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Sommario/riassunto

Challenging recent work that contends that seventeenth-century English discourses privilege the notion of a self-enclosed, self-sufficient individual, *The Power of the Passive Self in English Literature* recovers a counter-tradition that imagines selves as more passively prompted than actively choosing. This tradition - which Scott Paul Gordon locates in seventeenth-century religious discourse, in early eighteenth-century moral philosophy, in mid eighteenth-century acting theory, and in the emergent novel - resists autonomy and defers agency from the individual to an external 'prompter'. Gordon argues that the trope of passivity aims to guarantee a disinterested self in a culture that was increasingly convinced that every deliberate action involves calculating one's own interest. Gordon traces the origins of such ideas from their roots in the non-conformist religious tradition to their flowering in one of the central texts of eighteenth-century literature, Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa*.
