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INTRODUCTION

The revolution in manners in eighteenth-century prose

Very few people are willing to speak up for hypocrisy. As a rule, to use the word at all is to position oneself against it.[1] I am no more likely to identify myself as a hypocrite than I am to call myself a cannibal, although I may do either so long as I invoke a rhetoric of confession or conversion that separates my present identity from the past one I name and thereby disavow. When I call someone else a hypocrite, I point to a gap between what she says and what she does. I sometimes also attribute to the hypocrite a broader, more pervasive deceitfulness whose practice can include the insincerities associated with self-control and good manners. In the last case, if the mask of politeness is sufficiently flawless, I may find it difficult to distinguish the hypocrite from any other member of civil society. Indeed, if everyone suddenly stopped lubricating social interactions with politeness, the consequences for the institutions of daily life – families, schools, religious organizations, companies, governments – would likely be catastrophic.

Insofar as the charge of hypocrisy assumes a discontinuity between motive and action, the sophisticated hypocrite poses problems for conventional arguments about character and behavior.[2] The belief that close scrutiny will always expose the hypocrite's true self depends on the highly questionable assumption that any given individual can be considered simply as the sum of a set of words and deeds that represent an "authentic" self inside. What happens when the hypocrite puts on such a good act that her life cannot be distinguished in the smallest particular from that of the perfectly virtuous person? Perhaps fortunately, most hypocrites are unable to keep their real motives hidden behind the mask of virtue. On the contrary: hypocrites stand out, exposing themselves at every turn. A partial list of prominent fictional hypocrites includes Chaucer's Pardoner, Shakespeare's Iago, Milton's Satan, Molière's Tartuffe, Fielding's Blifil, Sheridan's Joseph Surface and Dickens's Uriah Heep.[3] At least in literature, and possibly in life as well, the individuals we think of as hypocrites experience a strong impulse

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towards confession or self-exposure, and all of the characters I have named are compelled to anatomize their own hypocrisy in a complex play of self-loathing and self-aggrandizement. The hypocrite's often manipulative display of feelings that run the gamut from embarrassment to agony prompts some observers to defend the hypocrite, if not hypocrisy itself, by noting that hypocrisy exacts an immense psychic cost. For these observers, hypocrisy's offenses are mitigated by the psychological price the hypocrite pays. Another defense of hypocrisy invokes the paradox of the sincere hypocrite, whose imitation of virtue finally becomes second nature.[4] In each case, however, the intention is not so much to justify the practice of hypocrisy as to account for it by exposing the psychic machinery by which it operates.

My own intention is neither to examine the psychology of hypocrisy nor to dissect individual hypocrites, whether they be the tackers and trimmers of seventeenth-century political life or the unreliable narrators of novels such as Ford Madox Ford's *The Good Soldier* (1915), Agatha Christie's *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (1926) and Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* (1989). Instead, I will consider a series of eighteenth-century arguments for hypocrisy as a moral and political virtue in its own right, arguments that thrived in the medium of what Lawrence Klein has called "the culture of politeness."[5] Recent accounts of eighteenth-century British political philosophy have emphasized the partial displacement of the liberal paradigm of rights and obligations by a paradigm of virtue and corruption. In the latter model, commerce operates by means of manners to define the characteristically modern virtue of politeness, which is often threatened by corruption, especially in conditions of patronage or dependence.[6] Although truthfulness continues to be valued, the identification of virtue with politeness renders the ideal of sincerity increasingly problematic, with the effect of polarizing truth and civility. Among the advocates of politeness are writers like Swift, Hume and Burke who make manners the basis of civilization. Their arguments for civility are sometimes so extreme, however, as to constitute outright defenses of hypocrisy, and hence become vulnerable to attack. While initially offering writers a provocative form in which to revise and critique popular assumptions about the relationship between virtue and politeness, the pro-hypocrisy argument subsequently (once the rise of manners is assured) goes underground. It is transformed in the process into a widely influential set of arguments about modesty, self-control and tact; thus redefined, hypocrisy and its affiliates (a cluster of related terms, including gallantry, manners and tact, all coming under the umbrella of politeness) assume a dominant position in nineteenth-century British writing.

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By tracing the employment of the term "hypocrisy" in eighteenth-century discourse, I show the unique advantages offered by the concept of hypocrisy to writers who wish to make arguments about domination and dependence in a wide range of genres and modes. The first three chapters identify some characteristic fissures and self-contradictions in arguments for hypocrisy, examining closely a number of logical and rhetorical flaws that were noticed at the time by writers hostile to politeness. Civility's opponents tend to attack the forms of exclusion (often based on gender or class) on which civility as a premise depends. Chapters 1 and 2 pose a series of questions about texts by Locke, Swift, Mandeville, Hume and Chesterfield. What are the risks and rewards of defending hypocrisy? What does a successful argument in favor of hypocrisy look like? Must arguments for hypocrisy always remain ambivalent or self-defeating? Is hypocrisy the limit case for politeness? Does hypocrisy work best as a strategy of opposition or for maintaining the status quo? Why do discursive pressures around the question of hypocrisy so often explode into attacks on servants and women?

Chapter 3 addresses a pivotal moment in the history of politeness, when the revolution controversy of the 1790s pits Burke against a group of adversaries, including Wollstonecraft and Godwin, who substitute sincerity for Burke's chivalry and politeness. While Wollstonecraft offers one of the eighteenth century's most persuasive challenges to the ethos of politeness – a challenge framed in terms of gender, and one that is in many ways more sustainable than Godwin's wholesale attack on insincerity – I suggest that her call for a revolution in female manners remains ultimately compatible with a commitment to decency more often associated with Burke. Chapters 4 and 5 consider what the genre of the novel offers to writers interested in how women respond to the tension between the need to be truthful and the need to be polite. In the fourth chapter, I examine the *Pamela–Shamela* controversy of the 1740s, eighteenth-century Britain's most public and most fully worked-out debate on hypocrisy; in the fifth chapter, I turn to Austen's *Mansfield Park* (1814), teasing out of the novel the strands of an argument that justifies hypocrisy as a legitimate manifestation of female dependence. Despite its continuity with eighteenth-century discussions of female modesty, Austen's novel is surprising in its emphasis: at once incorporating and rejecting elements of the earlier literature of modesty, *Mansfield Park* reclaims tact and female reticence as forms of sociability that serve the interests both of women as a group and of society at large, while simultaneously pointing out their substantial cost to individual women.

My project offers a hybrid of two methodologies: cultural criticism, which operates by situating texts in a dense network of cultural practices

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and artifacts, and rhetorical criticism, which proceeds by the close analysis of individual texts. I also aim to encourage conversation between two groups within the field of eighteenth-century studies. One of these is represented by the writings of the major historian of political thought, J. G. A. Pocock, and the work he has influenced in the fields of political theory, history, moral philosophy and literary criticism; the other, by Nancy Armstrong's influential 1987 book *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, the progenitor of a body of work on conduct literature that is often, though not always explicitly, shaped by Foucauldian concerns about sex and domination. Both groups are interested in power and language, yet while Pocock and his followers often seem unaware of the relevance of gender to eighteenth-century political writing, Armstrong and hers lack a vocabulary for talking about either the more traditional forms of political power or the uses (not necessarily oppressive) of manners. While historians of sensibility such as G. J. Barker-Benfield have begun to demonstrate the centrality of gender to eighteenth-century political writing, historians and literary scholars have been in some ways slow to respond to such insights (particularly as they affect how we think about the first half of the century).[7] Another way to describe the problem is to say that while Pocock, Quentin Skinner and others have opened up the history of political philosophy to manners without going on to ask related questions about gender, critical work on the novel in its relation to the literature of conduct tends to have the opposite problem, with questions of gender occluding or displacing the political in the ordinary sense of the word.[8] While Armstrong's avowed goal is to bring the cultural back in touch with the political, for instance, her fascination with the ways in which the novel allowed women to reconceive of politics as psychology leads her to ignore much of what the eighteenth century itself understood to be political.[9] In response to Armstrong's suggestion that "a modern, gendered form of subjectivity developed first as a feminine discourse in certain literature for women," I propose instead that eighteenth-century arguments about female modesty are already intertwined with and mutually dependent on arguments about politeness in the public sphere.[10]

In describing this critical configuration, I follow the lead of several literary scholars who have been especially attentive to the relationship between gender and politics during the long eighteenth century; I owe a particular debt to the work of Carol Kay, and to others (including Claudia Johnson) who have acted on Kay's insight that those who wish to consider the relationship between literature and the political should take gender into account.[11] There is a strong etymological connection between "politics" and "politeness," though the connotations of the first are far more often

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negative ("politic" can mean scheming as well as judicious), and the plural noun "politics" serves to describe private as well as public machinations. "A curious Dilemma truly my Politics have run me into," observes Joseph Surface in *The School for Scandal* (1777). "Sincerely I begin to wish I had never made such a Point of gaining so very good a character – for it has led me into so many curs'd Rogueries that I doubt I shall be exposed at last."[12] I propose that the language of politeness offers a powerful alternative to the language of subjectivity for describing the various political and psychological concessions made by men and women in the quest for integration into and representation within linguistic, cultural and political communities.

The thought-experiment I propose at the outset, then, is that hypocrisy be treated as morally neutral. Described by La Rochefoucauld as "the homage vice pays to virtue," hypocrisy is also sometimes defined as habit or second nature.[13] Arguments in favor of hypocrisy frequently appear in the guise of arguments about the force of habit. If hypocrisy simply means playing a part, might not the sufficient repetition of a given action allow the hypocrite a kind of functional sincerity? Regardless of an individual's initial motivation, habit can become second nature in contexts as various as religious observance, oaths of political allegiance, courtesy to a spouse and deference to a superior. In the *Rambler*, Johnson speculates that "even [the hypocrite] might be taught the excellency of virtue, by the necessity of seeming to be virtuous," and hopes to reclaim "the man of affectation" (not yet a confirmed hypocrite) when he finds "how little he is likely to gain by perpetual constraint, and incessant vigilance, and how much more securely he might make his way to esteem, by cultivating real, than displaying counterfeit qualities."[14] Johnson here builds on earlier eighteenth-century defenses of hypocrisy by Swift and others, quoted briefly below and discussed at greater length in chapter 1. The argument for habit as second nature extends into nineteenth-century moral and political writing from Burke and Wordsworth to William James, who quotes the Duke of Wellington's famous exclamation: "Habit a second nature! Habit is ten times nature."[15] Like Johnson, James identifies habit as an essential technique for self-fashioning: "to conquer undesirable emotional tendencies in ourselves, we must assiduously, and in the first instance cold-bloodedly, go through the *outward movements* of those contrary dispositions which we prefer to cultivate."[16] Nietzsche offers a similar, albeit a less prescriptive, argument when he attributes goodness to "the protracted dissimulation which [seeks] to appear as goodness" and says that "[w]hat is dissimulated for a long time at last becomes *nature*: dissimulation in the end sublimates

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itself, and organs and instincts are the surprising fruit of the garden of hypocrisy."[17]

The first steps toward making hypocrisy acceptable are taken in the discourse of political science. While Francis Bacon defends dissimulation for its pragmatic value, Machiavelli makes such a strong claim for the political utility of hypocrisy that he leaves us unsure what to think of hypocrisy's consequences for ethics.[18] Each academic discipline offers a different vocabulary for talking about hypocrisy, a vocabulary that usually corresponds to a distinct ethical orientation. Philosophy's antagonism to hypocrisy goes back to Plato, but its preference for morals as opposed to manners is expressed especially memorably by Kant. "We are *civilized* – perhaps too much for our own good – in all sorts of social grace and decorum," he says. "But to consider ourselves as having reached *morality* – for that, much is lacking. The ideal of morality belongs to culture; its use for some simulacrum of morality in the love of honor and outward decorum constitutes mere civilization."[19] By polarizing manners and morals, philosophy as a discipline rejects the ideal of civilization to which the social sciences (thanks in part to their Enlightenment origins) are generally committed.

Sissela Bok introduces her uncompromising argument against dishonesty by noting that moral philosophers have paid strangely little attention to lying. While a more extensive body of work on deception can be found in psychology and political science, she objects to the fact that these disciplines "most often approach problems of deception in a merely descriptive or strategic manner."[20] What Bok begins to articulate here is a deep disciplinary divide. By its very constitution, moral philosophy wants to condemn lying absolutely, while both psychology and political science are more concerned with the tactics than the ethics of lying. This is even more true of sociology, especially that branch represented by the influential work of Erving Goffman, whose accounts of human behavior consistently invoke the framework of theatrical performance.[21] We are consequently put in the position of having to choose between two unsatisfactory alternatives: a philosophical vocabulary that is inherently antagonistic to hypocrisy and a sociological vocabulary to which hypocrisy is so integral that it offers no way of speaking about hypocrisy (as it were) from the outside.

When hypocrisy is not an "ordinary vice," in Judith Shklar's formulation, it can become an unspeakable virtue. Many defenses of hypocrisy begin by giving it an attractive alias: manners, civility, decorum, self-control, politeness. To defend hypocrisy under its own name means breaking a taboo, and a strong incentive is required to risk the outrage such a defense is likely to provoke. One incentive may simply be that of anticipating the

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charge of an adversary: it is best to be the first one to say the word, as when Swift admits and thereby counters the charge "that the making Religion a necessary Step to Interest and Favour, might encrease Hypocrisy among us: And I readily believe it would."[22] I return repeatedly to the question of what happens when arguments for hypocrisy are explicitly articulated, using the instruments of literary criticism to probe different discourses on hypocrisy in satire, moral philosophy, political and educational writing and the novel.

There is an important difference between texts that name hypocrisy and dissimulation without disavowing them and texts that avow something very like hypocrisy under another name (chivalry, gallantry, politeness, self-restraint). Books on education are especially likely to be brazen about hypocrisy because it is a controversial but necessary element of an education in virtue. Designed to supply a repertoire of practical techniques for socializing actual children, educational manuals cannot afford to be euphemistic. The how-to aspect of the conduct book encourages openness about hypocrisy, insofar as hypocrisy offers a "good enough" approximation of virtue. Of course, ethics also has a how-to component, and the intimacy between ethics and etiquette is long-standing (it is hardly surprising that the subjects should share a single two-letter code in the Library of Congress system).[23] Both ethics and etiquette have a special relationship to practice: as Dale Carnegie says of *How to Win Friends and Influence People* (1936), "this is an *action* book."[24] Accordingly, I emphasize not disjunctions but continuities between different kinds of writing on manners, and each chapter attends to practical advice books as well as to political and philosophical arguments about insincerity. I remain attentive, however, to the special things that happen in language when writers defend the unspeakable, for while hypocrisy can sometimes be exonerated, particularly when it is redefined in terms of self-control, there is a presumption of guilt in the case that distinguishes hypocrisy from co-defendants such as manners and politeness.

The history of manners is to a great extent the history of the conduct book, as this prescriptive genre is where manners leave their most obvious traces.[25] A catalogue of the conduct books most influential in Britain from the Renaissance through the end of the eighteenth century includes Erasmus's *De civilitate morum puerilium* (1530), Elyot's *Boke Named the Governour* (1531), Castiglione's *Il Libro del Cortegiano* (1528) and Hoby's 1561 translation *The Courtier*, Della Casa's *Il Galateo* (1558), Lyly's *Euphues* (1584), Allestree's *Whole Duty of Man* (1658), Halifax's *Lady's New-Years-Gift, or, Advice to a Daughter* (1688), Fordyce's *Sermons to Young Women* (1766),

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Gregory's *A Father's Legacy to His Daughters* (1774) and Chesterfield's *Letters to His Son* (1774). The canon of the self-help book remains in many ways more constant than the literary canon. In a tradition going back beyond Chesterfield and Machiavelli to Cicero, writers as diverse as Samuel Smiles, Stephen Potter, Dale Carnegie, Miss Manners, Martha Stewart and the authors of *The Rules* have offered arguments about ethics in the form of specific prescriptions for behavior. The fact that the last writers are all female is not coincidental. An important part of the story I tell here is how and why the thing called "tact" should go from being stigmatized at the beginning of the eighteenth century as a vice associated with effete male French aristocrats to being embraced at the start of the nineteenth century as the domestic virtue that would enable British women to manage feelings in both the home and the nation, a linguistic and cultural transformation with lasting consequences not just for Victorian England but for contemporary American culture as well.

Manners – the social constraints that check the dictates of individual desire – represent a subtle but pervasive hypocrisy, a form of discipline that exacts certain penalties but also promises social and moral rewards. "Men are qualified for civil liberty," Burke says, "in exact proportion to their disposition to put moral chains upon their own appetites."[26] Self-control is never synonymous with hypocrisy, of course, and Burke shares with his contemporaries Johnson and Burney a sincere wish to show that politeness and virtue are wholly compatible. In the context of arguments for self-restraint, England has always represented a special case – at least, that is, in the minds of the English, who are described by John Stuart Mill as "more than any other people, a product of civilisation and discipline."[27] Yet for all these eighteenth-century writers, the restraint of appetites calls up the specter of hypocrisy: while politeness and good manners can and should arise from the heart, they are also the product of years of discipline directed towards the suppression of true feeling. In response to the very general fear that manners are closely allied to hypocrisy, many of the writers treated in this study choose not to avoid but to embrace hypocrisy as a synonym for manners and strip the word in the process of much of its stigma.

Though many British writers are quick to embrace self-control as a virtue, a few decline to join the new consensus on politeness. Attacks on manners can target discipline as such – as when Godwin attacks politeness as a form of coercion – or merely focus on the tyrannies of convention – as when Johnson tells Boswell to "clear [his] *mind* of cant" ("You may *talk* as other people do: you may say to a man, 'Sir, I am your most humble servant.' You are *not* his most humble servant . . . You may *talk* in this manner; it

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is a mode of talking in Society: but don't *think* foolishly").[28] Yet manners represent only one kind of dissimulation. Bok's *Lying* offers a litany of the insincerities that erode civic life, including white lies, excuses, justification, lies in a crisis, lies protecting professional peers or clients, lies for the public good, deceptive social science research, paternalistic lies and lies to the sick and dying. Bok is especially vexed by the problem of inflated letters of recommendation for students, as is Stephen L. Carter in his investigation of the competing claims of sincerity and benevolence.[29]

The eighteenth century had a different list of the most damaging forms of insincerity. The religious settlement of the Restoration had institutionalized in Britain a system whereby individuals employed in government were forced to swear regular loyalty oaths to church and state. The Corporation Act of 1661 excluded from municipal office all those unwilling to swear oaths of allegiance and supremacy and to take communion in the Church of England. This situation was compounded by the Test Act of 1673, which excluded Catholics and nonconformist Protestants from all public offices (both civil and military), and the second Test Act of 1678, which extended similar provisions to anyone sitting in Parliament, whether in the Lords or the Commons. The refusal to swear oaths had already emerged as a moral principle in several English Puritan sects during the years of the Revolution.[30] The imposition of loyalty oaths now rendered swearing doubly offensive. The government seemed not just to sanction but actively to reward hypocrisy, especially in the form of occasional conformity, defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*) as "a phrase applied after 1700 to the practice of persons who, in order to qualify themselves for office, in accordance with the Corporation and Test Acts, received the Sacrament according to the rites of the Church of England, and afterwards during their office were present at any dissenting meeting for worship" but known to some as "occasional Hypocrisy."[31] Both Anglicans and dissenters objected to the tendency of the Test Act to corrupt individuals by way of compromise and equivocation, and, in this context, it carries a conservative political charge to argue that habit is second nature – i.e., to say that swearing loyalty oaths on a regular basis makes a man loyal, as Lord Kames suggests in his *Loose Hints upon Education* (1781).[32]

What with those who swore oaths without meaning them and those who refused to swear at all on the principle that swearing debased truth, the problem of hypocrisy would come to be associated with several different forms of language: not just with the provisions of the Test Acts, which asked dissenters and Catholics to be hypocritical for their own advantage and for that of the government, but also with the oath more generally, as

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a form of words in which meaning had become equivocal. As the debate about oaths suggests, eighteenth-century arguments against insincerity in language cover two quite different cases. One objection is to special forms of language, especially to the pressure-point of the oath; the other is to conventional forms of language and to the daily erosion of meaning consequent upon the use of expressions like "your most obedient and humble servant" in the subscription to a letter. Many dissenters objected to such apparently innocent conventions, singling out in addition the answer commonly made by a servant to an unwanted visitor that the master or mistress is "not at home." I will argue that the presence of servants in these two key examples of insincerity is significant, corroborating Paul Langford's observation that the eighteenth century's "story of politeness and commerce . . . is not least an account of the way in which the polite and commercial class dealt with its inferiors."[33] Many of the eighteenth century's anxieties about the ever-present threat of human deceitfulness, in other words, arise from an uncomfortable awareness of the corruption of free and open communication by a class system in which the interests of different groups are seen to be increasingly divergent.

Invoking the term *distinction* to describe a system of manners that divides the powerful from the powerless, Pierre Bourdieu argues that manners are a form of cultural domination: that "what some would mistakenly call *values*" are embedded "in the most automatic gestures or the apparently most insignificant techniques of the body – ways of walking or blowing one's nose, ways of eating or talking."[34] It is clear enough that manners are all about power. Samuel Smiles identifies the crucial test "by which a gentleman may be known," for instance, as his manner of "*exercis[ing] power* over those subordinate to him."[35] While I will suggest that hypocrisy is often secured in eighteenth-century writing by the exclusion of specific groups (women, servants) from the privilege of *being* hypocritical, however, this is not the whole story. Cultural criticism often lingers on the topic of domination, assuming that privilege equals hegemony and that the main work of criticism is to expose inequities. An important set of counter-arguments suggests that the relations between domination and dependence are far more complex, especially when it comes to hypocrisy, civility and politeness. While John F. Kasson's book on nineteenth-century American manners allows a token importance to "the virtues of civility," which he identifies as an important prerequisite for democratic society, he precludes any deeper exploration of the relationship between civility and democracy by emphasizing that "established codes of behavior have often served in unacknowledged ways as checks against a fully democratic order and in support of special interests,

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