



# **Writing a Usable Past: Russian Literary Culture, 1917-1937 (Studies in Russian Literature and Theory (Paperback))**

*Angela Brintlinger*

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In *Writing a Usable Past*, Brintlinger considers the interactions of post-Revolutionary Russian and emigre culture with the genre of biography in its various permutations, arguing that in the years after the Revolution, Russian writers looked to the great literary figures of the past to help them construct a post-Revolutionary present. In detailed looks at the biographical writing of Yuri Tynianov, Vladislav Khodasevich, and Mikhail Bulgakov, Brintlinger follows each author's successful biography/ies and their failed attempts at biographies of Alexander Pushkin on the centennial anniversary of his death. Brintlinger compares the Pushkin biographies to the other biographies examined, and in a concluding chapter she considers other, more successful commemorations of the great poet's death. She argues that popular commemorations--exhibits, concerts, special issues of journals--were a more fitting biography than the genre of the "usable past." For post-revolutionary cultural actors, including Tynianov, Khodasevich, and Bulgakov, Pushkin was a symbol rather than a model for constructing that usable past.

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