JOSEPH HALL'S *MUNDUS ALTER ET IDEM* AND CROSS-DRESSING IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND[1]

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Abstract: This paper argues that early modern English utopias in general, and Joseph Hall's *Mundus alter et idem* (1605/1606) in particular engage in the contemporary debate on cross-dressing. After a look at the problem of early modern cross-dressing, the paper introduces Hall's work, together with some of the opinions about it. Out of the 4 books of the work, here only the second part (the description of Viraginia/Shee-landt) is discussed here in details, since it abounds with instances of cross-dressing and related phenomena (for example, sexual licence and hermaphroditism). In my reading, Hall's work readily joins the ongoing debate, but because of its masterful rhetorical strategies and its satiric perspective, the text poses a great challenge if one tries to accurately identify its position in that debate. Yet, the text and some of Hall's other works testify a serious interest in cross-dressing and other gender-related issues.
Keywords: cross-dressing, early modern, England, utopia, Australia, hermaphroditism

1. Introduction

It is quite obvious that in the early modern era, when dress code was centrally regulated by so-called sumptuary laws prescribing the attire to be worn by people of different social ranks, both male to female and female to male cross-dressing posed a threat of some kind to established power relations. The precise extent and nature of this threat is heavily debated in critical accounts of the phenomenon, but the complexity of the issue is generally acknowledged.[2] The problem is all the more complicated when dealing with English Renaissance theatre, which was employing exclusively male actors, a feature that Stephen Orgel sees as "anomalous" in comparison to other European countries where either women were allowed to play, or theatre in general was forbidden (Orgel 1996: 1-2). With only male actors present on the stage, and boys performing the female roles, cross-dressing is universally present in the English public theatre of the time. However, the true complexity of the problem is only revealed when cross-dressing is also directly employed in the performed play's plot, like in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* and *As You Like It*. Confusion further exacerbates if the playwright goes yet one step further, and he himself refers to the strange gender configuration represented on the stage, like in the frequently quoted aside in the epilogue of the latter play, uttered by a boy actor actually performing a female role:

> If I were a woman, I would kiss as many of you as had beards that pleased me, complexions that liked me, and breaths that I defied not (Latham 1975: 131).

With this said, it is no surprise that English Renaissance theatre is one of the predominant areas of critical discussion about the phenomenon. In the 1980s, important works by Laura Levin, Stephen Greenblatt, Jean E. Howard and others addressed the

problem in the context of the stage. Another corpus particularly relevant to the issue is, quite logically, the 16th-17th century Puritan anti-theatrical polemic literature. When giving voice to their harsh critique against theatres (and, it cannot be emphasised enough, against many other "abuses" as well), authors like William Prynne, Philip Stubbes, John Rainolds frequently touch upon the issue of cross-dressing, like in the below quotation from Stubbes:

> Our apparel was given us as a signe distinctive to discern betwixt sex and sex, & therefore one to weare the Apparel of another sex, is to participate with the same, and to adulterate the veritie of his owne kinde (Stubbes quoted in Howard 1988: 422).

The third corpus pertaining to the subject is of vastly different nature. These are actual court records of cases against cross-dressers, a body of text which Jean Howard makes extensive use of in her seminal article published in 1988.[3] Interestingly, while in Howard's interpretation, such cases are another proof of a "sex-gender system under pressure (Howard 1988: 418)," in the historian David Cressy's evaluation of similar material, they appear in a completely different light. Cressy revisits Howard's claims, and based on the "remarkably mild" sentences in the legal cases examined by him, as well as on a different interpretation of cross-dressing in some contemporary plays, he arrives at the conclusion that "neither the records of ecclesiastical justice nor the London comedies reveal, in my reading, a sex-gender system in crisis (Cressy 1996: 450, 464)." Howard and Cressy represent the two extremes in the evaluation of cross-dressing, and many other positions can be found between the two poles. Without going any further into the matter right now, here I would only like to highlight that analyses of Renaissance cross-dressing predominantly rely on the above listed types of sources, namely: plays, anti-theatrical tracts, and juridical records, occasionally complemented with other types of texts (anatomical tracts, royal proclamations, homilies etc.) as well.[4]

In what follows, I propose that another group of texts may further refine our perception of cross-dressing in particular and early-16th century sexual and gender relations in general. Let us start from an author already much cited in the literature on cross-dressing: Philip Stubbes. Although he is frequently referred to in relevant studies, one aspect of his work is habitually overlooked, and this is already represented by the commonly used reference to the work, which runs simply as *The Anatomy of Abuses*. However, the full title is *The Anatomy of Abuses in Ailgna*. Ailgna is, of course, a rather simplistic anagram for Anglia, and the book is in fact a fictional travel book in dialogue form, as it is clarified right at the beginning, when Philoponus remembers in the following way:

> I have lead the life of a poore Travayler, in a certaine famous Ilande … presently called Ailgna, wherein I have lived these seven Winters, and more, travailing from place to place, even all the land over indifferently (Stubbes 1583: Bi^v).

Travel book in dialogue form, recounting a trip to an imagined land –Stubbes' work has easily found its way into the authoritative bibliography of utopian texts compiled by Lyman Tower Sargent (Sargent 1988: 3). In the present paper, I do not intend to scrutinise Stubbes' text, but following this trajectory from cross-dressing to utopias, I turn my attention to another specimen of English utopian literature from Shakespeare's time.

2. Mundus alter et idem and The Discovery of a New World

The book entitled *Mundus alter et idem sive Terra Australis ante hac semper incognita longis itineribus peregrini Academici nuperrine illustrate* (henceforth: *Mundus*), purportedly published in Frankfort and authored by "The English Mercury," came out in late 1605 or early 1606. Although there had been debates concerning its author, it is now proved to have been written by Bishop Joseph Hall (1574-1656), and also that notwithstanding the inscription on its title page, it was printed in London.[5] According to its modern editor, John Millar Wands, the text was immediately connected to Thomas More's *Utopia* (the German translation even renamed it to "*Utopia Pars II*"), and its initial popularity was comparable to that of More's book (Wands 1980: 1). Its English translation, a rendering by John Healey, was published in 1609, and there also appeared plagiarised editions from 1664 and 1684. Since the critical discussion on cross-dressing seems to make almost exclusive use of English sources, in the present paper I will primarily rely on Healey's translation, which is entitled *The Discovery of a New World or a Description of the South Indies. Hitherto unknown*. Nonetheless, at times I will mark important differences between this and the more faithful translation by Wands, who claims that Healey's version "might perhaps be more accurately called an adaptation (Wands 1981: lv)."[6]

Generally, *Mundus* is a fictional travel book offering an exhaustive account of the protagonist's travels to the unknown Southern land, which was a fertile source of utopian imagination for a long time.[7] Its descriptive parts are preceded by a highly rhetorical and rather sarcastic debate about the usefulness of travelling (*The Occasion of this Travel and the Introduction*) among three characters: the French Peter Beroaldus, the Dutch Adrian Cornelius Drogius, and the English Mercury, the narrator. The debate concludes with Mercury's decision to set sail to the Unknown Southern Land in the

good ship called "The Fancie", driven by the Columbian hope omnipresent in utopian texts of the time: "We must hope, and wee must dare (A4^r)."[8]

The ensuing travel account is divided into four books, each discussing a certain region of the continent, and according to the author of what is probably the most detailed monograph ever written on Hall, Richard A. McCabe, a certain group of human vices as well (McCabe 1982: 100-1). The table below contains the names of these main regions in Hall's original and in Healey's translation, together with McCabe's dual division of the represented vices:

Book	Hall	Healey	Vices (McCabe)
1.	Crapulia Yvronia	Tenter-belly Drink-allia	sins of flesh
2.	Viraginia	Shee-landt	
3.	Moronia	Fooliana	sins of mind
4.	Lavernia	Thee-uingen	

The discussion of the regions strongly resembles contemporary travel books, and as a consequence, these sections are also quite similar to the second book of *Utopia*. Both textual connections are further strengthened by the beautiful maps provided with the text, which are hardly distinguishable from the famous contemporary maps by Ortelius and Mercator. Nevertheless, Hall's map of the unknown Southern Land also features a land called *Terra Sancta*. This may mark the basically moralising underlying scheme of the work, since contrary to the other depicted regions, this area seems to be uninhabited, and it bears the inscription "ignota etiam adhuc," which reinforces the moral of the descriptive parts (the vanity of all human activities – including the search for an earthly Paradise) on the level of topography as well (McCabe 1982: 97-8).[9]

However, Hall's text is much more than a simple imitation of contemporary travel books or of More's masterpiece. The complexity of *Mundus*, with its myriad of allusions to classical and contemporary authors and works, is generally acknowledged in the critical assessments of the book. One of its early admirers, Sandford M. Slayer, puts the text into the context of late Renaissance authors, and after complaining about the general neglect surrounding Hall's work, ventures as far as to claim that "judged merely as a clever piece of literary craftsmanship, the *Mundus* is superior to the *Utopia* (Sayler 1927: 322-3)." He identifies important differences between *Utopia* and *Mundus*, and through specific textual analogies suggests that the impact of Erasmus', but above all, Rabelais' works is even stronger, a point reiterated in Huntington Brown's book

Rabelais in English Literature six years later (Sayler 1927, esp. 327-32; Brown 1968 [1933]: 103-5).

Wands also highlights important links between *Mundus* and *Utopia*, and sees in Hall's work one of the first dystopias in English literature. Yet he finds the connection between Hall's work and Mennipean satire more vital (Wands 1981: xxv-xli). In a similar vein, McCabe reads *Mundus* in the context of the satiric revival of the late 1590s, but at the same time, emphasises the allegorical nature of the work, and identifies a consistent moral agenda which is, as noted above, also reflected by the topography of the work:

> (…) we may say that *Mundus* is a Menippean satire upon the vices of Europe written in the guise of an allegorical travelogue recounting a fantastic journey to the great Southern Continent (McCabe 1982: 74.)

Besides the above positions, *Mundus* is also read by some readers as a representative of the popular "Land of Cokaygne" tradition of imaginary lands with infinite abundance. In J. C. Davis's basic work on English utopias of the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries, Hall's text is in effect excluded from the group of "proper" utopias precisely on this basis, an opinion many would find problematic (Davis 1981: 19-22). In a more recent article, Davis approaches *Mundus* from a different aspect, calling it "a satiric inversion of the claims of travel literature (Davis 2008: 8)". Similar perspective is employed in Peter Mancall's book on the great Elizabethan travel writer, Richard Hakluyt, in which *Mundus* is seen as an "attack on the idea of travel," implicitly positioned against the travel accounts so popular at the time, a work that "cast colonies as dystopias to be avoided at all costs (Mancall 2007: 258)." Fausett's book is unique in that it also touches upon the question of *Mundus's* gender reversal, and connects Hall's work to Thomas Artus and Béroalde de Verville, who also showed interest towards gender issues and hermaphroditism. According to him, Hall was one of the initiators of the "austro-hermaphrodite theme," perfected later by Gabriel de Foigny, whose *La Terre Australe connue* (1676) is an important piece of hermaphroditic utopianism (Fausett 1993: 48-51).

As this short review of critical opinions hopefully revealed, *Mundus* is informed by multiple literary traditions (utopian writing, Mennipean satire, travel writing), and this multiplicity is unified by an overarching, progressive moral agenda against vices of all sorts. Especially because of this moralising aspect, it is quite obvious that to some extent at least, the text can be read as a commentary upon contemporary social conditions, even if the commentary is expressed in an indirect way. Thus the second

book of Mundus, which describes the land of woman, and includes *Hermaphrodite Island*, as well as *Shrewes-burg*, a city where gender roles are completely reversed, clearly has something to contribute to the discussion quoted at the outset of my paper.

3. The description of Shee-landt/Woman-decoia

Since by definition every utopia is informed by a desire to rearrange the received social order, questions of gender inevitably arise from the very beginnings of the genre. Plato's *Republic* is renowned for its controversial views on women's role: whereas education and ruling is open for women, they are, through the abolition of private families, shared in common in Socrates' system.[10] Aristophanes, and above all his *Ecclesiazusae*, had a rather palpable influence on Hall's work, and especially on the way it depicts the political system of the land of women. While in general the Renaissance successor of the genre, More's *Utopia* includes a rather conventional patriarchal order, some more novel ideas are also found in it, like the examination of the man and woman by a third party before marriage, or a rather reasonable attitude to divorce. Almost invisible in utopian scholarship, one of the early English successors of More's work, *A Pleasant Dialogue between a Lady Called Listra, and a Pilgrim* (1579) is a conventional utopian dialogue between the traveller and the interrogator with the slight but important change of featuring a female interrogator.[11] Gender relations are obviously in spotlight in the first English utopia written by a woman, Margaret Cavendish's *The Blazing World* (1666), where fiction is explicitly treated as a means of gaining powers otherwise only accessible to men.[12] *Mundus*, on the other hand, is involved in the question of gender relations in a somewhat different way, and while we are turning our attention towards the land of woman, we should keep in mind McCabe's opinion that Hall was "neither philosopher nor theologian, but an impassioned devotionalist deeply convinced of the moral efficacy of imaginative literature (McCabe 1982: 2)."

The part devoted to the description of the land of women begins with a rather short general description of the land, performed in the usual manner of travel books, but it also contains a rather ambivalent remark:

> The soile thereof is very fruitful, but badly husbanded: It is divided into many Provinces, both large and ritch, yet all of severall conditions, habites and languages (H1ʳ).

The first clause obviously submits itself to utopian conventions, plenty being one of the persistent features of utopian landscapes. However, through the inventive pun on the double meaning of the word "husband," Hall suggests that the land of women cannot be an ideal place, and the reason for this is the diversity of "conditions, habites

and languages," which in turn is caused by the lack of proper cultivation. The text implies here that a land ruled by women, or rather: unruled by men necessary leads to confusion, but on a less institutional level, it simply means that the "unruly" woman represents danger. Correspondingly, Howard argues that female to male cross-dressing was interpreted as a sign of unruliness, which represented not only the danger of sexual licence but was also seen as a threat against the state (Howard 1988: 425). The concept of unruly women as dangerous in *Mundus* clearly initiates a remote link with cross-dressing already at this early point, and therefore it is all the more remarkable that besides conditions and language, the third area of confusion is "habites," and also that Wands's translation only includes "character and custom" in the same place (Wands 1981: 57).

This preliminary opinion gains more relevance after a crafty rhetorical twist in the second chapter, which lends some instability to the narrator's position. Since Mercury arrives from the land of the arch-enemies of the women, *Lecheretania*, he enjoys a rather cold welcome, and only the name and the fame of his country can save him: "Well to warde I went, and but that my countries name (the true Paradise of women) pleaded for me, I had never come home alive (H2^v)". Despite England's favourable gender reputation (which Wands leads back to a saying popular in the 1590s), the narrator has to accept certain laws, and thus we encounter another typically utopian textual element.[13] The laws are incorporated into the chapter, and open a rather wide window upon general contemporary stereotypes about women, reflecting a bunch of supposed female desires like the possibility of talking without interruption, being the ruler of the house, male constancy and monogamy, a respect for female privacy. From the perspective of the narrator's position, the last law is of paramount importance:

> That I should continually give women the prick and praise for beauty, wit and eloquence, and defend it against all men (H3^r-H3^v).

Mercury thus subjects to a law which imposes on him certain narrative rules. Since this happens at the very beginning of a book dedicated to the description of the land of women, the rest of the book must be treated with a grain of salt, since negative judgments must by agreement be suppressed (or they must be uttered in indirect ways). The narrator himself refers to this ambiguous position, claiming that "my tongue is tied by mine oth (…) Somewhat I may say, but no harme (H3^v)," and this admonition becomes all the more important when we are moving towards chapters describing more sensitive issues.

The narrative commences in the usual utopian pathway, displaying the form of government and the system of elections. This part is again full of negative stereotypes against women, and introduces a totally confuse, inconstant system, where the two most important virtues are Beauty and Eloquence. In a sense, this chapter is the illustration of the very beginning of the book, suggesting once again that if women are their own rulers, confusion necessary arises. This basic tenet is expressed almost word by word when this strange sort of female democracy is described in the following manner, right in the first sentence of the chapter:

> Their state (for ought I could observe) is popular, each one seeking superiority, and avoiding obedience (H3^r).

Remarkably, the Latin original uses the word *democraticus* instead of popular, yet from our present perspective it is more important that the self-ruling women of Shee-landt seek the privilege of men (superiority), and consequently, lose what seems to be in Hall's opinion their own principal virtue, obedience. As we get closer and closer to the heart of Shee-landt, the picture of Hall's ideal female gradually emerges – but because of the satiric tone, the picture is in negative, and it was apparently taken in black-and-white, too.

Thus the position of the narrator becomes rather problematic by the time we arrive to those parts which are directly relevant the topic discussed here. The title of chapter six is *Of Double-Sex Isle, otherwise called Skrat or Hermaphrodite Island*, and it represents a land where everything has a "double kind," even nature itself is full of weird dualities with fruits like *cherry-apple* and *date-almond*. But it is the inhabitants of this island who are particularly interesting for the problem of cross-dressing:

> Yea in so much that the very inhabitants of the whole Iland wore all their habits as *Indices* of a coaptation of both sexes in one. Those that bare the most man about them, wore spurres, bootes and britches from the heels to the hanshes: and bodies, rebates and periwigges from the crupper to the crowne; and for those that were the better sharers in woman kind, they weare doublets to the rumpe, and skirts to the remainder (H8^r).

Needless to say, the word *Indices* is a keyword in this passage, as it refers to the primary function of the sumptuary laws in effect at the time, which was to render class and wealth positions legible (Garber 1992: 26). However, on the Isle of Hermaphrodites, dress-code is not a marker of rank or wealth, but it is an outward sign of the dual sex of the island's inhabitants. Yet the cross-dressing acted out by them is much different from the cases discussed by Howard, Cressy and others, where cross-dressing means appearing in the opposite sex's attire. In *Mundus*, hermaphrodites wear male and female clothes simultaneously, a condition quite similar to a case noted down

in the mid-seventeenth century diary of the physician John Ward, which is recounted in Ruth Gilbert's monograph on early modern hermaphrodites:

> An hermaphrodite at a place 4 miles of Worcester: his testicles large and his penis out of measure big yet unfit for generation as my Landlord said he did believe. I and Mr.Trap saw him. Hee goes dressed upward as a woman in a kind of wastcoat and Bodies: but Breeches on (John Ward quoted in Gilbert 2002: 2).

On the Isle of Hermaphrodites, this type of "dual" cross-dressing is not so much a means of transgressing gender boundaries, but an outward sign of the double-sexed nature. In "their conceite" the inhabitants of the isle consider themselves to be in possession of "the perfection of nature," and it must be strongly emphasised that the narrator himself comments upon this duality in the following manner: "truly you may observe in them all, besides their shapes, both a mans wit, and a womans craft (H8^v)." At first glance, we seem to encounter here an island where the hermaphrodite is "an elevated ideal, the perfect union of opposites" (Gilbert 2002: 9).

Yet, despite the narrator's apparent approval, ambiguity lingers through the concept of hermaphrodites in *Mundus*. Remnants of conventional sexual distinctions can be observed, and these govern the direction of the "dual" cross-dressing. Some "bare the most man about them," while others are "the better sharers in woman kind," and the kind of dress he/she/it wears is an indicator of the dominant sex in the given individual. The dominant sex is also indicated by the names: "Mary Philip, Peter-alice, Iane-andrew, and George-audry (H8^r)". It is clear that dressing, cross-dressing, naming, and sexual identity are closely linked in the description of the hermaphrodites in *Mundus*, and there are similar instances of this association in Hall's other books. Both in his early satirical work *Virgidemiarum* (1597-8), and in his later sermons, he engages in rather fervent attacks against cross-dressers, and at least in one place he refers to them as "the hermaphrodites of our times" (Wands 1981: 158). The same association appears in other works written against cross-dressers, like in the famous *Hic Mulier* tract from 1620, where cross-dressing women are referred to as "new hermaphrodites" (*Hic Mulier* quoted in Howard 1988: 425). Therefore, the allegedly idealised image of hermaphrodites in *Mundus* must be handled with caution. Although the narrator seems to be approving, he also refers to the hermaphrodites' "conceite" and "deformity," and in the typical satirical inversion of values, retells the hermaphrodites' opinion about single-sexed persons: "what a coile they keepe about them, shewing them as prodigies & monsters, as wee doe those that are borne double-headed, or other such deformed birthes (H8^r)." All in all, the isle of hermaphrodites in Mundus reinforces Gilbert's

observation about the plurality and instability of the meanings associated with the early modern concept of hermaphroditism (Gilbert 2002: ch. 1., esp. 9-10).

The last chapter of Book II is an account of the country called *Shrewes-bourg*, where gender roles are completely interchanged. Here again, dress and outward appearance is of central importance; indeed, these make Mercury initially realise that the land is out of joints:

> Here was I truly guld; for espying persons in the habites of men, masse thought I, this is good, I am now gotten out of *Womendecoia*: but when all came to all, I was flat cousned with a borrowed shape: for in this countrie women weare britches, and long beards, and the men goe with their chinnes all naked, in kirtles and peticoates; spinning and carding wooll, whilest their wives discharge the main affaires of the state (I1^{r}).

The very first sign marking the mixed up gender configuration is once again the garment, and only after this comes the transposition of functions, as if it would be but a consequence of cross-dressing. Yet the interchange of functions is rather far-fetched: in fact men do everything that conventionally women were supposed to do, while women enjoy all the privileges that were inaccessible for them in the contemporary male-dominant patriarchal system.

Dressing and cross-dressing plays a pivotal role in the rest of the chapter as well. At one point Mercury compares the enslaved men of Shrewes-burg to Turkish slaves, and finds "that these distinction of habites assured mee this was a more base kinde of captivity (I2^{r})" – but the section may be more straightforward in the modern translation:

> It would have appeared to me that I was walking among some Turkish slaves, had not the dress that distinguishes them showed me it was an even baser kind of slavery (Wands 1981: 64).

Slavery is all the more insufferable because of the humiliating attire, which is once again mentioned later, the men's clothes being the only filthy spot in the otherwise neatly cleaned houses.

In the secondary literature on cross-dressing, charivaris and skimingtons are quite often mentioned, for example, Howard treats them as unofficial occasions where "unruly women were disciplined and insufficiently dominating husbands reproved" (Howard 1996: 103). No further description of this strange collective enactment of gender tensions is needed, since we can rely on the description of a similar episode in the chapter on Shrewes-burg – with the role of the man and the woman exchanged:

> She must first change attires with her husband, and then shave off all her haire, and so being ledde through the market place must stand for one whole daie upon the pillorie, as an object unto all the fleering scoffes of the beholders, nor shall the man escape scot-free, for being so audacious, as to take the favours offered by his wife without a modest refusal (I3^{r})

Once again, the importance of dressing and cross-dressing is re-confirmed, the change of attire being the most substantial part of the punishment of the wife who let his

husband loose: she can only put his normal clothes back after she produces a cudgel covered with the blood of the unruly man to the court.

Because of the total symmetry of the employed perspective (man do everything that would "naturally" pertain to women, and vica versa), Shrewes-burg reflects gender tension of a peculiar kind, one based on imagining a complete reversal of conventional gender roles. Through this, Mercury comes to realise that these roles are based on nothing but custom, in accord with Szőnyi's conclusion about Renaissance cross-dressing, which, as he claims, "suggested that gender differences resulted only from social practice and cultural representation" (Szőnyi 2012: 16). *Mundus* is an apt illustration to this point, particularly with the below passage, where the narrator explicitly ponders upon this idea:

> Now you would thinke it incredible if I should tell you of the neatnesse of their houses, yet the men are all their drudges to wash, wipe, scoure and sweepe all that is done: yea and dresse all the meate besides: so that I imagine that it is but mans esteeme of the undecency of such bussinesses, (not any of his unablenesse to discharge them) that makes him eschew such employments (I3^v-I4^r).

The shift of roles evidently raises empathy in the narrator, but most of the time, one feels that this empathy is reserved for the effeminated men, so cruelly humiliated by the roles imposed upon them. Here, for the first time, the narrator seems to come close to realising that male and female roles are not necessarily determined by biological sex, but they are culturally and politically sanctioned. And this rather progressive stance is reinforced by other works of Hall. In one of his sermons entitled *The Women's Veil*, Hall condemns the men who rule over their wives in a tyrannic fashion rendering them to the level of slaves (Wands 1981: 159).

4. Conclusion

To sum up, Joseph Hall's satyric dystopia, and especially its sections concerned with the land of women seem to be heavily informed by contemporary gender issues, and, more specifically by the topic of cross-dressing. Whenever some sort of gender reconfiguration takes place in the text, it begins with the mixture (*Isle of Hermaphrodites*) or exchange (*Shrewes-burg*) of gender-specific attire. And the image of the cross-dressed female in *Mundus* readily conforms to many of the claims of secondary literature. Let us here once again recall the two extremes in the evaluation of the phenomenon. Howard sees in cross-dressing a sign of a sex-gender system under heavy pressure, even if in her later article she calls attention to the non-monolithic nature of this system. Cressy, on the other hand, thinks that cross-dressing was much more marginal in its importance. Since Hall's text reiterates almost all the anxieties

connected to cross-dressing (the unruly woman, the monster-woman, the effeminate man, the conventional basis of gender roles), it is beyond doubt that *Mundus* is engaged in the same discourse. However, because of the crafty rhetorical structure, the problematic position of the narrator and the satirical tone, it is not always possible to precisely identify the stance of the text.

It might also have some relevance that the anatomical aspects of sex change are left almost completely unmentioned. While in the above quoted description of a hermaphrodite by John Ward, besides the strange dual dress, privities are also mentioned, nothing like this appears in *Mundus*. Even on the Isle of Hermaphrodites, we learn nothing specific about the anatomy of the inhabitants, except that they are "prefect both in begetting, & bringing forth" (H8^r). The biological differences seem to be less important for Hall than the social implications of gender trouble. And this is in agreement with the supposed moralising purposes of the work, as well as with Hall's image as a typical Elizabethan figure, whose fundamental characteristic was his "learned modesty" (Wands 1981: XX). And even though it was precisely the work discussed here that Milton attacked so fervently in his *An apology against a pamphlet called A modest confutation of the animadversions upon the remonstrant against Smectymnuus* (1642), calling it the "idlest and the paltriest mime that ever mounted upon bank," and a "universal foolery," by the inquiry of the text from the aspect of cross-dressing, it has by now hopefully become clear that the text is an infinite depository of many different contemporary social phenomena (Wolfe 1953: 880-1).

On the whole, cross-dressing has a fundamental place in the description of the land of women in Hall's book. The text reinforces the notion that cross-dressing was a heavily discussed phenomenon in the time, and *Mundus* readily joins this discourse. The text reveals two important aspects of contemporary cross-dressing. The first is the realisation that like dress-codes, gender roles are also customary. The other is that their interdependence is so tight that a change in one necessary causes an effect in the other. Whether these considerations refer to a general crisis in contemporary gender relations is another question. If we juxtapose the rest of the book to the chapters discussed here, we may reach the conclusion that even if there were serious problems with gender relations, there were serious problems with many other aspects of contemporary life, too. Thus, although here we focused almost exclusively on gender issues, we should never forget that as Hall's book demonstrates, in contemporary culture such issues were always inextricably intertwined with numerous other aspects and contexts as well.

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Notes

2 The secondary literature on cross-dressing is enormous. I will only refer to some of the many available critical opinions. For a recent treatment of the phenomenon, see Szőnyi 2011, which lists a lot of related works in its bibliography.

3 It must be immediately noted that in the newer version of her article, Howard has added some preliminary notes to her paper, the most important probably being that "In this chapter I no longer speak of a sex-gender system as a single phenomenon (Howard 1994: 162, n.1.)." However, the basic structure and the conclusion are not significantly changed by this addition.

4 On contemporary anatomical views, see Greenblatt (1988: esp. 73-86), and also Orgel (1996: esp. 18-24). Royal proclamations and the homily *Sermon against Excess of Apparel* are studied by Garber (1992, 25-28).

5 On the rather complicated publishing history of *Mundus*, see Wands 1980.

6 Where only page numbers are provided, I refer to the 1614 edition of *Discovery*.

7 The impact of the notion of an unknown Southern land on utopian imagination is discussed by David Fausett in a book-length study (Fausett 1993).

8 On the so-called Columbus topos, see Appelbaum (2004: 24-35). It must be also be noted here that Fancy/Imagination is yet another frequent topos of early modern English utopias; authors often feel the need to refer to it in their prefaces, like in Francis Godwin's *Man in the Moone* (1638), or in Margaret Cavendish: *The Blazing World* (1666).

9 The English editions I accessed through the *Early English Books Online* did not contain any maps. On the relation of the work to contemporary maps and geographical knowledge, see McCabe (1982: 85-90, 98).

10 For a clear-cut overview of feminism in Plato's *Republis*, see Brown 2010.

11 *A Pleasant Dialogue between a Lady Called Listra, and a Pilgrim. Concerning the Gouernment and common weale of the great province of Crangalor*, London, 1579, STC (2nd ed.) 18335.5. The text appeared without author, but a Thomas Nicholas is sometimes suggested as its author. seems to be completely neglected in utopian studies, although it is to my knowledge the first instance of a utopian texts where one of the utopian stock characters is a woman. The text follows the usual pattern of utopias, describing the political-ecclesiastical conditions in Crangalor. Particularly because of the unique authorial/narrative configuration (the narrator is a Corinthian woman who even argues for writing in English in the preface – in a book with all probability written by an English man), a detailed analysis of this text would be highly desirable.

12 As Anne M. Thell puts it, "She [M. Cavendish] attains her speaking position by locating the early modern loci of power—namely, the discourses of imperialism, science, religion, discovery, and travel—authorizing herself through them, and then harnessing them to fuel an absolute textual conquest" (Thell 2008: 441).

13 Catalogue of laws are found in many early modern utopias. See for example Gabriel Plattes's *The Description of Macaria* (1641) or Henry Neville's *The Isle of Pines* (1668).