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Nota di contenuto	Front matter -- Contents -- Acknowledgments -- Translator's Note -- Introduction -- Part I: The Titanic and the Demonic: Faust's Heirs -- 1. Faust and Peter on the Seashore: From Goethe to Pushkin -- 2. The Bronze Horseman and the Golden Fish: Pushkin's Fairy Tale-Poem -- 3. The Motherland-Witch: The Irony of Style in Nikolai Gogol -- Part II: The Great in the Little: Bashmachkin's Offspring -- 1. The Saintly Scribe: Akaky Bashmachkin and Prince Myshkin -- 2. The Figure of Repetition: The Philosopher Nikolai Fedorov and His Literary Prototypes -- 3. The Little Man in a Case: The Bashmachkin-Belikov Syndrome -- Part III: The Irony of Harmony -- 1. Childhood and the Myth of Harmony -- 2. The Defamiliarization of Lev Tolstoy -- 3. Soviet Heroics and the Oedipus Complex -- Part IV: Being as Nothingness -- 1. A Farewell to Objects, or, the Nabokovian in Nabokov -- 2. The Secret of Being and Nonbeing in Vladimir Nabokov -- 3. Andrei Platonov between Nonbeing and Resurrection -- 4. Dream and Battle: Oblomov, Korchagin, Kopenkin -- Part V: The Silence of the Word -- 1. Language and Silence as Forms of Being -- 2. The Ideology and Magic of the Word: Anton Chekhov, Daniil Kharms, and Vladimir Sorokin -- 3. The Russian Code of Silence: Politics and Mysticism -- Part VI: Madness and Reason -- 1. Methods of Madness and Madness as a Method: Poets and Philosophers -- 2. Poetry as Ecstasy and as Interpretation: Boris Pasternak and Osip Mandel'shtam -- 3. The Lyric of Idiotic Reason:

**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.

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