

## Mirror Images and Cross(dress)ing: Some Indo-European Intersections

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### I. The narrative comparanda:

1. Saxo Grammaticus, Gesta Danorum III.4: Rinda story (birth of the avenger of Baldr)
2. Mahābhārata, Virāṭa Parvan (IV)

### II. Common elements: disguise and cross-dressing, intimate contact with princess, sexual violence, loss of kingship and exile, in mirror-image order

#### Rinda story

Odin serial approach in various disguises to king

Odin's cross-dressing as servant maid / physician to achieve contact with Rinda, king's daughter

Odin's rape of Rinda while in disguise

Odin's loss of kingship / exile [/release from exile]

#### Virāṭa parvan

Pāṇḍavas' loss of kingship / exile

Pāṇḍavas' approach in various disguises to king Virāṭa

Arjuna's cross-dressing as dancing master, to instruct king's daughter and other girls  
[No rape – but see below]

Arjuna still in women's dress routs Pāṇḍavas' enemies during cattle raid

Pāṇḍavas' release from exile

### III. Redistribution of elements found in Rinda story in Virāṭa parvan

Odin assumes different disguises seriatim → 5 Pāṇḍava brothers + Draupadī assume different disguises synchronically

In particular, servant maid / physician [/arcane skill giving access to girl] → Draupadī servant maid / Arjuna dancing master [/arcane skill giving access to girl]

Odin's rape of Rinda → Arjuna treats princess entirely appropriately  
BUT (displacement;) Kīcaka, king's brother-in-law, attempts to rape Draupadī  
AND (reversal:) Bhīma, disguised as a woman, kills Kīcaka in especially violent manner

Mirror image: Fake woman, Odin, violates real woman

Real man, Kīcaka, attempts to violate fake woman, Bhīma

In both cases, gender-switcher wins

IV. Indo-European warrior culture – warrior and woman are the extreme polarities, dramatized by three transformations of warrior into woman/crossdresser in these stories

Odin → maidservant / physician

Arjuna → transvestite dancing master

Bhīma → “Draupadī”

Each transformation accompanied by act of hypermasculine violence, to redeem the sexual switch:

Odin in disguise rapes Rinda

Arjuna routs Kauravas single-handedly still wearing women’s clothes

Bhīma pretending to be Draupadī kills Kīcaka and pounds his extremities into his body