

1. Record Nr.	UNINA9910783003403321
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Titolo	The power of the passive self in English literature, 1640-1770 // Scott Paul Gordon [[electronic resource]]
Pubbl/distr/stampa	Cambridge : , : Cambridge University Press, , 2002
ISBN	1-107-12505-7 0-511-04212-4 1-280-15955-3 0-511-12007-9 0-511-15703-7 0-511-32949-0 0-511-48425-9 0-511-04495-X
Descrizione fisica	1 online resource (xi, 279 pages) : digital, PDF file(s)
Disciplina	820.9/353
Soggetti	English literature - 18th century - History and criticism Passivity (Psychology) in literature English literature - Early modern, 1500-1700 - History and criticism Christianity and literature - Great Britain - History - 18th century Christianity and literature - Great Britain - History - 17th century Ethics in literature Self in literature
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
Note generali	Title from publisher's bibliographic system (viewed on 05 Oct 2015).
Nota di bibliografia	Includes bibliographical references (p. 249-272) and index.
Nota di contenuto	Introduction. "Spring and motive of our actions": disinterest and self-interest -- "Acted by another": agency and action in early modern England -- "The belief of the people": Thomas Hobbes and the battle over the heroic -- "For want of some heedfull eye": Mr. Spectator and the power of spectacle -- "For its own sake": virtue and agency in early eighteenth-century England -- "Not perform'd at all": managing Garrick's body in eighteenth-century England -- "I wrote my heart": Richardson's Clarissa and the tactics of sentiment -- Epilogue: "A sign of so noble a passion": the politics of disinterested selves.

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*.

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