

Postcolonial Discourse Analysis and Intercultural Communication: Building a New Model

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Recently, a number of researchers have issued a call to apply postcolonial approaches to the study of communication (Shome, 1996; Collier, 1998; Shome, 2000). *Communication Theory* dedicated a special issue to this topic (Grossberg, 2002; Hegde & Shome, 2002; Shome & Hegde, 2002). Clearly, this pioneering research shows that establishing connections between postcolonial studies and communication, "can be mutually informing and contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the contemporary scene of social transformation" (Shome & Hegde, 2002, p. 260). In my work, I want to demonstrate how postcolonial criticism can be productively applied to the field of intercultural communication, specifically to the study of intercultural communication which focuses on discourse.¹

Following Raka Shome, I understand postcolonial criticism as "a methodological perspective that attempts to examine the power-laden ways in which narratives of imperialism and nationalism are both enabled and sustained, as well as resisted" (2000, p. 136). Traditionally, postcolonial criticism focused on the exploration of European colonialism in such historical contexts as South Asia, North Africa, and the Caribbean, but later it embraced other historical, social, and geo-political contexts. For instance, Walter Mignolo's work focuses on Latin America (1995), Epifanio San Juan's work focuses on the Philippines (2000), Ewa Thompson's work focuses on Russia (2000), and Agustín Lao-Montes's compares Ireland and Puerto Rico (2002). Closely connected to this research are explorations in postcolonial globality and diasporas (Halualani & Drzewiecka, 2002; Hegde, 1998; Kraidy, 2002; Murphy & Kraidy, 2003; Safran, 1999).

In my research, I continue to extend postcolonial criticism to new territories beyond European colonialism. I focus on contemporary Israel, where the histories of colonialism are layered. Before the formation of the state

of Israel, Palestine was under British mandate. The Jewish settlers took part in an anti-British movement; yet in the process they effectively displaced and marginalized the Palestinian population. Historians of Israel still argue whether Zionism can be seen as a colonial or anti-colonial movement (Bareli, 2001; Penslar, 2001).

But the layered colonial relations in Israel are not limited to the ideological domain. Applying Shome and Hegde's words, the multilingual and multiethnic composition of society results in the production of "new relations of displacement and diaspora *within* the nation itself" (2002, p. 257). For example, cultural critics such as Ella Shohat argue that the treatment of Jewish immigrants from North Africa can be seen in colonial terms (1999). These historical and social complexities make Israel an especially revealing site for postcolonial criticism.

Here, I focus on just one facet of intercultural communication in Israel, namely, the discursive relationship between veteran Israelis and Soviet immigrants. Applying the method of postcolonial discourse analysis to theorize this relationship, I develop a theoretical model of Mutual and Internal Colonization. This model brings to light the imbrication of ambivalence in intercultural relationships, where immigrants and locals simultaneously resent and admire each other, and themselves.

In the first section of the paper, I provide background on the politics of immigration in Israel, focusing specifically on Soviet immigration. In the second section, I discuss postcolonial criticism, specifically postcolonial discourse analysis. In the third section, I introduce my model, grounding it in the examples coming from Russian and Israeli cultures. Finally, I apply my model to the analysis of the media reception of Gesher theatre in Israel, and show the mechanism of cultural colonization at work. I conclude by considering the future implications of this model for the study of intercultural communication, and for postcolonial criticism.

THE POLITICS OF IMMIGRATION IN ISRAEL

The politics of immigration in Israel are best understood in the context of Zionism, the movement whose goal was the establishment of Jewish national state in Palestine. In 1950, Israel passed 'The Law of Return', which confers citizenship on any Jew or member of a Jewish family. David Ben-Gurion, the first prime-minister, called on Israelis to "speed and make more powerful the stream of immigration to the utmost of our power, for

the ingathering of exiles is the purpose of our existence and also a precondition of it" (quoted in Gitelman, 1982, p. 36). Later politicians such as Golda Meir, Moshe Dayan, and Yitzhak Shamir would echo Ben-Gurion's call. Thus *aliyah* [Jewish immigration to Israel] became a Zionist priority. The ideology of Zionism and the politics of immigration reflexively reproduce and justify each other.²

The first waves of Jewish immigration to Palestine came from Eastern and Western Europe in the first half of the twentieth century. These immigrants, who were mainly Ashkenazi [European] Jews, formed the cultural, political, and economic elite of Israeli society. The next major waves of immigration came in the late 40s and 50s, from Asia and Africa. These immigrants, mainly Mizrahi [literally Oriental] Jews, were victims of the ethnocentric and colonial attitudes of the Ashkenazi minority. The conflict between the disadvantaged Mizrahi majority and the privileged Ashkenazi minority remains unresolved.³

Soviet immigrants landed in the midst of these ethnic and political tensions. Soviet Jewish immigration formed the first massive wave since the 50s. Following the disintegration of the Soviet Union and an agreement with the US on immigration quotas,⁴ over 900,000 Soviet Jews arrived in Israel in the 90s. They now comprise over 15% of the Israeli Jewish population and represent one of the largest "ethnic" groups.

Tensions quickly developed between the Soviet immigrants and the veteran Israelis—both Ashkenazi and Mizrahi. The tensions were partly due to competition over jobs and housing, and partly due to cultural clashes over ethnic identification, Zionism, and assimilation (Leshem & Lissak, 1998; Lomsky-Feder & Rapoport, 2001; Sikron & Leshem, 1998). Yet, I will argue that the feelings of mutual resentment between Soviet immigrants and veteran Israelis were overlaid with mutual attraction, and further overlaid with self-righteousness and self-hatred. This complex of attitudes is explained by the way each side considers its cultural origin to be in some ways inferior, and in some ways superior to the other's. In order to understand how these imbricated cultural hierarchies function, I will analyze their manifestation in discursive relationships between Soviet immigrants and veteran Israelis.

THE POSTCOLONIAL APPROACH TO INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

My focus here is discourse. Following Foucault, I understand discourse as a system of statements, which contain social knowledge. Discourse is a

capillary form of power—a way of constituting knowledge, social practices, forms of subjectivity, and power relations. In this sense, culture, national identity, and ideology are all forms of discourse. These forms of discourse operate through such channels as law, education, and mass media. But in any form, discourse is not homogeneous; it is woven of different voices that both constitute and challenge it. Even the dominant discourse contains within it multiple voices, some affirming and some resisting each other. These voices do not exist in the simple opposition of 'empowered' versus 'powerless' discourse, but rather are "blocks operating in the field of force relations" (Foucault, 1981, p. 101).

Contemporary Israeli discourse is no exception: in addition to the dominant Zionist discourse, other voices, such as those of traditional Jews, Mizrahi Jews, and post-Zionist scholars are woven into it.⁵ New Soviet immigrants add another voice to this polyphony.

My project is to understand the complex relationships between the Soviet immigrant and Israeli-Zionist discourses. To this end, it will prove useful to borrow from the theoretical toolbox of postcolonial discourse analysis. The application of the postcolonial discourse analysis to the context of immigration is possible because the discursive practices of immigration are similar to that of colonization, despite the differences in historical and cultural contexts. In both cases, there is a binary relation between the dominant and subordinate cultures, and between hegemonic and marginalized discourses. In both cases, paraphrasing Fanon, the relationship vacillates between narcissism and inferiority.

In Israel, the dominant Zionist discourse plays a colonizing role with respect to the subordinate discourses of the cultural Others, including Palestinians and Mizrahi Israelis. That is because, as Shohat recognizes, Zionism assumes that:

[T]he 'national' is produced by eliminating the foreign, the contaminated, the impure, so that the nation can emerge in all its native glory. In the name of national unity, contradictions having to do with class, gender, ethnicity, race, region, sexuality, language, and so forth tend to be erased or glossed over. (1999, p. 11)

In that sense, colonization emerges as an important characteristic of interethnic relations in Israel. Following Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, I use "colonization" as "the infantilizing trope, which projects colonized people as embodying an earlier stage of individual human or broad cultural development, a trope which posits the cultural immaturity of colonized ...

peoples" (1998, p. 28). This definition is useful here, as it allows me to capture a particular dynamic between Soviet immigrant and Israeli-Zionist discourses. This dynamic centers on the notion of cultural hierarchy, where cultures are aligned along the line of what Raymond Williams (1985) called "a general process of intellectual, spiritual, and aesthetic development"—from lowest to highest.

Yet, applying postcolonial discourse analysis here requires a more complex understanding of how colonial discourse operates. In the traditional understanding of the colonial discursive operation (such as Said, 1978) colonial relations are modeled as a one-way street: the colonizer subjugates the colonized, which is possible because the colonized adulates the colonizer. This process is best described by Frantz Fanon: "The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards" (1952, p. 18).

However, postcolonial history shows that this model does not give adequate answers to questions about the colonial relationship. Robert Young argues that cultural exchange is never a one-way process, whatever the power relations involved. He suggests we find a way to talk about cultural exchange as two-way, where cultures are not "destroyed but rather layered on each other, giving rise to struggles that themselves only increase imbrication of each with the other" (1995, p. 174).

Homi Bhabha's work proves useful in describing cultural exchange as a two-way process. Combining the Foucauldian approach to discourse with psychoanalysis, Bhabha shows that colonial discourse operates not only on the conscious level of the construction of knowledge, but also on the ambivalent protocols of fantasy and desire. In psychoanalysis, "ambivalence" refers to a simultaneous attraction and repulsion from a person or an object, or a wanting of both a thing and its opposite. Applying the concept of ambivalence to the relations between colonizer and colonized, Bhabha shows how colonial discourse fluctuates between mimicry and menace. Mimicry, a process forced on a colonial subject, "is the desire for a reformed recognizable Other, as a subject of difference that is *almost the same, but not quite*" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 86). However, mimicry is charged with the danger of mockery. It threatens to undermine the prevailing norms and authorities—the 'normalized' knowledges and disciplinary powers of the dominant discourse. Thus mimicry turns into menace.

Discursive relationships between colonizer and colonized take the form of a Freudian *fort/da* game: a colonial subject is required to become "like" a colonizer and to correspond to the colonizer's norms and models. However, when the subject mimics the colonizer and attempts to become "the

same," the threat of mockery is so great that the colonizer's desire for the "same Other" is withdrawn, bringing forward remorse and anxiety. In Bhabha's words, "The ambivalence of colonial authority repeatedly turns from *mimicry*—difference that is almost nothing but not quite—to *menace*—a difference that is almost total but not quite" (1994, p. 91).

Bhabha's theory of the colonial discourse offers insights into the ambivalent relationships between colonized and colonizer. I would argue that the colonial relationships are even more complex. My analysis of the discursive relationships between Russian immigrants and veteran Israelis show that in this particular context, the positions of colonizer and colonized are not fixed, and that due to these shifts, the dynamic of colonization turns inward.

MUTUAL AND INTERNAL COLONIZATION

In order to understand the discursive relationships between Soviet immigrants and veteran Israelis, we need to consider the cultural attitudes of both sides in the context of the colonial histories of Russia and Israel. From this discussion it will become clear why the positions of Soviet immigrants and veteran Israelis shift between colonizer and colonized.

Russia emerged as a major colonizer during the nineteenth century. The Russian empire held sway over Central Asia, Siberia, the Caucasus, and the Far East. During the Soviet era, the colonization continued (Thompson, 2000). In addition to the republics of the former Soviet Union, colonialism spread to other parts of Eastern Europe, and to countries as far away as Afghanistan and Cuba. All these territories were politically, economically, and culturally colonized. These attitudes set the Soviet immigrants up to assume the position of colonizer.

Simultaneously, Russian culture was also colonized by Western European culture (Wachtel, 1999). This colonization found expression in the Europeanization of the Russian elites, which "laid the groundwork for the great Russian literary, musical, and artistic achievements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but it also produced a strong case of culture shock and a nagging sense of inferiority" (Wachtel, 1999, p. 50). The attitudes derived from this sense of inferiority set the Soviet immigrants up to assume the position of colonized.

The situation was even more complex for Russian Jews. They fully shared the Russian cultural attitudes explained above. But also, they were subject to humiliating anti-Semitism, which they internalized to some extent. The resulting self-hatred positioned the Russian Jews to feel inferior

vis-à-vis the Russian cultural majority. On the other hand, they developed a defensive reaction to anti-Semitism and took great pride in their ethnic heritage and traditional Jewish values. This defensive response allowed Russian Jews to feel superior to ethnic Russians.⁶ These conflicting attitudes set up the Soviet immigrants to simultaneously experience the ambivalent feelings of cultural inferiority and superiority in Israel.

Israeli cultural attitudes are ambivalent as well. In the struggle for the establishment of their state, the Jewish settlers (future Israelis) took a colonizing position towards the native Palestinian population. This position was reinforced during the years of statehood, including not only the politics of expansion and conquest of the Palestinian territories, but also discrimination against the Palestinian Israelis. This colonizing position was extrapolated to include the Jewish immigrants.

What contributed to the emerging colonizing position of the veteran Israelis is a certain type of bureaucracy produced by the Israeli immigrant absorption apparatus. In the process called "debureaucratization" (Katz and Eisenstadt, 1960/61), a bureaucrat (a public officer) develops informal personal relations with immigrants, instead of impersonal and businesslike ones. What might look like a positive event, in fact situates the bureaucrat as teacher/parent. This attitude is active not only in the bureaucratic context, but also in other public and private spheres in Israel. It leads to a condescending infantilizing attitude towards new immigrants, which allows any veteran Israeli to give lessons to a presumably incompetent immigrant.

Yet, simultaneously with the position of the colonizer, Israelis assume the position of colonized. For instance, within the cultural hierarchy of Israeli society, the Ashkenazi minority is placed above the Mizrahi majority who are forced to occupy an inferior position (Swirski, 1989). But even those Israelis on top of social pyramid express feelings of inferiority in respect to European, including Russian, cultures. This feeling has a historic origin: the founders of the state came mainly from Russia or Eastern Europe. Naturally, their ideas and their cultural legacy (Russian literature, music, and theatre) had high status in the nascent Israeli culture. These attitudes set Israelis up to assume the position of the colonized.

As we see, both Soviet immigrants and veteran Israelis have colonial frames of reference while dealing with cultural others. There is also a great deal of ambivalence in their attitudes; they simultaneously look up to and look down at cultural others, in this specific case, towards each other. As a result of these ambivalent cultural attitudes, the direction of colonization in the relationship between veteran Israelis and Soviet immigrants is not clear. Who is colonizer and who is colonized?

In fact, these positions are fluid. Both sides, Soviet immigrants and veteran Israelis, simultaneously admire and condescend to each other, thereby letting mimicry and menace work double shifts. This process results in mutual colonization: Soviet immigrants take an inferior (colonized) position in respect to the Israelis, admiring their Western and Jewish values, their economic prosperity, and more advanced technology. At the same time, these immigrants take a superior (colonizing) position in respect to Israelis, dismissing them as 'uncultured,' 'primitive,' 'dark' people, like those from the Caucasus and Central Asia.

For their part, the veteran Israelis take an inferior (colonized) position in respect to Soviet immigrants, considering them high-cultured, sophisticated intellectuals—bearers of great Russian culture. Yet they also put themselves into a superior (colonizing) position, questioning immigrants' Jewish and Zionist commitment, as well as their professional training and even moral principles (Leshem, 1998; Marx, 1998). We can see that the mutual attitudes of Soviet immigrants and native Israelis swing between demonization and deification, replicating the double figures of colonization: narcissism and inferiority.

A consequence of mutual colonization is internal colonization. As a result of this colonization process, the colonized internalize their peripheral status, and assume the centrality of the values of the colonizer. Thus colonization interpellates subjects. Colonizing discourse 'calls people forth', thereby providing conditions and context for obtaining colonial subjectivity. As a result, the mutual colonization is internalized, and the colonial process becomes self-generating: it can go on without any contribution from an external colonizer. A colonial subject forms a complete colonial system all by herself. She is both a colonizer and a colonized. This phenomenon was described by Franz Fanon, who wrote, "After having been the slave of the white man, he [the black man] enslaves himself" (1952, p. 192).

Thus colonization directed both inside and outside make subjects shift positions between narcissism and inferiority. As a result, colonization creates a realm of antagonistic hierarchies, where one cannot be in peace—neither with herself, nor with the other. In the following section, I will show how these colonial attitudes are realized in discursive practices that emerge in media reception of Geshet theatre in Israel.

COLONIAL DISCOURSE AT WORK: A CASE STUDY OF GESHER THEATRE

Within the Israeli scene of cultural production, Geshet theatre emerges as an arena of ambivalent discursive relationships between Soviet immigrants

and veteran Israelis. In 1990, Geshet was founded by a group of Soviet immigrants as a marginal Russian-language theatre in Israel. Today, Geshet is one of the major Israeli public theatres, performing mostly in Hebrew. Yet, Geshet is still perceived as "Russian." Thus Geshet emerges as a cultural representative of the Soviet immigrant community. Therefore Geshet, like a prism, refracts issues of interethnic relations, as well as cultural and immigration policy in Israel.

During my fieldwork at Geshet (from 1999 to 2001), I interviewed the key figures in the company, compiled a media archive, and conducted participant observations. Here I will focus mainly on the media discourse surrounding Geshet, since the media provide the most public arena in which the discourse of intercultural relations in Israel is reflected and shaped. I also include interview material to corroborate the data.⁷

The colonization trope provides a map for charting the complex dynamic of media discourse surrounding Geshet. In this analysis, the dynamic of colonization is more apparent in the voices of Israeli critics, since theirs are the voices of the mainstream media. The voices of the Russian theatre-makers are mediated through the critics or the interviewer (myself). Still, the dynamic of colonization is evident.

The colonial attitudes of the Israeli critics are apparent in their condescension to the cultural origin of Geshet. When Geshet first came to public attention, critics dismissed it as culturally backward:

A Russian actor, like a Soviet person himself, was completely separated from what was happening in Western culture, and therefore, if someone has to learn something, it is them from us and not us from them. . . . Although the Israeli theatre suffers from big problems, for me and for all those who live here, this is the only possibility. And the Russian Geshet not only is alien to me, but also I see that it cannot bring me anywhere but backwards. (Mundy, 1991)

The critic assumes the superiority of Israeli theatre. His argument is based on the cultural and ethnic identity of Geshet members, and their assumed inferiority.

Further, when Geshet staged a play concerning the Holocaust (*Adam Resurrected*)—a topic the critics saw as quintessentially Israeli⁸—critics labeled Geshet naïve innocents. Thus, Shosh Raisman from *Tel Aviv* writes her review from the position of the privilege to define the "right" approach to the Holocaust and its representation:

. . . we would not be able to mount such a show on stage. The feeling of guilt wouldn't allow us. They [Geshet theatre-makers] produced a show, a circus,

a cabaret, [with] gas ovens and striped pajamas. And it was almost pleasant to me to feel that in preparation for this production they [Geshet actors] visited *Yad-Va-Shem* [the Holocaust museum in Jerusalem], read books, and saw movies on the subject. How naïve it looks from this [Israeli] side. How innocent, devoid of pain and guilt. (Raisman, 1993)

Raisman is condescending to Geshet theatre-makers, whose knowledge comes from "books and movies," and is not innate, like hers. Their representation of the Holocaust also lacks the "right" assortment of feelings, which she expects from anyone coping with the topic, and which for her devalues their work. Her denigrating tone portrays Geshet theatre-makers as clueless novices to the topic. This attitude is colonial, as the writer sees Geshet as "embodying an earlier stage of individual human or broad cultural development" (Shohat & Stam, 1998, p. 28), and thus placed low in her cultural hierarchy.

Finally, when Geshet staged a political satire of Israel (*Eating*), critics dismissed them as ignorant foreigners:

[T]he *Eating* production demonstrates the foreignness and distance of the theatre from the Israeli experience . . . the onstage interpretation of *Eating* by Yevgeny Arye [Geshet's director] shows not only a lack of understanding of the play and its poignant political message, but also of reality in the Middle East, where the play is taking place and in which we all live. (Weitz, 1999)

The critic's "we" is two-fold: it includes her assuming Israeli readers into the "reality in the Middle East," simultaneously excluding from it Geshet theatre-makers, unable to understand neither the play, nor the surrounding reality.

Yet, the Israeli critics also take the attitude of the colonized: they express feelings of cultural inferiority, looking up to the great Russian legacy of Geshet. The critic Boaz Evron was one of the first one to voice this position. In his review of Geshet's production *If Only He Wrote*: "This is the most professional theatre in Israel today. It establishes a new level [of performance]. One can feel an immense cultural tradition, demonstrating in contrast to our prejudiced views, that they [Geshet actors] are much more proficient in Western theatre and culture than we are" (Evron, 1991). This critical claim assigned Geshet a position of cultural superiority, and reserved a position of inferiority for Israeli culture. Evron fixed Geshet and Israeli theatre producers' places on the colonial hierarchy; the West on top, "the rest" on the bottom.

The Israeli political establishment also took part in Geshet's adulation. Geshet's success coincided with the necessity of the newly elected Rabin's government to adopt a "Russian theatre" as a metonymic stand-in for all other immigrants' endeavors, and to showcase its support for the immigrant community. The politicians and notables made a point to attend Geshet's performances. In 1994, Geshet's director was even invited to accompany Yitzhak Rabin to Oslo for the reception of the Nobel Peace Prize.

Speaking at Geshet's premiere, the Minister of Education and Culture Shulamit Aloni not only nominated Geshet as the best theatre in Israel, but also called upon the rest of the Israeli theatres to "set Geshet as an example" of collective spirit and ensemble work (Handelsaltz, 1994).

This statement turned out to be a major faux pas. It offended the majority of theatre-makers in Israel, who deemed a Soviet immigrants' theatre unworthy to be their ideal. As Michael Handelsaltz puts it: "[Aloni] preferred to insult all of Israeli theatre by pouring praises over the heads of the Geshet theatre" (1994). In the later review, he writes:

They [Geshet theatre-makers] bask in the admiration of the Israeli audience and critics. The attitude of the cultural establishment to them is almost self-demeaning. Judging by the praises—only few of them deserved—addressing their productions and their director, one might think that they invented theatre, and that before their arrival all what was here [in Israel] was a cultural desert. (Handelsaltz, 1998)

This statement results from the dynamic of mutual colonization. The critic is threatened by Geshet's perceived cultural superiority. In his view, Geshet took a condescending position towards Israeli audiences and critics, whereas Israeli audiences and critics took positions of ingratiating admirers. In his attempt to restore justice, Handelsaltz calls both the theatre and its fans to order. In doing so, he takes a condescending position towards the theatre. It does not occur to Handelsaltz that he contributes to the endless tag of war of mutual colonization.

In the late nineties, the adulating attitude to Geshet became increasingly popular with some critics. Fabiana Hefetz, in her article playfully titled "Fancy bridge above shallow waters"⁹ exhibits the same attitude: "They [Geshet actors] are wonderful again. The water in the title refers to the rest of the [Israeli] theatres" (1996).

Such an adulating attitude angered some critics and theatre-makers. For instance, Tzipi Shohat quotes Dror Keren, one of the *sabra* Geshet actors: "I protest against the blind worshipping [of Geshet]. This worshipping

poses the theatre as members of cultural elite, who throw several trinkets to the natives in a banana republic" (Shohat, 1996). In his mocking complaint, Keren captured the dynamic of colonization in explicitly colonial language.

As critics move from a colonizing to colonized position, they internalize it, and ultimately display colonial attitude to their own culture. This entire dynamic can be seen in Sarit Fuks's review of *Three Sisters*:

Arye does not really belong. He is an artist who is cut off from his roots, who works within an alien cultural environment, which he does not value. He does not create within his own living culture; yet, he continues to produce theatre that this culture taught him. The further away he is from it [the Russian culture] the more rigid are the patterns that he brought with him from his motherland. . . . When Arye looks at us from the stage impatiently, he does not show much respect to us nor to our culture. And justifiably so, too. (Fuks, 1998)

Fuks starts by taking a colonizing position, and putting Arye into an inferior position ("Arye does not really belong"). But then she moves to Arye's vantage point, and ascribes to him the condescending position of a colonizer ("he does not show much respect to us nor to our culture"). Yet, at the end, she makes another shift and concludes by agreeing with Arye: "And justifiably so, too." Internal colonization makes Fuks turn not only against Arye, but also against herself. This is internal colonization at work.

Parallel colonial attitudes are seen in the discourse of Geshet theatre-makers. Of course, Russian cultural producers are very careful in expressing their condescending attitude to Israeli culture, especially while speaking to journalists. Still, there are quite a few slips, and when I was interviewing them, these attitudes were revealed more openly.

Geshet actor Israel (Sasha) Demidov recalls that Israel at first reminded Geshet actors of a southern republic in a Soviet Union: "We used to have a feeling that it's like Yalta here, Caucasus, yes, there was that feeling then. People are like Georgians. . ." (1999). Here, Demidov takes a colonizing position in respect to Israelis, projecting Russian prejudice against 'primitive' 'dark-skinned' people from the Caucasus and Central Asia.

Later, he explained, this impression changed, but even his later account assumes the cultural immaturity of Israeli culture:

Israel is naïve, and we next to it are not exactly old, but wizened. When we were in France—French are like us, like Russians—they are different [from Israelis]. All these revolutions, that they had in France, left their trace. . . . Here, they don't have it yet. [Jewish] people are seemingly ancient people, but here they are naïve and youthful. (Demidov, 1999)

Here Demidov measures Israeli culture by the standards of European (Russian and French) culture, and finds Israeli culture underdeveloped.

Israeli journalists picked up this attitude and reflected it in their articles, especially in profiles of Yevgeny Arye—the director and co-founder of Geshet theatre. Ariana Melamed calls her article: “[Arye] will show you what is *kultura*.” For this threat she chooses the Russian word *kultura* [culture] over the Hebrew *tarbut* for its European “cultured” sound. Having claimed her attitude, she criticizes the ethnocentrism of the Soviet immigrants:

When the leaders of immigrant intelligentsia point out to the Israelis that they [Israelis] are only descendants of the [Russian] culture, whereas they [Russian immigrants] are bearers of the thousands years of *kultura* [culture], too many Israelis tend to nod in agreement. (Melamed, 1997)

Melamed charges the Russian intellectuals with colonizing Israeli culture, and sneers at Israelis who willingly take the colonized position.

In an interview with Goel Pinto, Arye voices Geshet's credo in colonizing terms:

I still believe that we are fighting [a battle] over at least a little bit of culture in this country, which . . . is not in a good condition in that respect. We are trying to struggle with TV and movies, we are trying to be unique, and we need help in order to achieve it. (Pinto, 1999)

Arye takes upon himself the role of a missionary, the role of alleviating the assumed deficiencies of the “natives,” who without him would lose even the meager “little bit of culture” he is struggling to maintain. After statements like this, it is no surprise that some critics and audiences find Arye's tone condescending.

Yet, the Geshet theatre-makers also take the attitude of the colonized. Their rhetoric expresses a great deal of respect and admiration for Israel, at times bordering on awe. Sometimes, Arye appears to be a perfect colonial subject hailing the dominant ideology, en route to assimilation. For instance, when Arye announced Geshet's plans for a new production about Israeli history (*Village*), he hailed Israeli history and the Israeli experience:

It is not just another production. . . . It is important to me and to the actors to attach ourselves to the Israeli reality and history . . . we have to try to turn the Israeli experience into our own, with the help of the Israeli playwright. (“Mahazeh Hadash,” 1995)

Geshet's choice of *Village* and its interpretation provides further evidence of their idolization of Israeli culture. Geshet presented the history of the founding of the country, and staged it as a nostalgic and warm personal testimony. Thus Geshet actors demonstrate their acceptance of and admiration for Israeli-Zionist ideology.

The Geshet theatre-makers further affirm the Israeli-Zionist ideology of immigration. Tamar Avidar quotes Arye: “Immigration to Israel after being a *refusnik* [a person denied emigration by Soviet authorities] for years, was a most meaningful change in my life, also from the artistic perspective” (1999). Arye reaffirms the Zionist ideology posing life in exile as limited, and presenting his immigration as a fulfillment of life-long yearning. Demidov seconds him: “We identified with this country for as long as I can remember. . . . We hated communism and we loved the State of Israel. . . .” (Bar-On, 1997).

As Geshet theatre-makers move from a colonizing to colonized position, they internalize it, and then display colonial attitude to their own culture. This dynamic can be seen in Demidov's discussion of language:

I oppose the idea of the small Russian enclaves within an Israeli society. I read books and papers in Hebrew. In the neighborhood where I live. . . a large portion of population are Russians, but in the streets you'll hear only Hebrew. My connection to the state and to the language is enormous. (Koral, 1999).

Geshet's co-founder and a first manager Slava Maltzev makes his point even more poignantly: “We don't want to be hostages of the Russian audience” (Ben Shaul, 1992). Explaining Geshet's decision to start performing in Hebrew, Maltzev said to me:

It was very difficult to attract Israelis, they came, said that we were wonderful, but didn't stay. And then I understood that this is a critical question, a question of our future, that no one will advance us as a Russian theatre, no one needs us, we'll be pathetic losers, like Russian street,¹⁰ like Russian deli stores. And we wanted to be part of them, their favorite thing. (Maltzev 2001)

Here, we see how Maltzev internalized the cultural situation in Israel, in which the Russian immigrant cultural and economic venues are seen in a condescending light. Now, he sees “Russian Street” as inferior as well. This is internal colonization at work.

Thus, my analysis of Geshet's media reception and my fieldwork materials reveals a colonial discursive process, but a more complex and fluid one

than the existing theories recognize. The model of Mutual and Internal Colonization adds to understanding the relationships between Soviet immigrants and veteran Israelis as a nuanced, bi-directional process. Instead of the tropes of "adjustment" and "integration" of immigrants into a host culture, this model suggests mutual, ambivalent, and power laden interconnections between immigrants and hosts.¹¹

JOINING FORCES: POSTCOLONIAL CRITICISM AND INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Here, I have proposed a model of intercultural relationships that builds on the postcolonial approach to discourse. By connecting intercultural communication and postcolonial criticism, this model has the potential to enrich both fields.

This model has the potential to enrich the study of intercultural communication, by bringing to bear the critical impulse of postcolonial criticism. The existing body of literature on immigration and interethnic relations between Soviet immigrants and veteran Israelis (such as Al-Haj & Leshem, 2000; Gitelman, 1982; Sicron & Leshem, 1998) neither analyzes the issues of cultural power, nor provides a close reading of cultural discourses. My application of postcolonial criticism to the study of immigration and interethnic relations allows a close reading of cultural practices situated within specific geo-political and historical context, which uncovers regimes of power and normative knowledges active in the site of local cultural production.

Further, application of postcolonial criticism to the study of intercultural communication adds a new dimension to postcolonial discourse analysis. It brings to light the imbricated ambivalence of rhetorical relationship between colonizer and colonized. By extending the colonization trope to a context of immigration, my research widens the understanding of the colonial relationship. In contrast to previous theorizing of colonial relationships, my model emphasizes two distinctive processes: first, the discursive process of mutual colonization, when the roles of the cultural colonizer and the colonized shift, leading both immigrants and their hosts to colonize each other, and second, the discursive process of internal colonization, when colonial subjects ultimately colonize themselves as the role of colonized turns inwards.

The model of Mutual and Internal Colonization can reveal the ambivalent relationships between two cultural discourses, as they complement and clash

within the same subjectivity. Application of this model has the potential to give insight into the internal structure of hyphenated identities in other geo-political and historical contexts.

NOTES

1. For an overview of the study of intercultural communication which focuses on discourse, see Collier (2000).
2. For further discussion of immigration and absorption in Israel, see Shuval & Leshem, 1998; and Shuval, 1998.
3. For more background on the Ashkenazi elite, see Kimmerling, 2001. For more background on disparities between Ashkenazi and Mizrahi Israelis, see Swirski, 1989.
4. For more background on political origins of Soviet immigration to Israel see Jones, 1996.
5. For further discussion of traditional Jewish discourse in the context of Zionism see Kimmerling (2001). For further discussion of Mizrahi Jewish discourse in the context of Zionism see Shohat (1999). For further discussion of post-Zionism (a critical approach to Israeli history and ideology) see Silberstein (1999) and Nimni (2003).
6. For further discussion of the culture of the Russian Jews and their relationships with their neighbors, see Slezkine, 2004; Roi, 1995; Goluboff, 2003; Bryn & Ryvkina, 1994.
7. The materials quoted below are my translations from Hebrew (media) and Russian (interviews).
8. For more background on Israeli attitudes to Holocaust, see Porat, 1991. On the tradition of Holocaust representation in Israeli art, see Feingold 1992; Manor 1999; Gertz 1999.
9. Geshet is Hebrew for bridge, thus the title can be read as both "Geshet above shallow waters" or "Bridge above shallow waters."
10. "Russian street" refers to the Russian-language culture industry in Israel.
11. For further examples of the discourse of mutual and internal colonization in Geshet's media reception, with extended analysis, see Gershenson (in press).

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