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| Autore | Schnauder Ludwig |
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| Nota di contenuto | Preliminary Material -- Introduction -- Free Will and Determinism: A Philosophical Introduction -- Free Will and Determinism in Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Britain -- Conrad and the Problem of Free Will -- Heart of Darkness and the Empire Machine -- Nostromo and the Mechanics of History -- The Secret Agent and the Urban Jungle -- Conclusion -- Works Cited. |
| Sommario/riassunto | Although it has often been pointed out that the protagonists of Joseph Conrad's novels frequently fail in what they attempt to achieve, the forces that oppose them have rarely been examined systematically. Furthermore, no sustained attempts have been made to rigorously address the central philosophical issue the characters' predicament raises: that of the freedom-of-the-will. This interdisciplinary study seeks to remedy this neglect by taking recourse not only to the philosophical debate about free will and determinism but also to the relevant historical, economic, scientific, and literary discourses in the Victorian and Early-Modernist periods. Against this background a paradigmatic analysis of three of Conrad's most significant novels – Heart of Darkness , Nostromo , and The Secret Agent – investigates the writer's position in the free will and determinism debate by identifying certain recurring themes in which the freedom-of-the-will problem |

manifests itself. Light is thereby also thrown on a central Conradian paradox: how Conrad can insist on morality and moral responsibility, which presupposes the existence of free will, in a materialist-deterministic world, which denies it.
