russians attribute to historical events and the observance of a prayerful memory of the diseased relatives is reflected, for example, in the observances of the Russian Orthodox Church, which has a whole range of commemorations of the dead (*pominovanie umershikh (usopshikh)*): *otpevanie, panikhida, parastas, litia*

The significance of this word in Russian is not only evident in all the connotations the concept of memory or recollection carries, but also in the parallel meanings of this term. *Pamiat'* also means “consciousness, awareness” as in the expression *priiti v pamiat'* (“to come to mind”, “to regain consciousness”). *ПАМЯТЬ* in Old Church Slavonic refers to “mind, judgment” and in the related South Slavic language, Serbian, the principle meaning of the word *pamet* is “intellect, cleverness.” In its original form without the prefix *pa-*, this word is related to the Latin *mens, mentis* (“mind, judgment,” from where the English “mental” comes from) and the Lithuanian *mintis* (“thought, idea”) (*Proiskhozhdenie slova pamiat'* 2020).

The Russian saying *Ne bud' toropliv, bud' pamiativ!* (“Don’t be rash, be prudent!”) shows that this word can also mean “circumspect, judicious.” Another proverb, *Tomu tiazhele, kto pomnit zlo* (“The one who remembers has it hard”), accentuates the wisdom of not holding grudges, and the advice *Ne bud' gramoten, bud' pamiaten!* (“Don’t be literate, be mindful!”), shows the precedence of awareness and mental vigilance over knowledge and erudition (Dal’ 2020). We can see from these examples that the ability to remember and the capacity to preserve significant concepts and events in one’s mind is a reflection of one’s power of reasoning, mental astuteness and, ultimately, an evidence of one’s wisdom.

One might think that in today’s increasingly godless society, medieval or early modern piety and the desire to preserve the original taste of Christian Revelation has all but disappeared, and the word for memory, therefore, does not incorporate the described meaning and significance anymore. Indeed, the Revolution of 1917 initiated a massive effort to erase not only the ecclesiastical legacy and Christian heritage in the country, but also to wipe out the entire civilization of the Russian empire with its pronounced inclination to conserve the religious and intellectual tradition. Apart from the Red Terror, which exterminated close to 1 800 000 people only in 1918–1919 (Mel’gunov 1990, 23), the Soviet regime embarked on an all-embracing cultural revolution that introduced a complete censorship, monopoly of all publications by the Bolshevik-controlled media institutions, Social Realist literature and art, new orthography and new textbooks. A comprehensive state propaganda aimed to eradicate old convictions and practices, and to instill a new, Marxist-Leninist worldview.

The main tools in the destruction of the remnants of the old society and the conservative stance were fear, lie and obliteration of memory. Since people were apprehended for merely belonging to a social class or ethnic community, or having an ancestor who had said something decades ago, people tried to wipe out all the evidence about their origin. There was a genuine danger of children consciously or inadvertently denouncing their parents, so they were told nothing about their lineage or about the life before the revolu-

ob upokoenii. According to the Orthodox tradition, the sins of the deceased can still be atoned by the prayer of the living and Church services. During commemoration, the entire congregation sings *vechnaia pamiat'* (“memory eternal”). Also, there are “Parents’ Saturdays” (*roditel'skie subboty*) before every major Church holiday, when a service is performed for parents and other ancestors who have passed away. The tradition goes back to pre-Christian times, since there was a particular cult of the dead in the pagan Slavdom.

tion. Photo albums, diaries and all the evidence about one's genealogy were burned and destroyed. Family ties, beliefs, convictions, teachers' names and memberships in associations were recanted in order to save one's life, if not freedom. This is how memory was erased and conscience incinerated (Zubov 2010, 1005–1007).

Even with the ever-evolving cultural changes, especially during the Soviet social experimentation, much of the specific meaning of the word *pamiat'* has nevertheless been preserved in Russia to this day. As Georgy Fedotov puts it, in spite of ruptures and revolutions, there is a continuity that makes the unity of Russian religiosity not a myth, but reality. None of the existing properties in the life of a nation disappear, he writes. Some of the manifestations of the national spirit can lose the dominant meaning, some may reappear on a less conscious level, but they still exist, and they illuminate the past and determine the future (Fedotov 2015).

One place where the pre-revolutionary worldview was preserved and cultivated was the Russian émigré community. About two million people, most of them belonging to the nobility, immigrated in the few years following the revolution. A large majority eventually settled in Paris, creating their own publications and literary circles, trying to counterbalance the loss of their country and the old way of life.

Recollection of the Orthodox Tradition in Bunin

One such counterbalancing stroke during the turmoil of the Revolution took place in the mind and heart of Ivan Bunin (1870–1953), the first Russian recipient of the Nobel Prize in Literature. An intellectual of liberal political and social inclinations, when confronted with the destruction of the world he cherished, he felt the significance of traditional Russian culture in full force. Brought face-to-face with the rule of mob and disappearance of the country that brought him fame and comfort, Bunin suddenly and unexpectedly became aware of his hitherto neglected spiritual identity.

Bunin grew up in an impoverished noble family with a weak relationship toward the religious inheritance of his nation. His father Alexei was an alcoholic whose entire being was “imbued with the feeling of his aristocratic background” (Morozov 2017, 13). People who knew the writer as a young man, described him as a person with a lot of “life force, thirst for life” (Morozov 2017, 284). Bunin's main ambition was to become a writer, and he invested a lot of time and energy to meet all the distinguished authors and editors of his age who could help him advance in his literary career. He had hard time settling in one place and with one partner. On the other hand, his contemporaries recorded Bunin's gentlemanly demeanor, built-in elegance and natural comportment in every company (Muraviova-Longinova 1973, 310).

Bunin strongly felt the rupture between the Russian nobility and the illiterate, backward peasantry. As opposed to the Narodniks, who idolized the rural masses for their incorruptness by the urban society, he believed that peasants themselves were responsible for their miserable living conditions. In his short novel *The Village (Derevnia)*, published in 1910, Bunin described the physical, moral and mental degradation of the countryside.

His condescending view of peasants and the futile nature of their rebellious tendencies explain the author's subsequent shock and despair over the charge of the plebs during the Revolution and the ensuing Civil War.

In his *Diary 1917–1918* and its continuation *Cursed Days*, a compilation of biographical notes and remarks made in Moscow (from January 1st till March 23rd, 1918) and Odessa (from April 12th till June 20th, 1919), Bunin expresses his utter despair over his country's fate, disgust with the Bolsheviks, hope in victory of the White movement, and longing for the return to the normalcy of the pre-revolutionary world. There are quite a few diaries written during the Revolution and the Civil War, but very few of them are anti-Bolshevik, which makes this volume a valuable document of the reactionary sentiment expressed by a renowned author. In the words of Thomas Gaiton Marullo (1998, X), who in his translation of the work into English provided extensive notes to explain the historical events and identify the protagonists, the work “recreates events with graphic and gripping immediacy”. In Russia, *Cursed Days* has seen at least 15 separate publications since its first appearance in 1988 during the Soviet *Glasnost*.

Contrary to most Russian intellectuals and fellow writers, who yearned for a political and social change, and who were glad, even joyous to see it dramatically unfold in front of their eyes, Bunin's reaction to the February Revolution was antagonistic. He recalls his arrival in St. Petersburg in the Spring of 1917, shortly after the coup and tsar's abdication, when “the greatest country in the world” was “thrown to the full whim of fate”. Nevsky Prospekt, the main traffic artery of the capital, “was flooded by a gray crowd, soldiers with overcoats thrown on their shoulders, idle workers, servants walking about, and all sorts of rabble selling from stalls cigarettes, red flags, obscene cards, sweets”. On the sidewalks “there was litter, sunflower seed husks, dirty ice lay on the pavement, there were humps and bumps”. His cabman unexpectedly commented the sight: “Now the people, like cattle without a shepherd, will defile everything and destroy themselves”. “So what should be done?” Bunin asked him. “Done, he asked, there is nothing to be done now. It is the Black Sabbath now. There is no government” (Bunin 2017, 156–157)⁴.

Then October came. Bunin does not refrain from calling communists various names, like “cannibals” (Ibid, 74), “arrogant crooks” (Ibid, 97), and their rule “pure debasement, filth and bestiality” (Ibid, 151). “Lenin, Trotsky, Dzerzhinsky... who is more heinous, bloodthirsty, disgusting?” – he wonders (Ibid, 198). When Bunin finds out that his fellow writers, Alexander Blok and Andrei Bely, have become Bolsheviks, he calls them “sons of bitches” and “utter fools” (Ibid, 78)⁵. He names the communists “the Cain of Russia”, who, in a “joyful, mad fury threw his entire soul under the feet of the devil for thirty pieces of silver” and had “triumphed completely” (Ibid, 236).

Bunin describes the atmosphere in Moscow by recalling scenes like this:

⁴ This and all subsequent translations are mine.

⁵ According to the critic Igor S'ukhikh, “Blok heard the *music of the revolution*, and Bunin the *cacophony of rebellion*.” (Sukhikh 2009).

Across Kudrinskaya Square a procession is moving slowly – suddenly, furiously raging on a motorcycle, an animal in a leather cap and leather jacket flies out from Nikitskaya, cursing, waving a huge revolver, splashing with mud those carrying the coffin:

– Get off the road!

The carriers dart to the side and, stumbling, shaking the coffin, run as fast as they can. And on the corner there is an old woman standing, bent over, crying so bitterly that I involuntarily stop and start comforting, calming her down. I mutter: – “Well, well, God be with you” – I ask: – “A relative, right, the deceased?” And the old woman tries to catch a breath, overcome the tears, and finally utters with difficulty:

– No... Don't know him... I just envy him...

(Ibid, 148)

The title of a 1844 vaudeville by S. P. Soloviev, which became a well-known saying in Russian, “We don't preserve what we have, and we cry after we lose it” (“Chto imeem – ne khranim, poterivshi – plachem”) illustrates well Bunin's bitter realization about the value of the lost world. He admits having his previous life taken for granted until he witnessed it crumble before his very eyes: “Our children, grandchildren will not be able even to imagine that Russia in which we once upon a time (that is, till yesterday) lived, which we did not appreciate, did not understand – all that power, complexity, wealth, happiness...” (Ibid, 124–25). The author ruminates on the duality of the Russian people. There are two types, he declares: “In one, Rus' prevails, and in the other – Chud, Merya”⁶. But there is a great volatility and fickleness in both. “People have said about themselves: ‘From us just like from wood: a club and an icon’ depending on the circumstances, on who is treating it: Sergius of Radonezh or Emel'ka Pugachev” (Ibid, 142).

For the first time in his life, Bunin is genuinely moved by church services. He describes the beauty of the Moscow temple on Molchanovka, that “still surviving island in the sea of beasts and murderers”. After experiencing the Easter service with tears “bitter and sweet”, he admits he had previously always been indifferent to it (Ibid, 81). A little later, he recounts another occasion in a Moscow church, where he attended a wedding, and again compares the haven of the “old” world with the “vile and abjection of the ‘new’”. Then there was the passion week, where the words of a canon “By the wave of the sea... Covered in antiquity... pursuer-tyrant... hidden under the earth” deeply touch his heart. “How many people, who were never there before, stood in those churches then, how many those who have never cried, then cried”, he contemplates (Ibid, 146–47).

People most often remember God only in the moments of utter distress and misery, but many have testified that the feeling of grace can often be a life-changing experience. For Bunin, Church represents not only a symbol of the disappearing world, but, in a way difficult to rationally understand, a solace and hope of a higher kind. Like the taste of *madeleine* for Proust in *In Search of Lost Time* (Proust 2003, 44–47), the scents, sounds and sights of an Orthodox service bring to life the previously neglected faculty. They make him recall his spiritual essence. Bunin writes:

⁶ Indigenous Finno-Ugric tribes in Northern Russia, here meaning pagan and savage, compared to the sacred Rus'.

I often go to church, and every time I am driven to tears of rupture by the singing, bows of priests, incense, all that beauty, civility, the world of everything kind and compassionate, where all the worldly suffering is comforted and eased with such tenderness. And just to think that people of that midst, to which I partly belonged, went to church only for funerals! A member of the editorial staff has died, the head of statistics, a friend from college or exile... And there was only one thought, one desire: to go out on the porch and have a smoke. And the deceased? Oh, God, how little connection there was between all his past life and those funerary prayers, that laurel on the bony, lemony forehead!

(Bunin 2017, 235)

As a “poet and master of the external, sensual experience” (Il’in 1959, 33), Bunin continued to describe erotic passion in his stories, most notably in *Dark Alleys* (*Temnye allei*), but he also repeatedly, as Boris Liubimov explains, “conveyed many profound and heartfelt religious intuitions” (Liubimov 2019), especially in his poetry. Consider the early verses in which he exhibits a clear understanding of God’s omnipresence and hope in God’s mercy: “And God was clear, joyful and simple / He was in the wind, in my homeless soul...” (Bunin 2020a). In July 1918, only a few days before the murder of the Russian tsar and his family, he writes:

A time will come – the Lord will ask the prodigal son: / ‘Have you been happy in your worldly life?’ / And I will forget everything – I’ll only remember / the meadow paths through spikes and leaves – / And from the sweetness of tears I won’t answer, / Having fallen in front of merciful Knees.

(Bunin 2020b)

If words in a poem often emerge from the unconscious, reason and self-awareness have to be employed in creating prose works. Bunin ends his story “The Goddess of Reason” (“Boginia razuma”) about an actress from the time of the French Revolution, by calling the Mother of God “the Goddess of Goddesses”⁷. Even more remarkable is his story “Clean Monday” (“Chisty ponedel’nik”, 1945), which Bunin considered to be the most important work of his life. In it, he recounts a relationship with a young, wealthy girl, courteous but emotionally remote. After a few months of taking her to theatres and restaurants, where they impulsively drank and smoked, upon her request they visit a monastery. There, the male protagonist finds out she knows everything about church services. They spend a night in her apartment for the first time, and the next day she leaves him a note not to look for her anymore. After two years, during which he partially recovered from the despair of being unable to see her, he goes to the same monastery. In a twilight procession behind the Grand Duchess Elizabeth, tsarina Alexandra’s older sister who would be martyred only a day before the royal family, he catches a glimpse of his former love. In his diaries, Bunin thanked God for having him granted to write that story (Liubimov 2019).

Enclosed, like most intellectuals of his age and social class, by the spirit of enlightened skepticism and French aristocratism, Bunin, always independent, replete with integrity and proud self-sufficiency, still cultivated the pious devotion of his ancestors. The tragedy of the Russian Revolution functioned as the decisive catalyst for the conversion. Towards

⁷ It is interesting that this story was published in the Soviet Union in 1973, when such assertions – providing stories containing them were even published – were remorselessly deleted.

the end of his life, Bunin apprehensively prepared to face his Creator, penning the following words on his deathbed: “No one in the sublunary, / Only God and I” (Bunin 2020c).

Hippius’ Memorial to the Redeeming Power of Love

Less than a year older than Bunin, fleeing the homeland for good a month before him and buried in the same Paris suburb cemetery eight years earlier, Zinaida Hippius (1869–1945) shared some crucial literary acquaintances, tribulations, aspirations and impressions with her fellow writer. Attracted by mysticism in her 20s, she founded the “New Church” with her life-long companion, writer and critic Dmitry Merezhkovsky, and ended her path deeply disappointed, bitter and lonely. All that remained in the final stages was a heavy-laden conscience and effervescent memories.

Hippius was born in a family of a prominent lawyer and state official, who passed away when she was eleven. She started writing verses at a very young age. Zinaida Nikolaevna met her 23-year-old husband in the Caucasus at the age of 19, and soon married him. Spiritually and ideologically, they seem to have complemented one another. “After all, she is not another person, but me in another body,” Merezhkovsky wrote to a friend (Churakov 2020). They spent the next 52 years together, not parting for a single day. Hippius and her husband were the central pieces of the “Silver Age” of Russian literature, and the assembling point of the St. Petersburg intellectual life of the early 20th century, propelling and setting the tone for its cerebral and spiritual pursuits.

For the wide literary public, the name Hippius became a symbol of decadence, especially after the publication of her poem “Consecration” (“Posviashchenie”) (1895), which contains the verses: “I love myself, like God” (Gippius 2020a). Bunin called her poems “electric” because of concealed emotions and a frequent use of oxymorons (“Gippius” 2020). Penetrating, charming yet jaded, she was thought to accommodate “a demonic, explosive principle, an inclination for blasphemy, challenge to the well-adjusted mode of life, to the peace of spiritual obedience and humility” (Orlov 1999). Her exhibitionism and loftiness incited many to parody her and call her names⁸. Nikolai Berdyaev, a famous religious philosopher and cultural historian who, according to his own testimony, spent long winter evenings in 1905 talking to Hippius till three in the morning, considers her a “remarkable person, but also agonizing”. He writes:

I was always struck by her snake-like coldness. She lacked human warmth. There was an obvious fusion of female and male nature, and it was hard to conclude which one is more powerful. There was genuine suffering. Z. N. is by nature an unhappy person. I highly valued her poetry. But she wasn't a poetic creature, she was even an anti-poetic creature, just like many poets of that epoch.

(Berdyaev 1998, 389)⁹

⁸ Esenin, for example, called her *Gippiusikha* (Marienhoff 1990: 308), and Vasily Rozanov, who made “a profession” out of his “hatred toward Jews and loathing of Merezhkovsky and Hippius”, condescendingly called the couple “Merezhippius” (Shershenevich 1990, 467).

⁹ The writer Nina Berberova also made a remark about Hippius’s masculinity: “No doubt, she artificially developed two external features: calmness and femininity. Inside, she wasn’t calm. And she wasn’t a woman” (Berberova 1996, 376).

In the early 1900s, overcome by phantasmal yearnings, Hippius focused on the implementation of the idea of the “Third Testament” and the approaching “God-man theocracy.” Her husband and she identified the principles of external separation with the existing church and the internal union with her as the basis of the “New Church.” Their main idea was to erase the rift between the duality of spirit and flesh, and to sanctify the carnal. With their friend and co-resident, Dmitry Filosofov, as well as a few other admirers, the couple organized quasi-religious rituals. They exerted significant influence on the intellectual life of the Russian capital through the St. Petersburg Religious-Philosophical Meetings (1901–1903), which included liberal clergy, and the St. Petersburg Religious-Philosophical Society (1907–1917), a literary circle of like-minded poets, critics and thinkers. In 1902, Hippius founded a new religious, philosophical and literary journal “New Way” (*Novyi Put*), which published, apart from poetry and theoretical essays, the protocols of the society’s meetings. She was also active in defining the essence of symbolism as a literary movement¹⁰.

Deeply disappointed by the failure of the 1905 revolution and its bloody result, Hippius and Merezhkovsky turned to political activism. They greeted the February Revolution of 1917 with enthusiasm, turning their apartment into a virtual branch of the Provisional Government, with their greatest sympathies bestowed upon the Socialist Revolutionaries (SRs). Like her husband, Zinaida Nikolaevna reacted to the October coup with disgust. She calls it “the darkest, most idiotic and filthy social takeover” (Gippius 1928, 210), the “power of darkness” (Ibid, 219), and she prophesies a “civil war without an end or finish” (Ibid, 221). After spending all their savings, and even selling most of their furniture and belongings to survive the famine in the city, the couple fled to Poland in late 1919, and a year later moved to Paris, where they spent the rest of their lives.

Despite walking into her own apartment and “finding everything in place: books, dishes and linen” (Berberova 1996, 377), and despite becoming “the queen of literary Paris” (Figs 2006, 540), Hippius was eventually overcome, like most Russian immigrants, by a Spenglerian sense of doom. She thought all the refugees have fallen into the “slit of history” (Berberova 1996, 380). Her mental state in exile, and her relationship to recollection and reminiscences, is best described in her poem “Memory” (“Pamiat’”, 1925):

*I won't leave a long trail,
In the limp human memory.
But this illusion of being,
Unclear, faulty and empty –
What do I need it for?
I live – inside me,
And if not... isn't it the same,
If someone remembers you.
Or forgotten you are by all?*

*In one stroke they will pass
The long century and a short day...
There is no life in someone else's memory.
Memory, like forgetting, is but a shadow.*

¹⁰ See, for example, her letter to A. L. Volynski in (Shruba 2004, 342–343).

*And on Earth, while my
Flesh is still alive and breathing,
Only one thing concerns me:
That the Lord will not forget me.*

(Gippius 2020b)

Like the repentant malefactor in Luke's Gospel, Hippius does not heed human judgment anymore. She declares her unconcern about her literary or personal legacy; instead, she pleadingly entrusts her hope in God's mercy: "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom" (Lk 23:42 KJV). And who is Hippius' "Lord"? He is not Bunin's God, found in the Russian Orthodox Church, the world of "beauty, civility", "everything kind and compassionate", "comfort and tenderness", but love, "primordial, eternal love" (Gippius 1996, 266). She has been searching for that love all her life, and she believes in its existence and supremacy, even after the devastating departure of her "Dima". In one of the final entries in her diary, she declares: "The power of love is equal to the power of death" (Vul'f 2020). She senses the coming end, and she welcomes it, just like her husband did.

Those who respected and loved the charismatic poetess, saw in her death the end of an epoch (Vul'f 2020). The tombstone covering the remains of Hippius and Merezhkovsky is built in the shape of a dome of a Russian church. Above Andrei Rublev's icon of the Trinity, the words "Thy Kingdom come" are engraved.

Hippius and Bunin, although emerging from different backgrounds and satiated by diverging predilections, seem to have ultimately reconciled their views and attuned their expatriated souls. "One can love only a person", wrote Hippius about Bunin. "We love the person while loving the writer. And such a divinely-terrestrial, earthy writer, thrusting us into the flesh of the world, making us touch it, feel it, it is impossible not to love such writer, like Bunin, not to love him facelessly, abstractly, picturesquely" (Gippius 2020c).

At her burial, Bunin, notorious for avoiding funerals, could not walk away from her coffin ("Zinaida" 2020). Perhaps, after all, he discerned the departure of a kindred soul. They shared the same collective memories.

Conclusion

Understanding the specific meaning of a certain word in a language opens up a whole new world of profound ideas, colorful images and riveting stories related to a particular time and place. It reveals the mysterious dimension of human dialogue. In Russian, the word *pamiat'* recalls the significance of national tradition, cultural legacy, and particularly its spiritual inheritance. It is in many ways connected to the cultivation of Byzantine tradition in its medieval and early-modern theocratic past. It ignites and incites the loving memory of one's parents, ancestors, native language and homeland. The word *pamiat'* is also affiliated with the intense God-seeking and neo-paganism of symbolist poetry, the forerunner of the New Age movement cultivated during the Russian Silver Age.

Ivan Bunin and Zinaida Hippius, although in the last few decades of their lives refugees in the politically-agitated, modern West, belong to the pre-revolutionary world whose origin reaches back to the beginnings of the last Russian dynasty and even earlier, to the

Kievan Rus' and the christening of the vast, Eastern Slavic expanses. Their memories revive not only the intellectual strife and esthetic pursuits of the last generation of Russian nobility, but also the religious sentiment of the past centuries. Bunin's memory is directed toward the might of the ruined empire, which includes the traditional Church, and Hippus' recollection is the crown of her esthetic and spiritual search and her lasting belief in the power of love.

Bolsheviks came to power in 1917 with the intent to destroy the existing culture and to create a new world based on the ideology of dialectic materialism. They succeeded in this only to a certain extent. After a massive and pervasive attempt to erase memory in the last century, the revival of writers and thinkers such as Bunin and Hippus in post-modern Russia re-establishes the remembrance and stimulates the recreation of a powerful civilization and a wealthy, fruitful culture. By tapping into the blood line of literary expression, it also kindles an understanding of universal values.

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Atminties prasmė Bunino ir Gippius kūryboje

Svetozar Poštić

Santrauka. Šiame straipsnyje atminties reikšmė atskleidžiama per Ivano Bunino ir Zinaidos Gippius, dviejų iškilų vėlyvosios carinės Rusijos ir tarpukario Paryžiaus emigrantų literatūros veikėjų, likimą ir dvasinės orientacijos pokyčius. Straipsnyje visų pirma nagrinėjama porevoliucinė šių dviejų rašytojų vertybių transformacija ir susitaikymas su išorinėmis aplinkybėmis bei vidine kančia. Atminties svarba Buninui išryškėja po to, kai jis suvokia tragiškas ir bauginančias revoliucijos pasekmes, kurios paskatina jį atsigręžti į praeitį kaip į ramybės ir paguodos šaltinį. Gippius dienoraščiai ir poezija, ypač po vyro mirties, taip pat rodo jos atsigręžimą į amžinąsias vertybes ir nusigręžimą nuo iki tol vyravusių žemiškų, trumpalaikių siekių. Abiejų rašytojų kūryba orientuota į ikirevoliucinę praeitį, o tai prieštarauja modernistų skelbtiems ateities siekiams, paspartinusiems 1917 m. Rusijos revoliuciją.