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The Revealing and Concealing Smiles in Heian Literature: Exploring The Mystery of Smiling Through The Concepts of Mono No Aware and Miyabi

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Abstract

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By Quynh Phan

Unlike tears, the smiles in Heian literature have never been given the attention they deserve. Various instances of smiling are found throughout famous works of Heian literature such as “Tale of Genji,” “The Changeling,” and “The Emperor Horikawa Diary.” The smiles are categorized into the revealing and concealing smile which are responses to mono no aware and miyabi, respectively.

The revealing smile displays happy, positive emotions, especially to guileless, childlike innocence like that of Yugao and young Murasaki in “Tale of Genji.” Like tears, it is also a sophisticated and refined form of expression toward mono no aware.

The concealing smile hides the unwanted, negative, and socially unacceptable emotions. It is an instrument of miyabi which is parallel to grazia and sprezzatura of the Italian Renaissance court. Miyabi of “The Tale of Genji” is compared to grazia and sprezzatura of “The Book of the Courtier” by Baldassare Castiglione. The analogy of miyabi, grazia, and sprezzatura leads to the understanding of Japanese conception of reality in the Heian period and provides a more refined comprehension of miyabi. It also answers the question whether the act of concealing smile and laughter in both “Tale of Genji” and “Book of the Courtier” belongs to the category of grazia or sprezzatura.

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Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO BACKGROUND OF JAPANESE AESTHETICS IN HEIAN LITERATURE

Critics of Heian literature have paid extensive attention to the topic of sorrow and grief, as well as the related tropes of weeping and tears. However, there are few studies on smiles and laughter—which, I believe, are also important in understanding Heian literature. In this study, I will give an in-depth analysis of two categories of smiles: the "revealing smile" and the "concealing smile." The revealing smile conveys pure and positive emotions of the wearer. By contrast, the concealing smile hides undesirable emotions. My research will explore the gravity and importance of these two types of smile in Heian culture and literature.

Heian literature unfailingly highlighted sadness, sorrow, and longing as the principal elements of literary works during the Heian era of Japanese history. Grief and sorrow are the central themes for most works written on Heian literature. *The Tale of Genji*, a central work of not only Heian but also Japanese literature as a whole, has always been cited by scholars who study and write about Heian culture and literature. Authors such as Norma Field and Ivan Morris, for example, wrote about Heian literature by exploring *The Tale of Genji* and the theme of melancholy and sadness which the novel embraces.

Norma Field's *The Splendor of Longing in the Tale of Genji* discusses the relationships between Genji, the hero of the story, and the major as well as minor heroines.[1] Field takes the reader through various episodes of *Genji* which highlight the agony of love affairs and yearning that each character has to confront. Ivan Morrris' *The*

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[1] Norma Field, *The Splendor of Longing in the Tale of Genji* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1987)

World of the Shining Prince is a classic work on Heian culture. The author wrote extensively on the cult of beauty of Heian court in which suffering and sorrow are found at the core of Heian aesthetics. These two books are examples of the many sources that place heavy emphasis on grief and despair. In my study of Heian literature using *The Tale of Genji*, I notice that many of the characters, including Genji, smiled and laughed just as often as they wept and grieved. These smiles and laughter hint at a new perspective and a deeper understanding of Heian culture. My research will focus on the smiles found in various mediums of Heian fictions and their significance to the Heian court and aesthetics.

MONO NO AWARE – A DEFINITION

First, I would like to introduce the background of Heian-era Japanese aesthetics. Two central aesthetic concepts are *mono no aware* (物の哀れ) and *miyabi* (雅). *Mono no aware* is a term coinned by Motoori Norinaga, a nativist who lived during the Edo period. The aesthetic of *mono no aware* was not called by this name during the Heian period. *Mono no aware*, according to Morris, means "the pathos of things."[2] It is the feeling triggered when witnessing the beauty of nature such as cherry blossom petals falling or the manifestation of aesthetics through the cultured courtiers and the arts they performed. Often the observer is moved to tears by not so much the apparent beauty of things but the realization of the inevitable end of such beauty that is bound to fade away along with the passage of time. *Mono no aware* is described by Morris as "a restrained and elegant form of sensibility, a quiet feeling of resignation that a well-bred man might

[2] Ivan Morris, *The World of the Shining Prince* (New York: Kodansha Internatinoal, 1994), 197.

experience when faced with the combination of the world's beauty and the ineluctable fact of all living things."[3] Aesthetics was the center of Heian society; and as Morris remarked, it replaced virtue and ethical goodness as the fundamental principle of the court affairs. The elegance of grieving becomes the means to express one's artistic sensibility.

In his book *Landscapes and Portraits: Appreciations of Japanese Culture*, Donald Keene emphasized perishability as "a necessary condition of beauty."[4] Perishability is the core of *mono no aware* for without this element, *mono no aware* cannot be appreciated as a form of Japanese aesthetics. It is the perishability of things that make them beautiful and worthy of being appreciated. Perishability, then, is synonymous with beauty. As Keene said: "The innumerable poems on the cherry blossoms are therefore rarely concerned with their appearance but instead with their significance as symbols for the perishing beauty of the beholders."[5] The Heian nobles dedicated their time and energy to understanding and expressing "the cult of beauty."[6] *The Tale of Genji* by Murasaki Shikibu is the best representation that, as how Keene put it, expresses "the creation of beauty in every aspect of life [which] was the chief concern"[7] for the Heian court.

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[3] Ibid.
[4] Donald Keene, *Landscapes and Portraits: Appreciations of Japanese Culture* (California: Kodansha International, 1971), 30.
[5] Ibid
[6] Keene, 34.
[7] Ibid

MIYABI – A DEFINITION

Another courtly aesthetic term that played a major role in shaping the Heian court etiquette is *miyabi*, literally "courtliness" but can also be translated as "refinement." Like *mono no aware, miyabi* was limited to the aristocrats. It is a quality that pertains only to those of nobility. It covers the scope of Japanese aesthetics that includes *mono no aware* and acts as the primary class marker of Heian rigid hierarchy. In *The Tale of Genji*, the hero of the tale, Genji, is described as someone who naturally possessed *miyabi* and excelled in all arts. As Haruo Shirane concluded in his article, "the *miyabi* ideal finds its most perfect embodiment in the form of Genji…a man of arts, letters, and love, a hero of sensibility."[8] Elements of *miyabi* manifest in the very simplest forms of gesture or art performances by the nobles. It can be the way a lady reveals the sleeve of her twelve-layered robes (*junihitoe*) through the bamboo blind of her carriage or the way she lets her lustrous long hair fall on the back of her robe. In the case of a gentleman, he can express his *miyabi* through dance performance, quality of his poetry and calligraphy, or just the way he admires the seasonal changes in his garden. In *Sources of Japanese Traditions,* Wm Theodore de Bary highlighted *miyabi* as the kind of "refinement" that gives the courtiers "a justification for their own way of living and at the same time a contempt for the non-courtly."[9]

John Wallace, on the other hand, approached the concept of *miyabi* in relation to suffering. According to Wallace, Murasaki Shikibu expanded the meaning of *miyabi* "to

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[8] Haruo Shirane, "The Aesthetics of Power: Politics in The Tale of Genji," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 45 (1985): 647, accessed February 15, 2011, http://www.jstor.org/stable/2718974.

[9] Wm. Theodore de Bary. "The Vocabulary of Japanese Aesthetics I," in *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, ed. Wm. Theodore de Bary et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 200.

incorporate a notion of suffering."[10] In his article "Tarrying with the Negative: Aesthetic Vision in Murasaki and Mishima," Wallace explained that there is a beauty in suffering and the source of this suffering is amorous desire. The ideal *miyabi* is exhibited through the elegant expression of sorrow and suffering. The highest quality of *miyabi* is found when a particular form of beauty is on the verge of non-existence or death. This is evident in the scene in *Genji* where Lady Murasaki was gravely ill and our hero Genji described her appearance as "a beauty not of this world." Even as she was dying Lady Murasaki still maintained her *miyabi* such that it made her appeared even more graceful and beautiful than before. Beauty transcends death and turns the expressed sorrow into an exhibition of the artistic and sophisticated *miyabi*. This is *miyabi* of the Heian court.

CHAPTER 2: THE SMILES IN HEIAN LITERATURE

TWO TYPES OF SMILE

A smile, like tears, can display one's unmediated emotions as a form of expression of *mono no aware*. It is an outward, facial expression in response to things whose ephemeral being is the core of the construction of beauty. However, it also acts as a mask that hides undesirable feelings. This smile is a tool that maintains one's *miyabi*—the courtly refinement of the Heian period. My research covers the two types of smile in Heian literature: the revealing smile and the concealing smile, and their connections to Heian aesthetic terms *mono no aware* and *miyabi*, respectively. From here I would like to begin my thesis with an analysis of the revealing smile and its relation to *mono no aware*

[10] John R. Wallace, "Tarrying with the Negative: Aesthetic Vision in Murasaki and Mishima," Monumenta Nippon 52 (1997): 185, accessed February 15, 2011, http://www.jstor.org/stable/2385571.

found in several central works of Heian fiction such as *Genji, The Changeling*, and *The Emperor Horikawa Diary*.

THE REVEALING SMILE: PLEASURE TOWARD CHILDLIKE INNOCENCE AND SENTIMENT TOWARD *MONO NO AWARE*

The revealing smile is a response to children or childlike innocence that stirs the principal appreciation of the natural and unpolished. It is a delicate and simple smile that conveys a great deal of delight and pleasure. This pleasure is shown when a character experiences a brief moment of positive emotion. The revealing smile in Heian literature is another way, aside from tears, that the aristocrats used to express their feelings for *mono no aware*. It is also a means to express the characters' happy emotions toward childlike innocence. In other words, it is a kind of natural, unpretending, and transparent reaction to the innocence that belongs to characters such as Yugao and Murasaki in *Genji* and the young Emperor in *The Emperor Horikawa Diary*.

AS A RESPONSE TO GUILELESS EMOTIONS –EXPRESSING PLEASURE

The revealing smile is the means to exhibit not only the wearer's sensibility for *mono no aware* but also his pleasure and delight. In Chapter 4 of *Genji*, Yugao, Genji's lover, was described as a lady who was fragile and easily frightened. Her being easily scared and "[something] childlike in her fright brought a smile (微笑む[11]) to [Genji's] lips."[12] In the original text, the description of Genji's smile utilized 微笑む (hohoemu)

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[11] "Genji Monogatari," Etext Library at Virginia University, accessed March 9, 2011, http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/japanese/genji/modern.html.
[12] Murasaki Shikibu, *Genji*, 67.

which means to smile. The prefix "hoho" 微 implies something delicate or small while 笑 is the same kanji used for "laugh." So, "to smile" 微笑む means a small and delicate laughter. The childlike features of Yugao pleased Genji and he enjoyed seeing the frightened Yugao. In fact, he was touched by Yugao's frailty, and his delicate response revealed his immediate feelings of pleasure toward her vulnerability. The revealing smile is a response to unmediated, guileless emotions such as those of Yugao.

A similar case appears in Chapter 5 in which there are several scenes when Genji was seen smiling tenderly at young Murasaki or at the thought of her. One scene is when Genji forcefully took young Murasaki back to his mansion, despite the protest of her servant, Shonagon. Murasaki, unaware of what the sudden change might mean, "smiled (微笑んでいらっしゃるのが[13]), innocently and unprotestingly, he [Genji] had to smile (微笑んで御覧になる) back."[14] The original verb before conjugation for the smile in this scene is 微笑む. Here again, Genji's smile is a direct response to Murasaki's pure and ingenuous feelings. In the same chapter, Genji tried to teach Murasaki how to compose a poem, and when she was unable to do so, she "looked up at him, so completely without affectation that he had to smile (微笑まれて[15])." Since Murasaki was still a child, she did not know how to conceal her emotions or feign something appropriate as a noble lady would. She spoke as thoughts came to her and did not make an effort to hide her flaws. This honesty of hers made Genji smile because, being a child, her reaction is straightforward and refreshing. Through his smile, Genji showed his favor to the unpretentious reaction of the innocent Murasaki. Her unpolished yet not crude

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[13] "Genji Monogatari."
[14] Murasaki Shikibu, *Genji*, 109.
[15] "Genji Monogatari."

manner brought out Genji's transparent feeling which he revealed through his smile.

In Chapter 9, Genji finally, though forcefully, consummated his relationship with Murasaki. As custom would have it, Murasaki was supposed to write Genji a letter the next morning. However, "[he] opened her writing box but found no note inside. Very childish of her – and he had to smile[16] at the childishness. He stayed with her the whole day, and he thought the stubbornness with which she refused to be comforted most charming."[17] This is another scene of Genji's smiling at Murasaki's childishness which he found attractive. He was pleased at Murasaki's "stubbornness with which she refused to be comforted"[18] that was a rare and unusual trait that could not be found in most of his lady friends. His smile expressesmsatisfaction at Murasaki displaying her frank, unhappy emotions which most people would try to hide with a smile—the second type of smile which will be introduced later.

The similar tender smile can be found in another well-known Heian literary work *The Emperor Horikawa Diary*—also known as *Sanuki no Suke Nikki*—written by Fujiwara no Nagako, a lady-in-waiting who served under Emperor Horikawa and his son, Emperor Toba. In the memoir, she described how the innocence of the young Emperor brought her comfort after the death of Emperor Horikawa.

I buried my face in my sleeve to hid my grief. The young Emperor

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[16] Though Seidensticker translated it as "he [Genji] had to smile at the childishness," the modernized Japanese text for this part isかわいらしくお思い申し上げなさって and the original version has it asらうたく見たてまつりたまひて. かわいらしく (kawairashiku) and らうたく (rautaku) both mean "cute" or "charming." Neither version has the character for smile笑 orにっこり in it. In this part, Genji simply thought Murasaki was charming. There was nothing in the context that hinted at a smile.

[17] Murasaki Shikibu, *Genji*, 181.

[18] Ibid.

> was watching me curiously, and as I did not want him to know what was upsetting me, I put on a show of unconcern, and said, 'I yawned, and it made my eyes water.'
>
> 'I know all about it,' he said.
>
> I was taken aback by the blend of sweetness and authority in his words, and queried, 'And what is it that you know?'
>
> 'That you are probably thinking about something involving the syllables *ho* and *ri*,' he replied.
>
> I was charmed to realise that this little boy understood all about my feelings for the late Emperor Horikawa. I felt my spirits soar, and found myself smiling.[19]

Nagako, attempted to maintain her decorum by hiding her feeling, but was caught off guard by the young Emperor's understanding. Much like young Murasaki, he did not hesitate to reveal his thoughts. It is this straightforwardness which is part of his childlike innocence that moved Nagako. Her smile is a response to the encounter of such innocence.

AS A RESPONSE TO MONO NO AWARE –EXPRESSING AESTHETIC SENSIBILITY

Like tears, the revealing smile is also an aesthetic expression of *mono no aware*. A powerful example of the revealing smile is found in Chapter 5 of *Genji* when the

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[19] Fujiwara no Nagako, *The Emperor Horikawa Diary*, trans. Jennifer Brewster (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1977), 103.

bishop whom Genji was visiting directed the latter's attention to a beautifully blooming cherry blossom. The text described Genji's response as follows: "A very great rarity indeed,' Genji said, smiling 微笑む[20], 'a blossom with so long and short a span.' "[21] The key point is that Genji described the fading existence of the cherry blossom, a *mono no aware* concept, with a smile. Cherry blossoms only bloom for three days and wither away, and the cycle repeats next year and the year after that. In this sense, it is very much similar to reincarnation and karma which were widely believed in the Heian period. Through his smile Genji revealed his awareness of the evanescence of the beauty of things in nature which share the same fate of the transient existence with human existence. Although *mono no aware* is often associated with tears, in this case, Genji's smile is a spontaneous response to *mono no aware*.

Throughout the tale, Murasaki Shikibu constantly reminded the readers of Genji's superiority in his graceful manner and most of all, his naturally handsome appearance that often made the onlookers smile in realization of the beauty they were witnessing. There are multiple examples of this type of smile in Chapters 12 and 13 of *Genji* which took place during the time when the hero was in exile due to his affair with the Emperor's favorite consort. In Chapter 12, To no Chujo, Genji's long-time friend, visited Genji in Suma where he was exiled. Though living in a rural place Genji still proved himself to be a man of taste.

> Genji's dress too was somewhat rustic. Over a singlet dyed lightly in a

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[20] "Genji Monogatari."
[21] Murasaki Shikibu, *The Tale of Genji*, trans. Edward G. Seidensticker (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), 94.

> yellowish color denoting no rank or office he wore a hunting robe and trousers of greenish gray. It was plain garb and intentionally countrified, but it so became the wearer as to bring an immediate smile (にっこり[22]) of pleasure to his friend's lips.[23]

Instead of kanji, hiragana—Japanese phonetic writing system—was used to describe To no Chujo's smile. にっこり is pronounced as "nikkori" which means to smile sweetly. It has a connotation of a gentle and pleasing smile. The descriptions of Genji's dress such as "yellowish color denoting no rank," "plain garb," and "countrified" are not those of a praise or compliment intended for a great courtier like Genji. However, these images of Genji's dress reflect Genji's melancholy mood as he was in exile. More importantly, this was intentionally done by Genji so it was not a mistake but rather a display of Genji's splendid taste which he managed to express so well.

To no Chujo's smile acknowledges the fact that his friend's radiance could turn a rustic dress into a garment that befitted its wearer's handsome feature. Genji's outfit alone was enough to mirror his feelings of exile without the hero having to show his sorrow through any other form of physical expression. Wearing such a "plain garb" and "countrified" dress that was so befitting of Genji's feeling of utter desolation brought out his dignified aura and proved his fine taste in clothing which made him an ideal courtier. The sadness that Genji's outfit conveyed harmonized perfectly with his nobly appearance. This harmony which blended Genji's forlornness and charm turned him into a human manifestation of *mono no aware*. To no Chujo's smile reveals his sensitivity and

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[22] Ibid.
[23] Murasaki Shikibu, *Genji*, 244.

pleasure toward his friend's refined appearance while the latter was in exile. The smile is described as an immediate response of pleasure to the *mono no aware* that Genji had transformed himself into.

In the following chapter, Genji left the Akashi Priest's house after spending the night there. Murasaki Shikibu compared Genji's appearance in daylight to "the radiance of the sun and the moon" which the governor was given the privilege to witness.

> The sun was rising as Genji left the boat and got into a carriage. This first look by daylight at his new guest brought a happy smile (笑み[24]) to the old man's lips. He felt as if the accumulated years were falling away and as if new years had been granted him. He gave silent thanks to the god of Sumiyoshi.[25]

The root kanji for smile is used in this description of the priest's smile. 笑み is read as "emi" meaning a smile. The context in which the priest's smile is found denotes a straightforward happy emotion as a result of having seen Genji's unworldly magnificence in person. This is another instance of the revealing smile expressing the wearer's delight which in this case resulted from the priest seeing Genji in daylight. The smile represents the priest's sentiment toward the shining prince Genji and his appreciation for the prince's beauty. This is an example of genuine happiness expressed with "a happy smile" as clearly described in the passage. The smile is a response of complete joy and a result directly from an aesthetics appreciation.

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[24] "Genji Monogatari."
[25] Murasaki Shikibu, *Genji*, 252.

Upon seeing Genji, the priest felt as if he were reborn, "as if the accumulated years were falling away and as if new years had been granted him." This awareness of the impermanence of life is somewhat different from the usual *mono no aware*. *Mono no aware* is usually found in things that are beautiful but have in them the inevitable fading existence which makes it even more worthy to be appreciated. In the priest's case, however, he felt the effect of the transitory of life within himself and Genji's beauty is an external factor as opposed to the usual *mono no aware* whose both beauty and evanescence exist in the object of *mono no aware*. Nevertheless, the priest still had the same appreciation of *mono no aware* for Genji's beauty. The only difference is that this appreciation is more optimistic in the sense that the priest felt new life had been bestowed on him and experienced a moment of joy rather than sadness.

Another example of a revealing smile is from *The Changeling*, or *Torikaebaya Monogatari*, which was written sometime between 1100 and 1170, more than a hundred years after *The Tale of Genji*. In the story the Sadaijin, Minister of the Left, had one son and one daughter who, under strange circumstance, grew up as the opposite of their gender. In other words, the girl took on the role of her brother and eventually became Chunagon (Middle Counselor), a considerable high-ranking courtier in the Heian court. The boy became Naishi no Kami (Court Lady) and went to court to serve the Crown Princess as her lady-in-waiting.

Even though it caused Sadaijin much distress to see his daughter and son became so abnormal, he was moved by the fact that they excelled wonderfully in their reversed roles. At one point he was deeply touched by the radiance of his daughter who was now growing up as a boy. Her youthfulness was so charming that "he could not tear his eyes

away from the lad, he was so moved that the tears he had shed and his grief were both forgotten, and despite himself he smiled slightly."[26] For a moment he was able to forget his despair and responded to the beauty of his daughter with a smile. Though he anguished over the fact that she acted more like a boy and less like a girl, Sadaijin recognized that within this inappropriateness the beauty of his daughter was still apparent. Again, this is another scene when a noble character expressed positive feeling by smiling which resulted from his sentiment for the "pathos of things" or *mono no aware*. This *mono no aware* is similar to the one that the Akashi priest experienced. The Sadaijin felt grief due to his daughter behaving abnormally, yet her youthful charm as a young boy still made him smile. In this sense, despair and beauty—coming from the observer and the one being observed, respectively—came together and became the "sadness of things" or *mono no aware* which then prompted the Saidajin's smile.

The beauty that was often appreciated and celebrated in Heian court belongs to a deep, compassionate, and gentle aesthetics which connects to the transience of life and subdued by that very impermanent quality. As the aesthetic sense is embedded within *mono no aware*—a manifestation of beauty in sorrow—centered around grief and suffering. The evanescence of things makes them more delicate and therefore worthy of appreciation. This idea is found in many works of Heian literature by the gentlemen and ladies at the court who showed their appreciation toward the beauty of nature and its subjects by composing poetry and including in their prose extensive description about seasonal changes and other natural occurrences that moved their hearts. While tears traditionally act as a sign of sensitivity to "the pathos of things" that conveys sadness and

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[26] Rosette F. Willig, trans., *The Changelings: a classical Japanese court tale* (California: Stanford University Press, 1983), 19.

sorrowful feelings which then manifest into the permanent view of life for the Heian aristocrats, the smile portrays the fleeting, happy, yet bittersweet moment of happiness which is also an expression of one's refined sensibility. Evident in the smiles by Genji, To no Chujo, the Akashi priest in *Genji* and the Sadaijin in *The Changeling* are the reconciliation of happy yet temporal, positive emotions and the sad, delicate aesthetic sensibility which were often expressed through tears.

THE CONCEALING SMILE – MAINTAINING MIYABI

The second type of smile is the concealing smile, one that disguises a person's socially inappropriate feelings. The concealing smile is utilized to maintain *miyabi*—courtly refinement. According to de Bary in the chapter "Vocabulary of Japanese Aesthetics," *miyabi* is the most inclusive term for Heian aesthetics[27]; and at the same time, *miyabi* is also the central principle around which all court manners and etiquette revolved. The concealing smile is a tool to maintain *miyabi* when a courtier needed to hide his negative emotions. In fact, none of the noble characters in *Genji,* except young Murasaki, ever openly revealed their anger or any kind of excessive, uncontrollable emotions. The feeling of discontent is visible in the context but is carefully covered up with a smile when these characters interacted with one another. The concealing smile becomes a reflexive respone for those who had been educated with the concept of *miyabi* and those who carried *miyabi* in them.

In *The Changeling* the act of smiling which was used to conceal one's feelings was explicitly stated. Just before the climax in the first part of *The Changeling* when

[27] De Bary, "Vocabulary of Japanese Aesthetics,"199.

Saisho, Chunangon's best friend, was about to discover Chunangon's true identity, Chunagon pondered over Saisho's feeling for her and was "deeply distressed" that Saishou loved both Yon no Kimi, Chunagon's wife, and Naishi no Kami, Chunagon's "sister" who was actually her brother. However, in the presence of Saisho "Chunagon smiled to conceal his feelings"[28]. Chunagon's feelings that were mentioned here were feelings of jealousy. In order to preserve her gentlemanly persona Chunagon smiled to erase the traces of jealousy which was usually an undesirable feminine trait.

Earlier I used the scene between Yugao and Genji in Chapter 4 as an example for the revealing smile. In the same chapter, when the jealous spirit of the Rokujo Lady, Genji's other lover, appeared, the hero showed his concealing smile when he asked Ukon, Yugao's maid, to go out to bring a light. She replied with hesitation that it was too dark. In response, Genji "forced a smile（ちょっとお笑いになって[29]）" and commented on her "behaving like a child."[30] The kanji used here is お笑い (owarai) which is a common noun meaning something comical. Genji's forced smile is a façade he put on to hide his alarmed state in front of Ukon. It is not a smile responding to Ukon directly, but to the situation that required Genji to put on a smile as a "noble performance" to conceal his true emotion, which was fear, for it was a feeling that should not be shown, for the sake of preserving the image of the great gentleman that he was.

Using the concealing smile can be a way to express refusal. Such was the case in Chapter 5 of *Genji* when Genji came to see Murasaki hoping to take her away before her father arrived. Genjji said he needed to talk to Murasaki as an excuse to see her. In

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[28] Willig, 83.
[29] "Genji Monogatari."
[30] Murasaki Shikibu, *Genji*, 71.

response, "Shonagon smiled (微笑んでいた[31]). 'And no doubt she will have many interesting things to say in reply.' "[32] Here Shonagon rejected Genji's request, but not explicitly. By concealing the true meaning of their interaction with a smile, she conformed to the norms of courtly behavior. Shonagon's smile is a polite refusal to Genji's request. Since Genji was, of course, of much higher rank that Shonagon, a servant who possessed knowledge of court etiquette, Shonagon was expected to give Genji more than just a simple, plain answer. It is a smile that camouflages her discontent regarding Genji's request to see Murasaki.

The notion of using a smile to mask negative emotions was found not only in works of fiction but also in those of non-fiction such as memoirs and diaries. In *Murasaki Shikibu Her Diary and Poetic Memoirs* translated by Richard Bowring, Murasaki described "[those] in Adviser of the Right Kanetaka's group had arranged everything perfectly, and included two cleaning maids who looked somehow countrified in their very correctness, bringing a smile to everyone's lips."[33] The smile in this scene is a smile of disdain. It masks the obvious displeased feeling of everyone who saw the maids trying to appear graceful—an act which overstepped the boundary of their status.

In *Genji* there are many instances where the characters performed the concealing smile in the presence of their peers. One of such instances is in Chapter 2 when Genji and his fellow courtiers talked about women on a rainy day. At one point, one of the courtiers who was telling his story was "[quite] aware that the great gentlemen were amusing

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[31] "Genji Monogatari."
[32] Murasaki Shikibu, *Genji*, 108.
[33] Richard John Bowring, trans., *Murasaki Shikibu, her diary and poetic memoirs: a translation and study* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982), 103.

themselves at his expense, he smiled somewhat impishly (少し微笑んで[34]).”[35] The kanji used for the “somewhat impishly” smile of the courtier in this excerpt is 少し微笑んで with 少し (sukoshi) which means “a little.” The courtier made a delicate, yet slightly subtle smile. It was not a whole and complete smile but just a little bit of smiling enough to do the trick of concealing. From the context this courtier realized that his failed romance was the source of amusement for his peers. However, it would be unbecoming if he had visibly expressed any discontent. So in the presence of “the great gentlemen” he gave a mischievous smile to cover up any hints of dissatisfaction.

It was not just noble courtiers but noble court ladies were also capable of such performance. In another courtier’s romance adventure, he asked a lady to come with him as he was about to be promoted. However, her reply was not what he expected.

> [She] only smiled (少し微笑んで)[36]. 'Oh, it won't be all that much trouble to put up with your want of consequence and wait till you are important. It will be much harder to pass the months and the years in the barely discernible hope that you will settle down and mend your fickle ways. Maybe you are right. Maybe this is the time to part.'[37]

This lady’s rejection is highlighted by her smile. Behind her smile is the feeling of disdain for this courtier whose prospective career did not turn out as the lady had hoped.

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[34] “Genji Monogatari.”
[35] Murasaki Shikibu, *Genji*, 35.
[36] “Genji Monogatari.”
[37] Murasaki Shikibu, *Genji*, 29.

But being a Heian noble lady she did not show her scorn directly but chose a more sarcastic and delicate method: smiling to refuse his offer.

The concealing smile also comes up several times in chapter 6 of *Genji*. This chapter is about a red-nosed princess called the Hitachi princess who had no prospect in background or appearance. Due to her shortcomings the Hitachi princess became the subject of various sarcastic remarks by Genji and Tayu—the princess' lady-in-waiting—who possessed wits and confidence which her lady lacked. She did not hesitate to offer her frank advice to the princess.

> The princess stammered that she would not know what to say and withdrew to an inner room. Tayu thought her childish.
>
> 'You are very inexperienced, my lady,' she said with a smile (微笑むんで)[38]. 'It is all right for people in your august position to make a show of innocence when they have parents and relatives to look after them, but your rather sad circumstances make this reserve seem somehow out of place.'[39]

Unlike Genji who found Murasaki's childishness charming, Tayu regarded the princess' shyness as something "out of place." In other words, the princess' "display of innocence" was no different from the "countrified" look of the maids who tried to act above their station in *Murasaki Shikibu Diary* as discussed above. To this irony, Tayu smiled to conceal her disrespect and contempt toward the princess.

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[38] "Genji Monogatari."
[39] Murasaki Shikibu, *Genji*, 119.

In another scene, Tayu complained to Genji about his infrequent visits to the princess which caused some trouble for her and other ladies. To this Genji replied: " 'I had thought to help her grow up,' he said, smiling (にこり)[40]."[41] It would not be proper for Genji to say the real reason that he was too busy to visit her, because Genji was a gentleman who had a reputation to keep with the ladies; and the princess, though she did not have any strong prospects, was still a princess by birth. So turning his reply into somewhat of a joke with a smile, Genji preserved his image of a gentleman by masking his true emotions.

On one occasion, the princess sent a letter to Genji. However, "[the] princess did not have the advice of a learned poetry master. Silence, alas, might have been more successful. He [Genji] smiled (苦笑しながら)[42] at the thought of the princess at work on her poem, putting all of herself into it."[43] The use of the kanji in this excerpt is most interesting. The kanji 苦笑 read as "kushou" means "bitter smile" or "sarcastic smile." The choice of kanji highlights the meaning of Genji's smile in this scene. Genji was unhappy with the princess' lack in poetry and so he smiled to hide his disappointment in the princess. The smile creates an appearance of noble grace while not making Genji's displeasure with the princess' poem too obvious. Genji's annoyance is well coated with his sarcastic smile of grace. So even though it might seem obvious that he was not happy with the princess' effort in writing a poem, Genji did not show it. Instead, he revealed a smiled which in turn concealed his discontent from being exposed on the surface.

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[40] "Genji Monogatari."
[41] Murasaki Shikibu, *Genji*, 122.
[42] "Genji Monogatari."
[43] Murasaki Shikibu, *Genji*, 127.

But even a great man like Genji was, at one time, a "victim" of a biting remark by Tayu who made a comment on his outfit.

> 'It amuses me sometimes to think that your royal father believes you to be excessively serious. I doubt that he ever sees you dressed for these expeditions.'
>
> He smiled (ちょっと 微笑んで)[44] over his shoulder. 'You do not seem in a very good position to criticize. If this sort of thing requires comment, then what are we to say of the behavior of certain ladies I know?' [45]

From this conversation between Genji and Tayu, it is clear that Genji was offended by Tayu's comment. Still, he succeeded in preventing any sign of irritation to be shown and controlled the tension with his smile. The concealing smile masks and suppresses any feelings of resentment, anger, and objection. While the delicate tears can make one appear graceful even when weeping, a smile can give one the appearance of grace even when one's emotions are being disturbed. Thus, the concealing smile becomes an instrument that adds a more courtly refined taste to the exhibit of the masked negative feelings of those whose lives were governed by the Heian court.

The concealing smile opens a new connection to Heian aesthetics of refinement, *miyabi.* The ability to maintain *miyabi* depends on the ability to produce the perfect concealing smile. This smile masks and replaces the "unwanted emotions"—those that

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[44] "Genji Monogatari."
[45] Murasaki Shikibu, *Genji*, 115.

cannot be displayed in order for the character to preserve his *miyabi* in the eyes of others. While it may be deemed as an artificial smile, the whole act of producing the concealing smile is an accepted natural behavior of *miyabi*. It is an almost instinctive reaction to suppress any forthcoming emotions that, if revealed, may tarnish the reputation of a courtier or court lady.

CHAPTER 3: THE HEIAN SMILES AND ITALIAN RENASSAINCE

LAUGHTER IN LITERATURE

CONNECTION BETWEEN MIYABI, GRAZIA, AND SPREZZATURA

Miyabi is very much similar to *sprezzatura*—a term that originates in *The Book of the Courtier* (1528) by Baldassare Castiglione (1478-1529) who was known as Count of Novillara as well as an Italian courtier, diplomat, soldier, and a Renaissance author. The work portrays the Italian Renaissance court and describes the qualities of an ideal courtier. The book is divided into four sections in which the discussions on the ideal courtier were discussed in four consecutive nights. *The Book of the Courtier* was written primarily in the form of dialogues between the courtiers and court ladies at the Gonzaga court in which Castiglione had served. When it comes to courtly refinement and grace the Heian court of the eleventh century is strikingly similar to the Italian Renaissance court of the sixteenth century. Though different in time and place, the most fundamental aspects of a perfect courtier, grace and courtliness, are shared by Heian and Italian Renaissance courtiers. The characters Genji and Lady Murasaki are the exemplification of the essence of *miyabi* in *Genji* which focuses on refined appearance. *Sprezzatura,* on

the other hand, distinguishes itself from *grazia*—natural grace—by accepting that it is possible to construct the appearance of *grazia* without actually having grazia.

As *miyabi* is closely observed and judged by courtiers and ladies of the Heian court, the appearance of it must carry certain importance to the Heian court and its people. Yet, neither De Bary or Morris mentioned the possibility of the artificially constructed *miyabi* by the characters in Heian fiction. The purpose of the concealing smile in my thesis is to maintain the *miyabi* that is perceived on the outside—the appearance—of a courtier. The overlapping definitions of *miyabi* and *sprezzatura* are crucial to my study of the concealing smile in Heian literature. Therefore, exploring the concept of *sprezzatura* and *grazia* and establishing the similarities and differences between them with *miyabi* will provide further insight into the Heian court, the setting in which the concealing smile is utilized, and the life of its people, who performed the concealing smile as part of their everyday life.

In the First Book of *The Book of the Courtier*, the quality of the ideal courtier first comes from his noble birth, for "nature has implanted in everything that hidden seed which gives a certain force and quality of its own essence to all that springs from it."[46] The emphasis immediately starts with the natural cause of the beginning of the courtier as a human being. Count Ludovico da Canossa, who introduced the definition of *sprezzatura,* cited Don Ippolito d'Este as an example to associate "a happy birth"[47] with grace. The noble birth is considered a courtier's grace from which his courtliness

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[46] Baldassarre Castiglione, *The Book of the Ccourtier*, trans. Daniel Javitch (New York: Norton, 2002), 21.
[47] Ibid, 22

originates[48]. It is a necessary attribute to the grace of a courtier. The Count specifically stressed the fact that "a happy birth" is grace itself. The notion of birth is closely associated with the concept of naturalness. The Count emphasized the origin of grace to be that which belongs to the working of nature. He also remarked that those who are not blessed with the noble birth could, indeed, "polish and in great part correct their natural defects."[49] The Count highlighted the first notion of *sprezzatura* as "that certain grace which we call an 'air,' which shall make him [the courtier without *grazia*] at first sight pleasing and lovable to all who see him."[50] This is similar to the smile of *miyabi*—one that gives the courtier a calm and composed appearance. It is to preserve the courtly image expected of their respective rank and status.

The name or reputation of a courtier, "once stained, is never restored…[and] always remains defiled before the world and covered with ignominy"[51]. This is the reason why the Heian courtier, who shared a great deal of similar conduct to the Italian Renaissance courtiers, employed the use of the concealing smile in order to protect his name for fear of tarnishing it. It is acceptable, as Count Ludovico remarked, "if he [the courtier] have complete loyalty and an undaunted spirit, and be always seen to have them."[52] The significant part of this statement is " be always seen to have them." The Count admits that a real life courtier might not always have the perfections he mentioned before but more important than that, he must always appear to have them.

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[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid, 24.
[52] Ibid, 22.

In a way, it is like the ancient Greek play or the Noh play where the actor wears a mask in order to hide the changes of his expression. Thus, his performance is then judged by the audience observing his movements and actions rather than his facial expression. Using this metaphor, the courtier is the actor; the concealing smile is the "mask of performance" that hides his undesirable emotions; and the audience is his fellow courtiers and ladies in the noble circle for whose sake he put on the performance. However, the discussion about the ideal courtier never mentions if the courtier wants these qualities for himself but rather implies that he ought to have them or should want to have them. The model of an ideal courtier removes individuality and replaces with a persona created and accepted by society. In other words, a courtier is someone that holds the expectation of the best and is sustained by their acceptance. Thus, the "universal rule" for all courtiers (except those born with natural grace) becomes something like "to practice in all things a certain *sprezzatura* [nonchalance], so as to conceal all art and make whatever is done or said appear to be without effort."[53]

The idea is emphasized with the concept of concealment of any sign of effort and replacing it with an artificial air of nonchalance. The necessity to maintain *sprezzatura* in every action is because if a courtier showed that the things he achieved was due to great effort it would make him appear as someone with "an extreme want of grace."[54] This sort of desire degrades the status of a courtier for it shows that he is affected by greed and that he lacks natural grace; and therefore, has to fabricate it through artificial means.

The Count supported his view on *sprezzatura* by citing excellent orators of ancient time who "made their orations appear to be composed in the simplest manner and

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[53] Ibid, 32.
[54] Ibid.

according to the dictates of nature and truth rather than of effort and art."[55] The irony here is that this naturalness, according to the Count, can be fabricated and such fabrication is acceptable as long as no one knows of it. This is the connection that links *sprezzatura* and *miyabi. Sprezzatura* places importance in appearing naturally with an aura of nonchalance. *Miyabi* also focuses primarily on appearance rather than what is underneath. On the other hand, *grazia* is both appearance and essence of true grace. In other words, the appearance of *grazia* corresponds directly to what it is beneath its appearance. To put it simply, a graceful person not only appears but *is also* graceful. This is the view of the Italian Renaissance court. The Heian court, however, does not specifically separate what *seems* and what *is*. Though at times the importance of being naturally excellent in all arts is stressed in *Genji*, the author made it clear that to Heian courtiers, the appearance of refinement is more important than refinement itself. Thus, the concealing smile becomes a medium through which appearance of *miyabi* is produced. When a courtier utilized a concealing smile he essentially put on an indifferent attitude to the unfavorable change of atmosphere. Both Heian and Italian Renaissance courtiers used this same method to preserve their courtly images.

THE CONCEALING LAUGHTER in *The Book of the Courtier*

In my reading of *The Book of the Courtier* I discovered that in the interaction of the characters throughout their discussions, instead of smiling, these courtiers laughed to hide their discontent feelings. This is the Italian Renaissance or Castiglione's "concealing laughter." The laughter is a sophisticated façade that hides away any feelings of

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[55] Ibid.

displeasure. It is parallel with Heian's concealing smile and illuminates the analogy of *miyabi, grazia*, and *sprezzatura*.

EXAMPLES OF THE CONCEALING LAUGHTER

The First Book of *The Book of The Courtier* began with signora Emilia, the most outspoken and witty court lady in the book, proposing a game. The Duchess, who presided over the court in the absence of the Duke, had but few words in the entire four discussions but the presence of her *grazia* was made apparent on every page of the book by Castiglione. She was the first character to use the concealing smile of *grazia*. When signor Gaspar Pallavicino insisted that signora Emilia tell her choice of the game for the evening, she replied:

> 'But I have already told it,' said signora Emilia; 'now do you, Duchess, bid him obey."
>
> To this the Duchess said, laughing: 'So that all shall be bound to obey you, I make you my deputy, and give you all my authority.'[56]

The significance of this brief exchange between the Duchess and signora Emilia shows how laughter is used in the Italian Renaissance court to conceal feelings of discontent when necessary. The Duchess responded to signora Emilia's "demand" by what appeared to be a joke. From the context of this excerpt, the Duchess was not entirely pleased by signora Emilia's demanding tone. Signora Emilia acted above her station when she asked

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[56] Ibid, 14.

the Duchess to order signor Gaspar to obey her request. The Duchess, however, skillfully turned her refusal into a joke by adding some laughter. This is similar to Shonagon's refusal smile which was discussed earlier. The Duchess did not reveal her displeased feeling because she was the Duchess who had a reputation to uphold. In this sense, the concept of the concealing laughter is parallel to that of the concealing smile of the Heian courtier. The laugh is an attempt to erase traces of contempt. It filters the negative emotions of the Duchess and prevents it from destroying the refined appearance that she was expected to have as the Duchess of Urbino. If not read carefully, the Duchess' response to signora Emilia might seem as a pure, harmless joke. However, the subtle, unpleasant feeling is still noticeable. Nevertheless, this was the best performance of the concealing laughter in *The Book of The Courtier*.

It is without a doubt that the Duchess had *grazia*. Castiglione described the court ruled by the Duchess in the following way:

> [The] most decorous customs were there joined with the greatest liberty, and games and laughter in her presence were seasoned not only with witty jests but with a gracious and sober dignity; for that modesty and grandeur which ruled over all the acts, words, and gestures of the Duchess, in jest and laughter; caused anyone seeing her for the first time to recognize her as a very great lady.[57]

[57] Ibid, 12-3.

Therefore, the character of the Duchess was clearly presented as one who possessed *grazia* by Castiglione who worshipped her with great respect.

The main speaker in the First Book was Count Ludovico. The Count is another character beside the Duchess who appeared to have *grazia*. When the discussion on the ideal courtier approached the topic of sculpture, Giancristoforo Romano remarked:

> 'I truly believe that you are speaking contrary to your own persuasion, and that you do this entirely for your Raphael's sake; and you may also be thinking that the excellence in painting which you find in him is so supreme that the sculpture in marble cannot attain to such a mark. But, take care, this is to praise an artist and not an art.'
>
> ….
>
> The Count said, laughing: 'I am not speaking for Raphael's sake, nor must you think me so ignorant as not to know Michelangelo's excellence in sculpture, your own, and that of others. But I am speaking of the art and not the artists.'[58]

The Count refuted Giancristoforo's accusation with a laugh. Whereas the Duchess's laugh has the appearance of a joke, the Count's laugh is more serious as a defense for his speech on Raphael's works. Here the Count's laugh acts as a mask to hide his immediate feeling of contempt. The Count was not pleased with what Giancristoforo said but as a courtier, he did not let his anger explode but laughed to conceal his discontent toward

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[58] Ibid, 58-9.

Giancristoforo and to preserve his appearance of *grazia*. The Count's laughing is an instantaneous response to Giancristoforo's comment. However, his immediate feeling precedes the instantaneous response. The laugh projects an air of "peace" and removes the tension that is apparent in the Count's words. In other words, the tension is there but it is camouflaged by laughter.

It is difficult to determine who has *sprezzatura* and who has *grazia* in the book. However, the one that stands out the most is the witty signora Emilia who, as Castiglione described, "seemed the mistress of all, and all appeared to take on wisdom and worth from [the Duchess]."[59] From this description of signora Emilia, it is clear that Castiglione has assigned her as a character of *sprezzatura* in the most discreet way. This is evident in the Second Book when the discussion shifted to the virtues of women.

> Signor Gasparo said: 'One would have to invent a very subtle rule for distinguishing between them, because more often than not those who seem to be the best are in fact quite the contrary.'
>
> Then messer Bernado said, laughing: 'If our signor Magnifico were not present here, who is everywhere held to be the protector of women, I should undertake to reply to you; but I do not wish to offend him.'
>
> Here signora Emilia, also laughing, said: 'Women have no need of any defender against an accuser of so little authority. Therefore, let signor Gasparo hold to this perverse opinion of his, which arises from his never

[59] Ibid, 12.

> having found a lady who would look at him, rather than from any fault on the part of women—and go on with your discussion of pleasantries.'[60]

Here signora Emilia made a sarcastic remark against messer Bernado who seemed to speak against women. Her laughing produces the kind of effect that not only it conceals her annoyance at messer Bernado and signor Gasparo, but at the same time empowers her statement. As laughter is an outright expression of one's thoughts, feelings and emotions, the way signora Emilia and the signor and messer who made use of it in their conversations is an attempt to mask their irritation or dissatisfaction. We know the laughter of signora Emilia is a product of *sprezzatura* because from the very beginning Castiglione had established the character of signora Emilia to be one without *grazia*. So the difference between her laughing and the Duchess' laughing is that the former is an imitation of the appearance of the latter. The Duchess's laugh in the example I gave above was meant as a gentle reminder to signora Emilia who overstepped her boundary. In contrast, signora Emilia's laugh is an attempt to appear with grace even when her words were directly attacking messer Bernado and signor Gasparo.

In Book Four, there is one significant instance when a character smiled; and it is even more significant when this smile is a concealing smile which is identical to the Heian concealing smile. It was the dialogue between messer Pietro and signora Emilia when the former tried to refuse the Duchess' request that he give a speech on the matter of love.

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[60] Ibid, 123.

> Then signora Emilia said, half annoyed: 'Messer Pietro, there is no one in the company who disobeys more than you; therefore it will be well if the Duchess penalizes you in some way.'
>
> Messer Pietro said, still smiling: 'Madam, do not be angry with me, for God's love; for I will tell you what you wish.'[61]

Before and after this part, the only apparent facial expression was laughing. Messer Pietro's smile has the same effect as the laughter by the Duchess and Count Ludovico in the examples I have cited. The effect of this smile is identical to the concealing smile in *Genji* and *The Changeling*. This smile catches and confines the unmediated emotions that should not be revealed.

Throughout the first three discussions, Castiglione's characters conversed in dialogue. It would not be a stretch to say that the whole book was filled with the characters laughing as they spoke and gave counter-argument to their peers. But the laughter was not always intended for the purpose of lightening the mood of the party. During the first two books, aside from laughing, there was no apparent hint of any sort of emotion these characters carried. It was not until the third book that the characters began to have more detailed descriptions of their speeches. These details are hints to whether each character possessed *sprezzatura* or *grazia*.

The shift to more descriptive actions of the characters creates an awareness about those who have *sprezzatura* and those who have *grazia*. The hints Castiglione gave lie directly in the wording of his description of the manners of the characters. For example,

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[61] Ibid, 243.

in the Third Book, after stating his view regarding the virtues of the Court Lady the Magnifico "paused and was silent as if he had ended his talk."[62] In the Fourth Book, when his speech on the topic of love was finished messer Pietro Bembo "paused a moment as if to rest."[63] Lastly, in the same book, after presenting his opinion on the education of the prince signor Ottaviano turned to the Duchess "with an air of having finished his discourse."[64] These examples in which words like "as if" and "with an air…" are employed show either *grazia* or *sprezzatura* is at work. The question is, which of these words means *sprezzatura* and which means *grazia*. If the spectators notice the effort to appear naturally of the actor of *sprezzatura* then his performance has failed. However, if his *sprezzatura* is perfected then no one, except the few who have *grazia*, will be able to distinguish it from *grazia* since their appearances are almost the same.

RECONCILING MIYABI, GRAZIA, AND SPREZZATURA

Throughout *Genji*, none of the noble characters ever displayed any sort of anger or showed any sign of excessive, uncontrollable emotions. The Heian court described in *Genji* confined smiling, laughing, and weeping into the accepted range of mediums that displayed one's emotions. Smiling has a positive effect. Such effect was taken advantage of by a courtier who wished to hide his negative emotions in front of his peers. The concealing smile creates the falsehood of appearance. And at the same time, it suppresses the courtier's emotions by not allowing him to surrender to explosive anger and other undesirable emotions that cannot be shown. In doing so, the courtier is able to preserve

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[62] Ibid, 153.
[63] Ibid, 246.
[64] Ibid, 236.

his image as a gentleman. As far as Heian aesthetics are concerned, this is a display of *miyabi*.

The concept of *miyabi* focuses on refinement and eliminates anything that is vulgar or crude. By definition, *miyabi* is a quality that belongs only to nobility; it is also a class marker that separates those of noble origin from those of lower class. However, Heian aesthetics does not emphasize whether *miyabi* should be a product of a natural courtier like *grazia*. In fact, there is no distinction between the natural and unnatural in *miyabi* as opposed to *grazia* and *sprezzatura*. It is extremely difficult to distinguish between one who truly masters the act of *sprezzatura* from one who has *grazia*. Because a courtier who truly achieves *sprezzatura* will have a similar, if not identical, appearance to the one who has *grazia*.

Sprezzatura is the ability to imitate the appearance of *grazia*. Those who could perfect *sprezzatura*—so that others would think he had *grazia*—are as few as those who have *grazia*. *Grazia* and *sprezzatura* share a similar appearance but are not the same. Because the appearance of *grazia* is *grazia* itself while the appearance of *sprezzatura* is a mere copy of *grazia*. *Sprezzatura* simply "borrows" the appearance of *grazia*. It can only imitate the appearance of *grazia* but it can never fabricate the essence of *grazia*. A courtier who lacks *grazia* can never have *grazia*, because, as Count Ludovico stated in the First Book, *grazia* is a given quality from birth. *Grazia* is unattainable but its appearance can be replicated; and that is *sprezzatura*. In Castiglione's book *grazia* and *sprezzatura* are both discussed as two types of a courtier's grace. At the same time, however, one cannot ignore that they are essentially two different notions of grace. In fact, they are clearly characterized as two separate approaches to the idealization of grace

by the Italian Renaissance court. In contrast, *miyabi*, as discussed in works written on Heian literature such as Morris' *The World of the Shining Prince*, does not have this separation. This is the fundamental difference between *miyabi*, *grazia*, and *sprezzatura*.

If we are to compare the two principles of grace: *miyabi* and *grazia*, then *miyabi* is to the Heian court as *grazia* is to the Italian Renaissance court. *Miyabi* and *grazia* hold similar principle of grace; yet the Italian discourse of grace has a distinction between *grazia* and *sprezzatura* while the Heian does not. In other words, *miyabi* does not discriminate between essence and appearance while *grazia* does so by separating *sprezzatura* from itself and giving it a name. The act of naming is important for assigning something a name is the same as giving it its own existence[65]. However, though it had never been discussed in books written on the topic of *miyabi*, there are two modes of *miyabi* that have always exist in works of Heian literature that are equivalent to *grazia* and *sprezzatura* of the Italian Renaissance but have, nevertheless, been paid attention to before. The hero, Genji, represents a courtier with natural *miyabi*; on the other hand, the Hitachi princess, introduced in chapter 6, is an obvious case of failed attempt at the Heian equivalence of *sprezzatura*.

Examples of the concealing smile and laughter I have cited in both *Genji* and *Book of the Courtier* are evidences of *sprezzatura*, or rather, the *flawed sprezzatura*. This is shown by the fact that we, as the readers, are able see the purpose behind the concealing smile. *Sprezzatura* is like a stage performance; if the audience notices the

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[65] This was the case of Shinto—known as Japanese indigenous religion— which did not acquire its name until Buddhism arrived and became a major religion in Japan. Before the arrival of Buddhism, Shinto was so deeply rooted in Japanese culture that it was not seen as a relgion but, in fact, a part of Japanese daily life and custom. Despite their obvious differences, these two religions found their way to co-exist in harmony in Japan. Ivan Morris, *The World of the Shining Prince*, 93.

actor is acting then he has failed his performance. A good actor would make the audience feel as if they are living in his world and experiencing his grief and joy as he shows them instead of observing it from the outside as spectators. His acting would convince the audience that his tears and smile are not acting but a display of his true emotions. He could make his audience forget that they are watching a performance and believe that they are living in the reality of the actor. The concealing smile of *grazia* would make those who see it believe without a doubt that there is no trace of unpleasant feeling about this "concealing" smile. This is the power that a courtier with *grazia* has, the power to create a harmonious aura around him even when he is displeased.

The concealing smile only hides and prevents the obvious display of negative emotions. The context in which the smile is performed allows us to determine whether it is a pleasant or sarcastic smile. If *sprezzatura* is noticed then it has failed. This is when someone's actions are perceived as "unnatural" despite his effort to look natural. It is also when the audience realizes he is trying to appear "natural." The concealing smile can only filter negative emotions and stop them from surfacing. However, the characters in both *Genji* and *The Book of the Courtier*—even the ones who were supposed to have *grazia* like Genji and Count Ludovico— leave traces of irritation as they put on the concealing smile or laugh when they were confronted with undesirable emotions. If we follow this logic, then both Count Ludovico's and Genji's *sprezzatura* are flawed. However, to Genji and his contemporaries, such a "flawed" *sprezzatura* poses no threat to Genji's *miyabi* reputation. This also applies to the characters who performed the concealing laughter in *Book of the Courtier.* The targeted audience of Genji and the Duchess and Count Ludovico were not us modern readers, but those who belonged to the

Heian and Italian Renaissance court, respectively. Therefore, so long as their respective audiences were convinced of their performance then it had been a success.

As far as the characters of the two novels are concerned, since Genji—a natural courtier who is known to have *miyabi*—also practices the art of *sprezzatura*, it follows that *miyabi* of the Heian aesthetics must include the qualities of both *grazia* and *sprezzatura*. *Miyabi* encompasses both natural grace and the appearance of it. The concealing smile is an unmediated response in terms of courtly etiquette as well as a disguise to maintain courtly refinement. This smile is an expression of *miyabi* which breaks away the boundary that separates natural grace or *grazia* and *sprezzatura* –the appearance of *grazia*. The smile produces an appearance of grace while at the same time conceals the raw, unpolished emotions. This is the paradox of *sprezzatura* that *miyabi* also carries.

By not explicitly differentiating the essence and appearance of *miyabi* like the Italian Renaissance courtier, the Heian courtier, as described in Heian literature, conceptualized his view of reality in appearance. Heian courtiers put high value on how things looked or appeared. This is why they do not break down the apparent distinction of *miyabi*. There is no need to distinguish it as two different categories like *grazia* because Heian's *miyabi* is all about appearance. It is not for no reason that Japanese culture is called the wrapping culture.[66] The Heian era was when *miyabi* began to exert its tremendous influence on the court and those who lived in the capital. The refinement of *miyabi* is the polished appearance rather than what is beneath the appearance. What is

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[66] Joy Hendry discussed in her book *Wrapping Culture: Politeness, Presentation, and Power in Japan and Other Societies* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993) the importance of nonverbal communication and the appearance of things to Japanese culture starting with Japanese gift-wrapping custom.

seen is given priority because it is more immediate. Heian aesthetics are placed in the importance of appearance because it is the first thing that is perceived. Appearance is what is first perceived and is considered more important than the substance of things. The essence of *miyabi* lies in its appearance. To display this appearance is to express *miyabi* which is elegance and refinement.

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

Among the limited forms of emotional expression found in Heian literature, smiling plays a significant role in Heian court life and its defined aesthetics. The revealing smile is a response to the "pathos of things" or *mono no aware*. It also reveals one's genuine, happy feelings when confronted with undisguised emotions similar to childlike innocence that mostly belong to children. Sentiment toward *mono no aware* is usually expressed with a description of a wet sleeve drenched with tears. The connection of the revealing smile to *mono no aware* challenges the traditional view of tears as the one and only sophisticated expression of *mono no aware*. The smile is a response to a wide range of positive emotions, one of which is a response to *mono no aware*. The revealing smile also raises the question regarding the Buddhist-influenced view of life that emphasized the transitory nature of the secular world in which suffering was caused by attachment. The revealing smile presents the brief, happy moments in Heian fiction that were overlooked by both Heian experts as well as the Heian courtiers themselves. It acts as an inquiry after the Heian conventional view that life was nothing but suffering. The revealing smile proves that there were, indeed, instances of happiness where the characters expressed their bliss by smiling.

The studies of the revealing smile also attests that even though *mono no aware* had been often described with a tint of sadness due to its transitory aspect, it was not always expressed with tears. A smile, too, can be an expression of sensitivity toward aesthetics, namely *mono no aware*. The aesthetics of the Heian court transcended the definition of the impermanence as a negative concept and transformed it into a necessary element crucial to the understanding of *mono no aware*. When used to express *mono no aware*, the smile is tinged with sadness as in the example where Genji commented on the lifespan of the cherry blossom which displayed his sensibility toward the evanescence of life. The revealing smile allows the Heian noble to articulate their joy and happiness in the most graceful and sophisticated way. The revealing smile shares this graceful act with the concealing smile of *miyabi*. These two types of smile though are discussed separately in their respective category; they are two coherent terms since both are the medium of *miyabi* and *mono no aware* which are closely related.

The concealing smile is an instrument of *miyabi* which hides the crude, socially unacceptable emotions. A courtier who could maintain his *miyabi* even when the situation was not in his favor was praised by both Heian and Italian Renaissance. Such is the grace of a good courtier. Unlike their Italian Renaissance counterparts, Heian courtiers did not explicitly separate the ideals of *miyabi* into appearance or essence. Though the distinction is apparent in *Genji, The Changeling,* and *Murasaki Shikibu Diary*, it had never been discussed before, neither by Heian courtiers nor by Heian literature experts. *Miyabi* is an inclusive term that represents both *grazia* and *sprezzatura* which are two different notions of the same principle: courtly grace or refinement. Their differences and similarities provide further insight into how the two courts, though

existed in different time and place, celebrated their arts and courtly refinement. By comparing them we come to a better understanding of *miyabi* and discover new aspects of *miyabi* that had not been discussed before in the scholarship of Heian studies.

The concept of *miyabi* was so embedded in the court life that there was no need to question it or discuss it any more than what was given. The purpose of the concealing smile was to maintain *miyabi* which was to exhibit courtly refinement. As long as this purpose was fulfilled, there was no need for further inquiry about whether the concealing smile was a product of the appearance or essence of *miyabi*. This attitude toward *miyabi* highlights the Heian's focus on appearance which leads to a deeper understanding of its conception of reality. To Heian courtiers, reality lies directly in appearance. That is, what was real was what the eyes could perceive. Aesthetics ideals, too, were conceived in this manner since one could not express his *mono no aware* sensitivity toward a scene of cherry blossom petals falling if he did not witness it. *Miyabi* as well would not be appreciated if the appearance of refinement were not constructed correctly.

The concealing smile only prevents negative emotions from penetrating the appearance of *miyabi* but does not entirely camouflage the apparent negative feelings of the courtier. This is evident in the interactions between the characters in which one or both parties masked their discontent with the concealing smile. Moreover, these exchanges are proofs that even those with *miyabi* or *grazia* practiced "flawed" *sprezzatura*. The fact that we were able to identify the concealing smile example in *Genji* and *Book of the Courtier* proves that these are the imperfect *sprezzatura*. Had they been a concealing smile of *grazia* then we would be convinced that it was a revealing smile instead. However, even though these are "flawed" acts of *sprezzatura*, the respective

audience of the Heian and Italian Renaissance courts accepted this imperfection since it followed the expected behavior of a graceful courtier. So long as what is on the outside, the courtly image of a courtier, is protected with a concealing smile, it is not considered flawed.

The two types of smiles, revealing and concealing, present a new approach to the understanding of two important Japanese aesthetics: *mono no aware* and *miyabi*, respectively. Heian is the period when Japan started to become detached from China and began to form its own culture, which is evident in its aesthetics and appreciation for nature. By learning about how *miyabi* and *mono no aware* were seen and felt by Heian courtiers through their revealing and concealing smile, I have come to a better understanding of the highly sophisticated culture of the Heian court and how it was formed and is still being preserved in modern Japan. I have found a personal connection between myself and the ideals and beliefs that were held in high regard by the Heian courtiers. I was able to question the unasked and to inquiry after the presented facts. Works of Heian literature, though they were written more than a millennium ago, are still capable of providing rich philosophical understanding and knowledge to modern readers.

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