"YE QUAINT LITTLE ISLANDERS": LANGUAGE BEHAVIOUR OF THE BRITISH STEREOTYPE IN G.B. SHAW'S *CAESAR AND CLEOPATRA*

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Abstract: This paper is a part of a larger project on the language behaviour of different ethnic groups in Shaw's plays. It focuses on the British ethnic stereotype as it emerges from the playwright's ideology of the end of the 19th century, and tries to answer the question: which are those social variables that shape the identity of the characters, and which relate to their social and language behaviour. It focuses on two characters, Britannus and a "hidden one", who can also be considered to be the representatives of the English stereotype. The paper investigates the characters' linguistic manifestations as reflections of their ethnic identity, revealing those special discourse strategies which exhibit another ethos of communication, differentiating them from other characters in the play.

Introduction

This paper is part of work-in-progress on the way in which the ethnic identities of the Shavian characters are analyzed through an interactional sociolinguistic approach (as defined by Gumperz (2001)), concentrating on situations of speaking or, to use Roman Jakobson's (1971) term, speech events. These events "constitute units of interaction subject to direct analysis by established empirical means" (Gumperz 2001:215). The sociological predecessor of this interactional sociolinguistic approach is Goffman's (1989, in Gumperz 2001) proposed concept of "interactional order", as a distinct level of discursive organization, bridging the linguistic and the social. Based on this idea, Gumperz argues that all communication is intentional and grounded in inferences that depend upon the assumption of mutual good faith. Culturally specific presuppositions play a key role in inferring what is intended.

It is the philosopher Paul Grice (1989) who laid the foundations for an abstract, philosophical perspective on speaking, with his emphasis on *conversational cooperation* as a precondition for understanding. Arguing that communication is by its very nature an intentional process, he develops a theory of meaning that focuses not on utterance interpretation as such, but on the utterance's implicatures – roughly, what a speaker intends to convey by means of a message. He states that implicated meaning is based on inference, i.e. interlocutors use their additional knowledge to make sense of what is not explicit in an utterance. In this sense, communication is successful if and only if the interlocutor identifies the speaker's communicative intention. Grice suggests that our interpretations, although often diverging from lexical meaning, are ultimately grounded in surface form. They are derived through inference via processes of implicatures, processes that rest on social principles of conversational cooperation. Grice's maxims are therefore the essential principles of efficient rational communication.

On the other hand, Gumperz's theory is also based on Garfinkel's (1967) ethnomethodology of communication. He sees interaction as constituted by goal-oriented moves and his main concern is with the interpretive processes through which interactional outcomes are achieved. He also argues that everyday talk can never be precise and detailed enough to convey what is really intended, so that interactants inevitably and necessarily rely on what he calls "practical reasoning" and unstated, taken-for-granted background knowledge to fill in for what is left unsaid. In this line of thought he points out that in so doing, conversationalists display a built-in, deeply internalized and mostly unverbalized sense of social order.

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In this paper we follow Gumperz in stating that "sequential analysis cannot by itself account for situated interpretation. … The analytical problem [is] not just to determine what is meant, but to discover how interpretive assessments relate to the linguistic signalling processes through which they are negotiated" (Gumperz 2001:218).

In this sense, interactional sociolinguistic (IS) analysis concentrates on speech exchanges involving two or more actors as its main object of study. The aim is to show how individuals participating in such exchanges use talk to achieve their communicative goals in real-life situations, by concentrating on the meaning-making processes and the taken-for-granted, background assumptions that underlie the negotiation of interpretations. The analytical issue thus shifts from the search for grammar-like rules of language use as traditionally conceived, to questions such as

(i) how and by what signalling devices language functions to evoke the contextual presuppositions that affect interpretation, and

(ii) what presuppositions are at work in particular talk exchanges.

According to IS, interpretive assessments always build on local or context-specific background knowledge that takes the form of presuppositions that shift in the course of an encounter. Analysis focuses on *conversational inference*, defined as the interpretive procedure by means of which interactants assess what is communicatively intended at any one point in the exchange, and on which they rely to plan and produce their responses.

Conversational inference relies on two types of verbal signs: symbolic signs that convey information via the well-known lexical and grammatical rules and indexical signs, which signal by direct association between sign and context.

Gumperz also uses the term *contextualization cue* to refer to any verbal sign which, when processed in co-occurrence with symbolic grammatical and lexical signs, serves to construct the contextual ground for situated interpretation and thereby affects how constituent messages are understood (e.g. code-switching is one such contextualization cue). Others include pronunciation along with prosody (intonation, stress), rhythm, tempo and other suprasegmental signs. What sets them apart from communicatively similar lexicalized signs is that they are intrinsically oral forms. Since no utterance can be pronounced without such signs, contextualization cues are always present in talk and they provide direct evidence for the necessary role that indexicality plays in talk. Moreover, contextualization strategies signal meaning largely by cueing indirect inferences. Finally, and for our case most importantly, indirect (not overtly lexicalized) signalling mechanisms are for the most part culturally specific. Prosody and "accent" (in the sense of phonetically marked features of pronunciation), are among the principal means by which we identify where people are from and who they are, to assess their social identity.

As the methodology of my research I consider the Shavian text as a primary sociological text, an authentic corpus on which I examine the interlocutors' ethnic identity. In my analysis I am trying to relate the social variables that shape the described identity of the characters to their language and social behaviour. Naturally, in identity construction, all variables such as race, class, etc. need to be considered, but here emphasis is laid on ethnicity. In other words, I'm trying to sense how these characters' ethnic identity is being constructed also taking into account that ethnicity cannot be separated from other facets of identity.

According to Eriksen's (2001) anthropological view, the current scholarly orthodoxy on ethnicity can be summed up as follows:

"Although ethnicity is widely believed to express cultural differences, there is a variable and complex relationship between ethnicity and culture; and there is certainly no one-to-one relationship between ethnic differences and cultural ones.

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Ethnicity is a property of a relationship between two or several groups, not a property of a group; it exists *between* and not *within* groups.Ethnicity is the enduring and systematic communication of cultural differences between groups considering themselves to be distinct. It appears whenever cultural differences are made relevant in social interaction, and it should thus be studied at the level of social life, not at the level of symbolic culture.Ethnicity is thus relational, and also situational: the ethnic character of a social encounter is contingent on the situation. It is not, in other words, inherent."

The Shavian characters are constructed as representatives of different ethnic groups therefore we may examine what Shaw says about the different ethnic groups as stereotypes.

From among the various approaches to stereotype definition, formation and acquisition, the cognitive approach and the discursive approach are significant in my research. *Stereotypes* are defined in social psychology as cognitive or mental representations of a social group and its members. Hilton & von Hippel (1996:240) adopt the standard viewpoint that "*stereotypes are beliefs about the characteristics, attributes, and behaviours of members of a certain group."* The process of stereotyping emerges as a way of simplifying the demands of the perceiver (Bodenhausen et al. 1994), it makes information processing easier by allowing the perceiver to rely on previously stored knowledge in place of incoming information (Hilton & von Hippel 1996).

In this line of thought, Roland Barthes's terms may also be used, who – taking over Hjelmslev's pair of terms denotation-connotation – developed the couple of terms rhetoric and ideology. According to Barthes, rhetoric of a text is the totality of lexical choices in the text, including lexical, syntactical choices, but also includes other markers of style, such as figures of speech. On the other hand, all rhetoric properties may be interpreted as bearers of an ideology: the same text is open to various interpretations, the reader of the text is the one, who finally determines the interpretation of the text, but each interpretation must be justified in the text.

The British ethnic stereotype in *Caesar and Cleopatra*

A. BRITANNUS

Why is it sensible to speak of the British stereotype in a Shavian play with such a title? The answer is quite obvious on the surface. In the play there appears only one British character, called BRITANNUS, who is the typical representative of the British stereotype, he acts and speaks as such. All through the play his ethnic identity overrides all other facets of his identity, like his gender or his social status, but sometimes they intermingle, like in the scene where he first appears.

Britannus appears in the second act of the play introduced by Shaw as Caesar's secretary:

(1) *a Briton, about forty, tall, solemn, and already slightly bald, with a heavy, drooping, hazel-coloured moustache trained so as to lose its ends in a pair of trim whiskers. He is carefully dressed in blue, with portfolio, inkhorn, and reed pen at his girdle.* ***His serious air and sense of the importance of the business in hand*** *is in marked contrast to the kindly interest of Caesar.* (p.160)

His description and look perfectly fits a 19th century official, with the fashionable whiskers of the time. The colour blue appears for the first time here, describing his clothing. Later on, this colour also occurs in his conversation with Cleopatra, where he gives a personal explanation to the colour:

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(2) CLEOPATRA. Is it true that when Caesar caught you on that island, you were all over blue?[1]
BRITANNUS. **Blue** is the colour worn by all Britons of good standing. In war *we* stain *our* bodies blue; so that though our enemies may strip us of *our* clothes and *our* lives, they cannot strip *us* of *our*[2] respectability.

This explanation coincides with the one provided by a cultural dictionary which says that this is the colour of the British Conservative Party, therefore any uncompromisingly conservative British person is a 'true blue'. Similarly, the Household Cavalry, or the Royal Horse Guards are also called "The Blues" according to the blue combat jackets they wear. (Bart 1998: 32, 123)

He is called Britannus: the name itself is a marker of his ethnic identity, the Latin version of Briton, or as Caesar sometimes jokingly calls him, Britannicus. Shaw also provides an explanation for this: "*This magniloquent version of his secretary's name is one of Caesar's jokes. In later years it would have meant, quite seriously and officially, Conqueror of Britain***"** (p.180), thus extending the time of the plot to the playwright's present, and raising his character to the level of infinite time. This way Britannus becomes **the British character of all times**.

Britannus identifies himself and is identified – the reader may infer – with the British ethnic group he belonged to and left behind, when he became Caesar's slave. He must have had a proper British tribal name but when he joined Caesar, he lost it and took up a new identity: he became THE BRITON. This becomes obvious in his use of the personal and possessive pronouns highlighted above in (2), pronouns of inclusion. He overtly differentiates himself from the Romans identifying himself as a Briton when he utters the following sentence whilst trying to find an excuse why he does not jump into the water to escape from the Egyptians:

(3) BRITANNUS. Caesar: I am a man and a Briton, not a fish. I must have a boat. I cannot swim.

As he is the only character of British ethnic background, the Romans call him "Briton" as opposed to the conquered Egyptians.

(4) RUFIO. Hold the fort, Briton. Caesar will not forget you.

He also accepts being called a Briton by other characters. For instance, Caesar never calls him a slave, but his secretary and always behaves politely to him, introducing him to other characters:

(5) CAESAR [*blandly*] Ah, I forgot. I have not made my companions known here. Pothinus: this is Britannus, my secretary. He is an islander from the western end of the world, a day's voyage from Gaul. [*Britannus bows stiffly.*]

The secretary is also identified by the noun "islander" and this becomes his constant form of address, e.g.:

[1] Woad is the blue dye the ancient Britons used to paint their bodies. It is part of the ancient Celtic tradition.
[2] My emphasis.

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(6) CAESAR. Is Britannus asleep? I sent him for my armour an hour ago. [*Calling*] Britannicus, thou British islander. Britannicus! (p.181)
(7) RUFIO. Well, my British islander… (p.196)
(8) RUFIO [*rising*] Caesar: when the islander has finished preaching, call me again.
(9) CAESAR. […] O incorrigible British islander (p.197)
(10)CAESAR. Where is that British Islander[3] of mine? (p.238)

This islander is "quaint" as well because as the dictionary defines it: "interesting or attractive with a slightly strange and old-fashioned quality" (*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*), this description perfectly fits Britannus and with him, the image the world has about the British stereotype.

Beside the external features described above, as mentioned in (2), wearing "blue" for him means being serious, respectable, having a deep sense of duty. This is what he tries to teach Caesar all through the play.

(11) BRITANNUS [*with genuine feeling*] O Caesar, my great master, if I could but persuade you to regard life seriously, as men do in **my** country!

As discussed earlier (Ajtony 2004), he belongs to the western group of characters who employ negative politeness strategies[4], he being the most polite (in the traditional sense of the word), even "ultra-polite" among them. This may be due – first of all – to his being British but also to his social status, being Caesar's slave: he cannot be but extremely polite to those of higher social rank around him.

However, he also has several more direct utterances, where he openly attacks his interlocutor's face, whether he does so to his own master or to the Queen of Egypt, addressees of the highest rank around:

(12) BRITANNUS. Caesar: this is not good sense. Your duty to Rome demands that her enemies should be prevented from doing further mischief. [*Caesar, whose delight in the moral eye-to-business of his British secretary is inexhaustible, smiles indulgently.*]
RUFIO. It is no use talking to him, Britannus: you may save your breath to cool your porridge.[5] (…) (p. 170-171)

In a sense, he has an excuse to contradict Caesar: his pretended moral superiority which gives him enough courage to face his master. The playwright's commentary in brackets openly draws the reader's attention to the most outstanding feature of the British secretary ('*moral eye-to-business*'). He openly contradicts Caesar as if he had forgotten his status of a slave talking to his owner and keeps reminding him of his duties, as the highest virtue of all. His interlocutor who he addresses these reprimanding words does not even reply to him, just by an indulgent smile which expresses that he understands another way of thinking, he is open

[3] British Islander is written in capital letters as if it were his full name.
[4] See Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory.
[5] *Porridge* itself is a typical British stereotype: it is the typical breakfast meal usually eaten by adding some salt to it (but also with milk or sugar to make it more edible) which – after it gets cold, which often happens in its most frequent places of appearance, i.e. in boarding-schools and prisons – turns into a grey mass. Dr. Johnson says, "… oats is a grain which in England is generally given to horses, but in Scotland supports the people"; no further comment needs adding if we just mention that in prison-slang served time is called "porridge" (Bart 1998: 191)

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to high moral values. For him personally, middle-class morality is just an option he could choose but which he does not apply to his life.

Elsewhere Britannus tries to change the world according to his own British mentality: he is greatly shocked at hearing that Cleopatra and his brother Ptolemy are by law married and expresses his discontent with the situation:

(13) THEODOTUS. (…) The kings and queens of Egypt may not marry except with their own royal blood. Ptolemy and Cleopatra are born king and consort just as they are born brother and sister.
BRITANNUS [*shocked*] Caesar: this is not proper.
THEODOTUS [*outraged*] How!
CAESAR [*recovering his self-possession*] Pardon him, Theodotus; *he is a barbarian, and thinks that the customs of his tribe and island are the laws of nature.*[6]
BRITANNUS. On the contrary, Caesar, it is these Egyptians who are barbarians; and you do wrong to encourage them. I say it is a scandal.
CAESAR. Scandal or not, my friend, it opens the gate of peace. (p.165)

Even here, he does not direct his redressing words to the speaker (i.e. Theodotus), but to Caesar, over whom he believes to have the power to persuade to change the state of things. Caesar tries to manage the ever-growing tension between Theodotus and Britannus by excusing his secretary and finding an explanation to save his servant's face. Britannus does not or does not want to observe his master's "act of charity", and turns against him, too, by contradicting him directly, applying to the Egyptians the degrading epithet attributed to him ("barbarian") and expressing his disapproval of the fact that Caesar encourages the enemy in their ancient practices. His crying out "scandal" whenever someone around him violates his moral values is a stereotypical British feature. This makes him much stiffer and less ready to compromise than the Romans, especially Caesar, who gives evidence of much political and moral flexibility. There are further instances of such a stiff, uncompromising behaviour on the part of Britannus, when, for example, he refers to one's sense of duty, honour or respectability and most of all, manners, which are the greatest values for the British stereotype, e.g.:

(14) BRITANNUS. Caesar: Pothinus demands speech of you. In my opinion, he needs a lesson. His manner is most insolent. (p.177)

As a secretary, he needs to use such formal language ("Pothinus demands speech of you") but what follows is more than what his social status would allow him to say: he expresses his personal opinion by overtly articulating it and suggesting or better said, demanding a punishment for him because of his manners. In most decisions he is more severe than Caesar himself and ironically it is the emperor who apologizes for his slave's strict words:

(15) BRITANNUS. You are Caesar's prisoners, all of you.
CAESAR [*benevolently*] Oh no, no, no. By no means. Caesar's guests, gentlemen. (p.167)

Similarly, when talking to the queen of Egypt, he simply calls her an Egyptian but in this context he has an excuse: he tries to save Caesar's face when Cleopatra discovers and laughs at his baldness:

[6] My emphasis.

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(16) CLEOPATRA [*she takes off Caesar's wreath*] Oh! [*She bursts out laughing at him*].
CAESAR. What are you looking at?
CLEOPATRA. You're bald [*beginning with a big B, and ending with a splutter*].
CAESAR [*almost annoyed*] Cleopatra! […]
CLEOPATRA. So that is why you wear the wreath – to hide it.
BRITANNUS**.** *Peace, Egyptian: they are the bays of the conqueror. […]*
CLEOPATRA. *Peace, thou: islander!* […][7]
BRITANNUS [*looking up severely at Cleopatra*] You must not speak in this manner to Caesar.
CLEOPATRA. Is it true that when Caesar caught you on that island, you were all over blue? (p.181)

He is not afraid or shy to address the child queen in such an open way and the girl is not very polite to him either. Social status is not at stake here as the queen's young age acts as a leveller of their respective ranks; this is why they can have such a quick and short exchange of addresses. The secretary uses the imperative and the strongest modal verb of prohibition "must not", rebuking Cleopatra to behave properly. The girl is no better: the moment she feels that she loses face, she shifts the topic of the conversation to save it and turns to her addressee by invoking that amusing event when the latter was taken prisoner and made slave by the Romans. These are open, bald on record face threatening acts – according to Brown and Levinson's politeness theory – by naming each other by their geographical origin. As speakers they do not fear retribution from their addressee. In this sense, Britannus' case is extremely rare, as in social rank he is much inferior to Cleopatra. However, he still feels superior in power to her because he "can enlist audience support" (Brown & Levinson 1987:69) to destroy his interlocutor's face without losing his own. This "audience" is Caesar himself who Britannus can rely on, hoping for support against the conquered queen. He has been backed up so far so he can trust he will receive it again this time as well. Britannus' ethical superiority, his morally instructive behaviour echoes the 18-19th century British imperial attitude towards the rest of the world – considering themselves to be the "illuminators of the world". Judging people according to their own rules and values is a typical British stereotype and derives from the feeling of superiority inherited from the time when Britain was still the greatest empire of the world.

Last but not least, Britannus acts according to the British stereotype when he is a real cold-blooded Briton, who rarely loses his temper but even then he apologises for his outbreak. Together with the Romans, he is also swept away by the excitement of the flight from the pharos and, as Shaw describes him, he "*gives full vent to his excitement"* and cries out happily, naturally, the English way:

(17) CAESAR [*swimming further off*] Take refuge up there by the beacon; and pile the fuel on the trap door, Britannus.
BRITANNUS [*calling in reply*] I will first do so, and then commend myself to my country's gods. [*A sound of cheering from the sea.*] (…) The boat has reached him: Hip, hip, hip, hurray!

Naturally, when these moments of excitement pass, he resumes his cool behaviour and exaggerated sense of respectability, and later, when he is reminded of his "extreme" behaviour, he apologises for it in a most humble and polite way:

[7] My emphasis.

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(18) CAESAR. Who bade you, pray, thrust yourself into the battle of the Delta, uttering the barbarous cries of your native land, and affirming yourself a match for any four of the Egyptians, to whom you applied unseemly epithets?
BRITANNUS. Caesar: I ask you to excuse the language that escaped me in the heat of the moment. (p.238)

Although he loses his temper only once during the course of events, he reminds his interlocutors to stay calm and remain respectable even in the most extreme conditions. Among all the excitement of trying to escape from the lighthouse by diving and swimming away, Britannus tries to save his master's face by reminding him to change clothes. Even in such emotion-loaded situations he cannot think of anything else but honour and being respectable:

(19) BRITANNUS [*anxiously*] One last word, Caesar. Do not let yourself be seen in the fashionable part of Alexandria until you have changed your clothes.

This is such a hypocritical advice that Caesar does not even answer this warning.

At the same time, what is interesting to discover is that Britannus does not have a British identity only, but a Roman identity as well. He identifies himself with the people who have conquered his country and this is easily detectable by the use of the pronouns of inclusion:

(20) [*Britannus returns, greatly excited, with a leathern bag.*]
BRITANNUS [*triumphantly*] *Our*[6] brave Rhodian mariners have captured a treasure. There! [*He throws the bag down at Caesar's feet*]. *Our* enemies are delivered into our hands.
(21) BRITANNUS [*impatient of Caesar's slowness to grasp the situation*] Well, *we* shall now know who your foes are. The name of every man who has plotted against you since you crossed the Rubicon may be in these papers, for all *we*[6] know.
(22) BRITANNUS [*from the parapet*] Caesar; *we* are cut off. The Egyptians have landed from the west harbour between *us*[6] and the barricade!!!

However, this double identity does not cause him any internal conflict because they have a hierarchical order: Britannus is first of all a Briton, as his name suggests it, and also in great emotional distress he calls for his own country's gods; his Roman identity is his "official" face which he wears only to protect himself from detachment from the Romans which might bring him the end of this free life as a slave.

There are several other hints at Britain and the British stereotype in the Shavian text, e.g. Britain is called by Caesar as "the western land of romance", "the last piece of earth on the edge of the ocean that surrounds the world" – according to the "general egocentricity of the Ptolemaic universe" (Morgan 1972:242); the British pearl and the British oyster that become the values of this island; a reference to the British climate and misty air:

(23) APOLLODORUS. … How far off is the nearest galley?
BRITANNUS. Fifty fathom.
CAESAR. No, no: they are further off than they seem in this clear air to your British eyes (…) (p.204)

[6] My emphasis.

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Britannus's opinion of his own country is of a real patriot's:

(24) BRITANNUS. Have you not been there? Have you not seen them? What Briton speaks as you do in your moments of levity? What Briton neglects to attend the services at the sacred grove? What Briton wears clothes of many colours as you do, instead of plain blue, as all solid, well esteemed men should? These are moral questions with us. (p.198)

In a long list of rhetorical questions he mentions the most outstanding qualities of Britons which differentiate them from other ethnic groups: their way of speaking, their religion, their clothing – which, as mentioned above, in actual fact betray their character. As with rhetorical questions in general, the listener (here: Caesar) can infer the implicit "none" answer. Britannus's use of these rhetorical questions[8] supports my previous remark, i.e. that he is "brave" enough to face his interlocutor, Caesar, in most cases considering him as his equal speaking partner.

His interactional ethos, as described by Brown and Levinson (1987) may be called negative, in the sense that the way he interacts with other characters is generally stiff, formal and deferential which makes him belong to a negative politeness culture, the British.

Nonetheless, what distinguishes him from the British stereotype is the fact that he lacks that peculiar sense of humour and irony which is so characteristic to other British characters in Shaw's plays. "*His serious air and sense of the importance of the business in hand",* as Shaw introduces him, prevents him from being released from his duties and detach himself from his job. These features are to be found in Caesar, who learns a lot from his secretary but never loses his readiness for ironic remarks and humorous attitude ("in my flippant way" p.198). In this sense, he may also be considered another representative of the British stereotype but through lack of space, this is going to be analysed on another occasion.

B. The Hidden British Stereotype

Viewing the play more attentively, however, we may also discover another British character: *the audience themselves* who are addressed in the play and thereby also characterized in the Prologue, by the addressee, the mighty god Ra, who calls them "quaint little islanders". In his introductory speech, the Egyptian hawk-headed god has disparaging words for the British audience, being perfectly aware that they cannot answer back to his ironic remarks made on the British men and women's behaviour: using bare imperatives, using the personal pronoun "ye" not only as a sign of respect, but also – in my opinion – of ironical distancing:

(25) RA. Peace! **Be silent and hearken unto me, ye quaint little islanders**. Give ear, ye men with white paper on your breasts and nothing written thereon (to signify the innocency of your minds). Hear me, ye women who adorn yourselves alluringly and conceal your thoughts from your men, leading them to believe that ye deem them wondrous strong and masterful whilst in truth ye hold them in your hearts as children without judgment. (p.129)

[8] See Brown & Levinson's off-record politeness strategies: "To ask a question with no intention of obtaining an answer is to break a sincerity condition on questions – namely, that S wants H to provide him with the indicated information. This sincerity condition straightforwardly follows from the injunction 'be sincere', i.e. the Quality Maxim. Questions that leave their answers hanging in the air, implicated, may be used to do FTAs … (Brown & Levinson 1987:223)

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Ra's words recall the language of the Bible ("hearken", ye, word order typical to Biblical style etc.). But the most significant feature of this speech is the use of offensive forms of address, negative adjectives and ironic remarks ("ye poor posterity", "other fools before ye", "ye not so great", "ye compulsory educated ones", "your ignorant manner", "ye are a dull folk"; "instruction is wasted on you"; [you are] "the dust and the darkness") which all describe the playwright's contemporaries. These are in striking contrast between the British stereotype represented by Britannus – and discussed above – and the one described by Ra.[9] However, what makes this stereotype so rich is exactly its many-sidedness: it can be enlarged all the time. It is not everlasting but can change both synchronically and diachronically without losing its validity.

Conclusions

As we could see above, the play "*Caesar and Cleopatra*" displays two kinds of images of the British, as an ethnic group:

1. A stereotypical image represented by Britannus, with all his external and internal character traits, way of speaking and behaviour. Like most stereotypical images, which resist change, this image is still valid today, this is what most people still believe the British are like.
2. The other image is represented by the British audience of the time, represented as a hidden character of the play.[10]

What this parallel analysis of the two images has brought us to is exactly the revelation how the playwright confronts his audience with the image of the British stereotype by showing them two possibilities: Britannus on one side – which for them is difficult to notice, because he represents a stereotype of their own – and on the other side, reflecting their own contemporary image in Ra's speech. This confrontation should be an edifying lesson to any reader. Alterity and identity – the motto of this year's conference – are both at work here.

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[9] In this sense, Ra may be considered Shaw's spokesperson / "spokesgod": he is the character who expresses the playwright's opinion of his (?) nation. Though having lived among the British most of his life, he still remained an outsider for them, and gave voice to it though an ironic attitude towards them.
[10] This is exactly what makes this play so post-modern, in the sense that the audience is also included among its characters.

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