

Smuggling Novelty – Dismantling Tradition: Abhinavagupta and Bhoja on the derivation of *rasas*

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Any traditional discourse is continuously confronted with the struggle between the affirmation of novelty and the re-affirmation of tradition. This paper presents two different strategies for dealing with the same traditional legacy, representing opposed ways of negotiating and coming to terms with tradition itself. Commenting on Bharata's presentation of the derivation of *rasas*, Abhinavagupta and Bhoja, though unaware of each other, are both forced to account for an outdated aspect of Bharata's aesthetics. *Nāṭyaśāstra* 6.59-61 states that, of the given set of eight *rasas* (aesthetic emotions), four originate from the other four: (1) the comic *rasa* (*hāsyā*) derives from the erotic (*śṅgāra*), (2) the pathetic (*karuṇā*) from the furious (*raudra*), (3) the wondrous (*adbhuta*) from the heroic (*vīra*), and (4) the fearful (*bhayānaka*) from the loathsome (*bībhatsa*). Implicitly paying homage to the great sage, Abhinavagupta re-interprets the passage in a strikingly innovative way. He takes Bharata's four derivations as mere examples of four different kinds of relations among *rasas*. Hence, one *rasa* can originate from another as (1) its semblance, (2) the result of its result, (3) its direct result, or (4) a further result of its own Determinants. In contrast, Bhoja denounces the inadequacy of the old tenets and proposes his new opinion in an almost arrogant manner. Not only does he argue that there is no causal, developmental or terminological pattern that could account for the derivation of a specific *rasa* from another, but he states that Bharata's analysis of the number and structure of *rasas* is inadequate. There is no plurality of *rasas* at all, because ultimately there is only one real *rasa*, *śṅgāra*, "Passion", the speculative focus of Bhoja's entire aesthetic-cum-psychological theory. These two authors' approaches can be taken as instances of two possible strategies by which unavoidable cultural change is brought about and accounted for. (a) The 'novelty-smuggling' strategy brings theoretical and practical change within the framework of traditional lore by disguising a paradigm shift in the reassuring garments of the old system. (b) The 'tradition-dismantling' strategy delegitimizes bequeathed knowledge and invests the novelty of change as sovereign of a newly built cultural discourse, which then sets the parameters of any future development.