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Sommario/riassunto

This book explores the major paradoxes of Russian literature as a manifestation of both tragic and ironic contradictions of human nature and national character. Russian literature, from Pushkin and Gogol to Chekhov, Nabokov and to postmodernist writers, is studied as a holistic text that plays on the reversal of such opposites as being and nothingness, reality and simulation, and rationality and absurdity. The glorification of Mother Russia exposes her character as a witch; a little man is transformed into a Christ figure; consistent rationality betrays its inherent madness, and extreme verbosity produces the effect of silence. The greatest Russian writers were masters of spiritual self-denial and artistic self-destruction, which explains many paradoxes and unpredictable twists of Russian history up to our time.
