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## Talking across Time: Postcolonial Challenges to Language, History, and Difference

“...there is a paradox at the heart of the historian’s practice: the reality to which the historian’s interpretation is produced by that interpretation, yet the legitimacy of the interpretation is said to rest on its faithfulness to a reality that lies outside, or exists prior to, interpretation. History functions through an inextricable connection between reality and interpretation as separate and separable entities. The historian’s inevitable dilemma consists in the need simultaneously to avow interpretation and to disavow the productive role interpretation plays in the construction of knowledge. This dilemma is not a new discovery, neither the product of the ravings of radical relativists nor the by-product of some nihilistic ‘deconstructionism’; it inheres in the practice of history itself.” (Scott 2001: 86)

Where do our present discourses about most commonplace issues in applied linguistics come from? What have been the various articulations (Hall 1996) and assemblages in the past and how does probing some of their (semi)sealed boundaries allow us to cast analytic attention on the interpretive operations of the discipline, to the various ways in which it achieves its authority, its *reality effect* (Barthes 1986: 131)? Why is it important that Applied Linguistics attempt to come to terms with its present by reaching back into the ‘past,’ and what do we begin to uncover when we cross-question our current interpretations of key debates in the field? As Joan Scott above points out, all historical endeavours are interpretations and all interpretations should always remain open to disavowal. Implicit in her statements is the idea that stepping into “history,” “the past” (singularities which we must contest) is like stepping into quicksand—there is really no “firm base” from which to proceed, only an assemblage of images, documents, speeches, figures, relatives, artifacts, recordings, and photographs that have entered our consciousness and that we have to sift through as we attempt to make sense of our present. These fragments, on which we impose a coherence and linearity, emerge in prescribed forms in most every aspect of the ELT domain of applied linguistics (including language attitudes, world Englishes, pedagogic practices, language policies, pedagogic tools) and get articulated and

normalized through repeated practice (Hall 1996), thereby circulating ideologies that further sediment our enactments. Language, needless to say, is not only a constituent of this assemblage of fragments but also the very medium by which processes of (dis)assembling occur.

Being mindful of the role that language plays in our interpretations, our overall, more general aim in this paper is to counter how history has been told (challenging traditional historiographic methods), question whose histories get told and whose silenced (the selectivity that traditional history engages in) and interrogate the sedimentizing processes of some disciplinary “truths” and interpretations (unraveling historical contexts they emerge from). Our more specific aim is to address how a historical unraveling permits insights into understanding how particular disciplinary debates around English and vernacular education—especially those relating to pedagogic practices, identities, differences and critical practices—have assumed the cloaks/“reality effects” they have. We will do so by drawing on the close relationship between Mahatma Gandhi and his English friend, Charles Andrews, and their movement of Non-Cooperation (started toward achieving Indian independence) that both men enacted in very different ways. However, instead of writing about them and their views in the format of a traditional essay, we are doing so in the form of dialogue since this form allows us to sidestep some of the pitfalls of traditional historiography (more on this in the following section). Because we wished to show how we are each sutured into (this) history—thereby bringing the ‘past’ into the present—we also attempted to situate our individual, familial and disciplinary relations within space. Before we proceed with the dialogue, however, we offer a brief, but necessary introduction about Gandhi, Andrews, and their Non-Cooperation movement, and about tensions around historicizing.

### Gandhi, Andrews, Non-Cooperation: history, historicizing, textual forms

While it is impossible to ever pinpoint particular events that trigger tumultuous political struggles—since triggering events always emerge from a context of simmering grievances and turmoils—there often is in the collective consciousness of peoples certain “raw events” (discoursed through and mythologized by the media and historians) that are held up as those that propel movements. The Non-Cooperation Movement in the

Indian context—a struggle for independence against colonization—has been generally depicted by historians as one such struggle that had its point of departure in the Jallianwalla Bagh massacre, an event which occurred when General Dyer opened fire on an unarmed crowd of 20,000 people. While several key figures were involved in the Non-Cooperation movement, one relationship that stands out and that centrally informs this paper is the close friendship between Gandhi and an English missionary, Charles Andrews. Their relationship is particularly attractive for a number of reasons, including the fact that they—given their respective positionings as English and Indian—turned the colonizer-colonized association on its head, and in doing so not only deflected attention away from the ethnic-racial ‘barriers’ between the Raj and India, but drew attention to the moral impulses of their messages. Andrews first met Gandhi in South Africa, but it was when he came to India that his relationship with Gandhi developed into a very close bond. Reams have been written about Non-Cooperation in general (for full discussions, see Prasad 1950, Bakshi 1983, Andrews 2001, Gandhi 1959) and about how Gandhi and Andrews conceptualized and enacted it in different ways, and while it is not the purpose of this paper to primarily discuss this one issue, it is relevant to how English and vernacular issues get embedded in their movement. Non-Cooperation, for them, was a multi-dimensional endeavour that crossed religious, ethnic, and linguistic boundaries to destabilize what were perceived to be problematic colonizing apparatuses (e.g. modes of governance, taxation, policies around languages/education), and their views about English and vernacular education have to be understood against this complex political landscape.

But why, then, are we choosing to interpret them in the form of dialogue? We could have just as easily written about them in the form of a traditional academic essay. Historical representations have, over the last couple of decades, come under serious critical scrutiny, with postmodernist thinkers claiming that they are “linguistic constructs, highly conventionalized in their narrative forms, and not at all transparent, either in terms of language or structure” (Hutcheon 1989). Commenting on the state of crisis in historical representation Fredric Jameson argues that

The most intelligent ‘solution’ to such a crisis does not consist in abandoning historiography altogether, as an impossible aim and

an ideological category all at once, but rather—as in the modernist aesthetic itself—in reorganizing its traditional procedures on a different level. Althusser's proposal seems the wisest in this situation: as old-fashioned narrative or 'realistic' historiography becomes problematic, the historian should reformulate her vocation—not any longer to produce some vivid representation of history 'as it really happened,' but rather to produce the concept of history. (Jameson, cited in Hutcheon 1989: 61)

This notion of producing "concepts of history" is crucial to what we are attempting to do with this dialogue, since it directly questions the processes by which historical events get discursively encoded, and ways in which they get discursively circulated, and acted upon through practice. The moments of encoding and decoding are only relatively autonomous in relation to the circulations of discursive practices and discourses around historical events; "a raw/triggering event" cannot be transmitted by the media, for instance (indeed, there is no such thing as "raw event"); "the event" first becomes a story, a narrative, a critical juncture when it gets encoded in particular forms (in first-person accounts, news stories, traditional history essays) before it gets picked up, appropriated and cast into the collective (un)conscious (that murky realm to which group identities, nationalisms, fundamentalist ideologies, and vilifications also belong), and assumes its "reality effect" (Barthes 1988).

But if this encoding of historical events happens discursively—through language, in particular forms, with the privileging of particular, selective points of view—then the unraveling happens discursively as well. However, it is important, if possible, for the countering moves—such as those undertaken in this dialogue—to not fall prey to the same traps as the encoding (although some might say that this is an impossibility). Because traditional history has generally not openly acknowledged how its interpretations are grounded in particular points of view, written at particular times from specific places, always open to contestation, always partial, selective, and self-serving, it becomes doubly imperative for an applied linguistics endeavour that draws on history, such as this one, to engage in a textual form that defies traditional historiography and demonstrates the fluidity and malleability of interpretations. Presenting fragments of the past in textual forms that we are not accustomed to (a dialogue in the present case), bringing the past into the "present" (where both of us applied linguists who have written about our conjoined histories; Pennycook 1998, Ramanathan 2005), thinking about how

Gandhi's and Andrews' views about languages speak to contemporary disciplinary debates, and suturing our individual positionings into the dialogue (where familial connections intertwine with professional and historical ones) serves to simultaneously acknowledge and contest several historical facets at once: that all history is interpretation, that the past echoes in the present, and that we are each producers and products of history and historicizing.

It is with this sketchy background that we present our dialogue.

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**VR:** This paper is a conversational in form. It is about dialogue and syncretism, history and the present, narrative and theory, the colony and post colony, the empire and nation, (post)modernity and its margins. Too much, you say? Perhaps. But then, we think, it is time for this much. The historical metanarratives around the "colony" and "postcolony," two key terms in that list, pit our histories—yours and mine, Alastair—in opposition to each other to where dialogue breaks down. We believe it is time to counter this antialogism, since it is precisely the breakdown of dialogue that seems to characterize colonialism and much of postcolonialism. But beyond the form of our presentation, our purpose today is to open up to question the processes of historicizing that have defined our individual positionings and disciplinary debates. What strains in our histories—individual, familial, historical, disciplinary—have brought us to this present moment, and how do we interpret segments of our conjoined pasts today? While postcolonial scholarship has engaged extensively in historicizing and has alerted us to complexities around in-between spaces, hybridities, appropriations, and resistances, it has tended to do so by proceeding from notions of "difference" and "critical practice" that seem today to have tired interpretations around them. Our dialogue today is an effort to rethink these notions by visiting the close relationship between Mahatma Gandhi and Charles Andrews—a relationship that defies the slotting into camps—to see how they speak to particular disciplinary issues today. Our aim, thus, is to create chronoschisms—whereby we move between the past and present—so that Alastair and I, by remembering some of our common memories and conjoined histories asymmetrically, can move beyond the divisive languaging of "colonialism" and "postcolonialism."

**AP:** As applied linguists who insist that we cannot understand the present state of English, of English language teaching, of theories about

language, of applied linguistics without understanding the past (the colonial and the postcolonial, the clash of epistemologies that underlies current views on what works and what matters), we also want to question the ways in which we think about past and present, and how histories position us. These questions we have also interlinked with an exploration of the relation between Gandhi and Andrews. What, for example, should we make of these comments by Gandhi on the death of his close friend: "In the death of C.F. Andrews not only England, not only India, but humanity has lost a true son and servant . . . In my opinion Charlie Andrews was one of the greatest and best of Englishmen. And because he was a great son of England he became also a son of India. And he did it all for the sake of humanity and for his Lord and Master Jesus Christ. I have not known a better man and Christian than C.F. Andrews" (Gandhi 1946, cited in Clark 1970). I'm not sure I want to accept the idea that because someone was a great son of England, he also was a great son of India; or that Christianity is so easily at the service of something called humanity. For me, having written critically of Christian missionaries and their interconnections with English language teaching (Pennycook and Coutand-Marin 2003), I am wary of any argument that Christian missionary work is at the service of humanity rather than serving its own cultural ends. But I am wary too of dismissing Gandhi's words.

**VR:** Granting that missionary expansion was the right arm of colonial expansion, one as sensitive as Andrews would quickly discern the oppressive nature of the colonial process and see it as antithetical to the good tidings he has been called on to live out. It is precisely this aspect of Christianity that Gandhi zoned in on and used, citing the Sermon on the Mount, quoting Scripture, to disarm the British. Such an absorption of what was for Gandhi the "discourse" of the opponent was matched by Andrews' absorption of Indian aspirations to be free, an aspiration that was for him (Andrews) the discourse of the "opponent." The opposition is thus beautifully undone, dismantled, on moral grounds, the ground of "truth" or "satyagraha." By drawing on the close relationship between Gandhi and Charles Andrews, both of whom wrote back to the Raj by enacting their movement of Non-Cooperation, our aim today is not so much to interpret them yet again (this has been done ad nauseam in the Indian context) as much as it is to see how they allow us to address two key issues: 1) how their relationship and Non-Cooperation movement contests the very dichotomies between the "colony" and "postcolony"

camp and points to a knot of forgotten ties and interconnections that are reflected in our own familial and disciplinary histories, and 2) how visiting that stretch of history allows us to energize our thinking about silenced voices, identities, differences, pedagogies, “critical” practices, and the scattering of English and “vernacular” languages amidst these terms. My work with Gujarati and English teachers over the last many years (Ramanathan 2004, 2005) has underscored for me the impossibility of ever addressing these terms in isolation from each other; it has also made me hyperconscious of how we are each complicit in creating silencing conditions that render us deaf to the very voices we need to constantly hear. As we hope to show, historicizing, differences, silences, and critical practices are most complexly intertwined.

**AP:** We have been struck by the complexity of relations between our current lives and interests, the lives of Gandhi and his friend Andrews, and the many colonial and postcolonial texts that intervene in this relationship. Put another way, we are interested in the ways that colonial and postcolonial histories intertwine: what, for example, are we to make of our current academic interests and the fact that our mothers were both born in the south Indian state of Kerala? How have the different histories that sent one mother to an elite school in Bombay and the other to a boarding school in England influenced our current positions in relation to India? And how can we start to make sense of the relationship between Gandhi and Andrews, the one the tireless campaigner for Indian independence, the other the English missionary writing back to his home country to decry the follies of colonialism. What can we learn from their different ways of writing back—one to his largely Indian audience, the other to his largely English audiences—and our own projects of writing back? How do we deal with the anti-colonial alliance of Gandhi and Andrews—so well known in India, so little known outside—in relation to the politics of identity that draw very clear lines in the sand about who should talk about what?

**VR:** The politics of identities that we are wrestling with stretch deep into both our histories; binarisms, distances, and exclusions abound in this space, with overblown self-assertions that create ideological rifts and silencing conditions. 15th August, the Indian Independence Day, for instance, is a classic example. Each year, it is marked with speeches about what India is as a nation and the need to not forget “foreign rule.” 59 years as India is since independence, the prime minister last year spoke

of the celebrations to mark the first “battle of independence;” and of not forgetting what the “tricolour” (the flag) stood for. While this rhetoric emerges from a self-conscious need to establish a sense of nation and selfhood, its dichotomizing character is similar to Orientalism that Said accused the west of engaging in. When Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, in an address at Oxford University on the 8th of July last year, spoke of positive aspects of colonial rule, specifically of the English language we were left with, there was an uproar from certain sections of society. We need to move on, don’t we? Our field too needs to move on beyond tired notions of Orientalism which have over-scripted difference, beyond even poststructuralist notions of multiple identities to asking: what are identities for? What do discourses of identities do? How have the historical narratives around our past positioned Alastair in spaces where he feels ambivalent about speaking? What from the Gandhi-Andrews relationship can we extrapolate that will allow us to rethink how historicizing processes embed us, and how is this relevant to applied linguistics?

**AP:** Clearly there are many things at stake here: We share interests in language policies, vernacular education, the role of English in colonial and postcolonial contexts; we are interested in disrupting the ways history is told and historical metanarratives are constructed; the implications of Gandhi’s non-cooperation movement for contemporary contexts intrigue us; the difficulties surrounding concepts such as hybridity and syncretism, and the broader ways in which difference is over-scripted concern us. And we intend to try to do some of this through a dialogue between us and between Gandhi and Andrews, a dialogue that will draw these four lives into a different set of relations, a dialogue intended to disrupt some of the antialogism of both colonialism and postcolonialism. Hence, talking across time; and hence postcolonial challenges to language, history and difference.

**VR:** So we begin, then, with situating ourselves. What key historical and political tropes inform our present positionings; what in our recent past and not so recent past has brought us both to this point? In terms of my recent past, I’d have to say that my connection to this space has grown out of my long-term project regarding the sociopolitics of English and vernacular education in Gujarat—where I was raised and schooled—with a view to understanding some of the lasting impact of colonialism. My focus has been to understand a range of contexts—institutional, non-formal, community-oriented—around English and the vernaculars, with

specific emphasis on language teaching and education in general, and given current globalizing surges, my primary concern has been on asking who is left out, and why. This journey has been a most enlightening one in a variety of ways, most especially because it has made me acutely aware of how our present discourses around globalization and English stretch deep into issues of subordinations, inequalities related to mediums of instruction, devalued pedagogic practices, communities' sense of feeling pressure to catch up while simultaneously pulling back defensively, and ways in which west-based discourses fail to address these entanglements. In all of this, of course, is my own peculiar positioning: an insider there, and yet an outsider to vernacular-medium education, as part of west-based TESOL here, but certainly never seen as "mainstream" (with my non-American English and accent). My own current positionings in these scenes baffle me; I can place myself nowhere, but it is precisely this present instability and heterogeneity in our conditions that we are calling attention to.

But locating this in the last 60 years or so: in 1919 was the famous Jallianwalla Bagh massacre where General Dyer, in response to a peaceful gathering of people listening to a public address, opened fire on an unarmed crowd of 20,000 people, an event that catapulted Gandhi and Andrews into action and fueled their intense writing back. In the 1920s my grandparents on both sides left Kerala and migrated to the North. In terms of my own family history, both of my grandfathers worked for the English and related to Gandhi's Non-Cooperation very differently. My grandfather on my father's side worked for His Majesty's Government in British India and was a supporter of Gandhi's moral messages (although he was never a freedom fighter), and like other supporters started wearing a turban on his head with his European suit (from the 20's to 40's). My grandfather on my mother's side, on the other hand, identified quite closely with the English Residents at the princely courts who were his bosses and there are pictures of him wearing a "Sola topi," a hat of the sort that the English used to wear, with his European clothes). This identification also partially explains my mother's elite Church of England British schooling in Cathedral school in Bombay, a school built in the mid-nineteenth century for the children of English residents. A generation later, my parents growing up in the 30's and 40's straddled that cusp between the Raj and its end, and between them represent a complete intermixture of Tamilian-Keralite ancestry, British schooling, and vernacular traditions.

So what does all this make me? Not homogenous by a long shot! I enter this dialogue as a completely coalesced entity.

**AP:** Of course perhaps I ought to feel more at home in all this: An English language educator in a white man's world. But it's not so simple. What is it that draws me to question these positionings? My mother was born in Travencore, South India, in 1926. It was the year of the general strike in England, which echoed round the empire. In Hong Kong, for example, a massive strike and boycott of goods linked workers across the empire in a battle that was as much a "nationalistic protest against imperialism, using economic means for political ends" as a battle fought only about the deep inequities of the Hong Kong economy (Chan 1994: 46). In 1926, in response to the strike, the government turned particular attention to the role of the Chinese schools in the colony, urging "increased watchfulness in the schools. Special care should be exercised in the supervision of the vernacular schools in particular, for these can the more easily become breeding grounds for sedition" (Kotewall 455), and recommending that greater attention be paid to teaching "the ethics of Confucianism which is, in China, probably the best antidote to the pernicious doctrines of Bolshevism, and is certainly the most powerful conservative course, and the greatest influence for good" (455–456). These observations contradict simplistic images of colonialism as nothing but the imposition of colonial cultures, for here we see the imposition of local conservative thought on the population. But I have drifted from my theme.

When my mother was born in India, in 1926, it is 11 years since Gandhi's return to India from South Africa, five years since he vowed to spin cotton each day and urged mass satyagraha (non-cooperation) as part of his battle against the imperial economy (where Indian cotton was shipped to Manchester and then reimported as woven garments). It is 2 years since his release from prison (he was given a 6-year sentence in 1922 but released 2 years later). Andrews, meanwhile, who had arrived in India in 1904, where he was admitted to the Cambridge Brotherhood and joined St. Stephen's College in Delhi, had been advocating Indian independence. He had intervened in the strike of Madras cotton-workers in 1913, and in 1925 and 1927, he had been elected President of the All India Trade Union Congress. In 1925 he had also joined the Vaikom Satyagraha, a protest against the status of 'Dalit' (the 'crushed underfoot' or 'untouchables' as they were then known). And in 1926, my grandparents had already

been living in south India for 6 years (they would stay for another 27 years, past Andrews' death in Calcutta in 1940, with Gandhi grieving at his bedside, on through Indian independence and partition with Pakistan in 1947 and Gandhi's death in early 1948 at the hands of a young Hindu extremist). My grandfather also liked to wear his topi.

But this was not the history I was brought up with. My mother was sent 'home' to boarding school, and for almost ten years (because of WWII) only had connections to India through letters from her parents. Thus I was born English, did not hear Indian languages spoken to me as my mother had done as a child, did not check the bathroom for snakes. Yet something complex stirred here, as I devised my own diasporic wanderings, insisted on becoming a stranger to myself and my environments, travelled the routes of ELT, became suspicious of my Englishness. And as I moved through tropical Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong, colonial and postcolonial connections became increasingly apparent, the present echoed the past. And this dialogue starts to emerge.

**VR:** And yet, in many ways, this dialogue began a long time ago, isn't it? Perhaps it began more than 500 years ago when the first English traders landed in Surat, a gulf port in Gujarat, long, long before the divisive rhetoric of the "Empire" had set in? But somewhere along the way, starting in the mid-1800s—as traditional historians would have us believe—polarities between the English and Indians began to get rigidified into mutually exclusive metanarratives, and relations seemed to devolve into being between collective nouns of "colonizer" and "colonized," "ruler" and "subject," a point echoed in Andrews' sentiments about how British authorities viewed Indians as "foreigners."

Even though responsibility in self-government might be given in full to Indians themselves, there would always remain this residuum of dependence, this outlook towards British ideals and British ends. Australia, Canada, New Zealand, might not feel this residuum of dependence as 'integral parts of the British Empire' because the people of those countries were kith and kin of the British people. But Indians were nothing of the kind. They were foreigners and must always remain foreigners in the midst of an Empire of kinsmen. If 'blood is thicker than water,' then it would follow that the blood relations would combine against the outsider, the foreigner, India.<sup>1</sup>

It is amidst this kind of distancing "foreigner" vs. "kin" rhetoric that the relationship between Gandhi and Andrews emerges. What gets

erased in this is the idea that colonial and postcolonial histories are, in fact, completely conjoined, that just as the divides and gulfs were real, so were the intertwined and syncretic lives between the English and the Indians, a point that both Nandy (1983) and Dalrymple (2004)) make very evocatively in some of their writing, and that our own family histories indicate. And our current emplacements—yours and mine, a few generations down the road—hark back to this knot of forgotten, drowned-out interconnections. The inter-relations between us are not just ties to India, but a specific place in India, namely Kerala, where both our mothers were born, where your grandparents spent almost all of their working lives, and where you and I trace our “ancestry” back to. Generationally, thus, we lay claim to the same spatial, temporal, and historical terrains, a point that gets drowned out by historical metanarratives that frame us in binary terms, and that assert that one of us has “more claim/s” or “rights” to speak than the other.

**AP:** But wait. Can I really “trace my ancestry” back to Kerala? My family history traces my roots firmly back through British places, families, lineages. Being in India was only transplanting a part of England to a distant corner of the Empire. Are British and Indian histories really so intertwined, as the British largely sought their isolation from the masses they ruled, in bungalows surrounded by lawns, hill stations, tea plantations? And given the history of who gets to speak and who gets silenced, who wrote the histories of India that a generation of subaltern studies scholars have sought to unravel, whose knowledge has been seen to count, is not the position I speak from always embedded in lines of differentiation that are prewritten? But what would it in fact mean to suggest that the ancestry comes from place as well as genes, that the lines on a family tree that suggest direct lineage need a sense of place, of routes as well as roots (Clifford 1992), that my family tree might be a banyan, with its roots growing down to the ground, as much as a spreading oak tree of familial links?

**VR:** “Ancestry” in South Asia, Alastair, is almost never about family trees (something to do with a cultural reluctance to writing/graphing it down, perhaps?) and more to do with a sense of where you are from, a sense of “home” (however variously we define that word). While we almost never speak of genes, we do speak of natal spaces; indeed, the whole notion of one’s “mother’s home” is richly resonant in all kinds of contexts in India (almost always a place of refuge and unconditional

acceptance; we have some serious mother complexes!). So the fact that your mother was born in Kerala opens up that possibility for you to view your “ancestry” in spatial terms (something that I, as a South Indian raised in the north, do myself). Nice to have that option, don’t you think? It certainly complicates western notions of familial ‘origins’ and provides a Derridean alternative: maybe there are no “origins,” perhaps only spaces, but then maybe there are no “original” spaces either because spaces mutate. What this means, then, is that both our takes on “ancestries”—as lineage and birth-home—are equally valid and equally not. But moving beyond us, what this also means is that histories/ancestries/spaces are wide open and unfrozen. As Jenkins (2003) reminds us, all histories, including our individual takes on family trees and spaces, are interpretations, and all interpretations and knowledges, as you’ve just implied, are embedded in power and are thus inherently ideological and political.

But to bring all of this to the present and to Gandhi and Andrews: what we are trying to do is engage in a very local kind of non-compliance but before we say anymore about that let us hear from Gandhi and Andrews for whom Non-cooperation, while at once local and global was a moral endeavour:

**G:** In Non-Cooperation the result to be achieved is not infliction of punishment but the attainment of justice.<sup>2</sup> If a government does wrong, I become participator in its wrong-doing by co-operating with it and thus making it possible for them to do the wrong. It is my duty, not by way of punishment or by way of revenge but to the end that I may not make myself responsible for the wrong doing, to withdraw my support off that Government. Indeed, I should be justified in bringing that Government to a standstill. It is clear to me therefore that Non-Cooperation is as different from Boycott (with which it was confused) as an elephant from an ass.<sup>3</sup>

**G:** I have actually taken it [Non-cooperation] as a practice against members of my own family.<sup>4</sup>

**A:** Non-cooperation . . . implies the resistance of evil by forbearance, not by violence; by endurance, not by force; by suffering, not by slaughter. It regards the domination and subjection of India by a foreign country, such as England, with abhorrence, as an evil thing. It is determined not to co-operate with the evil and make it permanent.<sup>5</sup>

**AP:** So how might non-cooperation revive our current critical practices? It intercedes in some of the debates around resistance and opposition by opening up an alternative way of thinking. It provides a language of resistance that is predominantly peaceful. I am wary of work that strives for change without an adequate notion of struggle. I refer in particular to contemporary strands of work that describe themselves as ‘peace linguistics,’ aiming to emphasize peace, harmony, cooperation, and to teach peaceful English. For me, such a position avoids the need for opposition, resistance, change. Clearly non-cooperation takes a different line again, neither arguing blandly for peace nor taking up the overblown post-Marxist revolutionary rhetoric of some critical pedagogy, with its cries for struggle and social transformation. Non-cooperation ties to forms of resistance, and emerges from a different line of thought, a different philosophical context from much of what informs current western critical paradigms. One of the major current challenges that interests me is to link critical work (critical pedagogy, literacy, discourse analysis, etc.) that has emerged from a particular set of historical and philosophical traditions (humanism, idealism, Marxism, Christianity, the Frankfurt school, Freirean pedagogy) to the critical traditions within students’ own backgrounds, to local forms of knowledge. Invoking James Clifford again, in the hotel lobby of cultural relations, how do different critical trajectories intersect?

**VR:** Critical practices, as Brian Morgan and I have argued elsewhere (Morgan and Ramanathan 2005), occur in non-western spaces in very different ways, couched as they are in local languages and ways of living, being, operating, thinking (Bowers and Apffel-Marglin 2005). To the western eye and ear, these may seem unrecognizable since they don’t happen in English and occur in vastly different contexts. Some of these assume the mantle of non-cooperation in interesting ways. I have learned over the last several years through my work with Gujarati teachers how completely a moral endeavour it is and how wholly committed it is to the silenced. One key component of it—not quite evident in these quotes—is civic education and involvement which, for a number of politically incendiary reasons in the Gujarat educational context, is more of an issue outside the classroom than inside (Ramanathan 2006). One of these teachers, for instance, has started an ancillary non-formal, Gandhian program in a poor women’s college that is committed to the betterment of his female students. Non-cooperation for him is engaging

in the opposite of perceived silencing ills: finding ways to help students rent textbooks at minimal charges, arranging for vaccination camps to inoculate babies, getting students apprenticeships in the city's Self Help groups, arranging for buses that would ferry them safely during recent Hindu-Muslim violence. Non-cooperation in the Gandhi Ashram, on the other hand, also in the same city, seems to be directly oriented to addressing issues of communal accord (especially in the light of recent Hindu-Muslim violence) through local, vernacular practices that yield very tangible transformations: rebuilding homes that have been destroyed, finding and making shelter for orphaned children, finding employment for widowed women. In both cases, non-cooperation is non-formal, vernacular-based, non-confrontational, with few self-assertions. The focus seems always to be on the moral endeavour, and on working against silencing conditions.

Bringing all this back to Gandhi and Andrews and applied linguistic concerns about English and the "vernaculars": for Gandhi, championing the vernaculars became a way of mobilizing support for his nationalistic cause, whereas for Andrews, English became a way of rousing the educated Indian public. Look at what both have to say about the two mediums:

**G:** Of all the superstitions that affect India, none is so great as that a knowledge of the English language is necessary for imbibing ideas of liberty, and developing accuracy of thought.<sup>6</sup> The greatest service we can render society is to free ourselves and it from the superstitious regard we have learnt to pay to the learning of the English language. It is the medium of instruction in our schools and colleges. It is becoming the lingua-franca of the country. Our best thoughts are expressed in it. . . This belief in the necessity of English has enslaved us. . . .<sup>7</sup>

**A:** The study of English—even one-sided—was after all, at the critical moment of great importance, if Indian national and political aspiration was to be awakened . . . But the seed was being sown at the same time of national aspiration and desire for social change and moral freedom, and the great awakening of educated India came at last.<sup>8</sup>

**AP:** One of the interesting points about Gandhi's views on English was his recognition that the belief in the necessity of English was enslaving. Here he recognized the complicity of English-users with the maintenance of colonial rule at the same time that he used English to oppose that same

rule. One point is immediately worth noting here: These two positions are often set in opposition: either English is bound up with (neo)colonial domination or it is a language that can be used to oppose such power. Clearly, however, as Gandhi perceived, it was always both, and thus at the same time that one used English against colonialism, one was also complicit with the enslaving powers of English. It is this historical and present complicity that we need to try to grasp since it is also one of the cornerstones of the notion of non-compliance: We are all complicit with wrong-doing as long as we cooperate with the perpetrators. Unless we seek not to cooperate with English, we are complicit, are we not?

**VR:** Of course, we are. There is no getting around it. Our overlapping disciplinary interests are directly tied to our individual and conjoined histories. English education, as Andrews points out, came into India at a most critical moment. Despite growing up in our ‘separate-but conjoined’ worlds—you in England and me in India—our forays into our discipline are surely not entirely accidental. As postcolonial applied linguists with ELT affiliations we run the risk of seeming as if we are speaking from both sides of our mouths, supporting the vernaculars and critical traditions sometimes, globalization and English at others, and often get perceived as being contradictory. But none of these strains cancel others out because they are all overlapping.

However, Gandhi’s championing of the vernaculars should not be taken to mean that he did not recognize the growing role of English in international commerce and diplomacy. Look, for instance, at what Gandhi and Andrews have to say about both the spread of English and its interconnections with other languages:

**G:** My uncompromising opposition to the foreign medium has resulted in an unwarranted charge being leveled against me of being hostile to foreign culture or the learning of the English language. No reader of “Young India” could have missed the statement often made by me (in these pages) that I regard English as the language of international commerce and diplomacy, and therefore consider its knowledge on the part of some of us as essential . . . Nothing can be further from my thought that we should be exclusive or erect barriers. But I do respectfully contend that an appreciation of other cultures can fitfully follow, never precede, an appreciation and assimilation of our own.<sup>9</sup>

**A:** Of all the great Englishmen of the last century Macaulay was, in many ways, most under the spell of the one-sided material progress

of the West, and therefore least capable of judging at its true value Eastern culture and philosophy. His knowledge of India was that of a pamphleteer rather than a scholar. . . . The illustrious critic, whose knowledge of Sanskrit was second hand and very second rate, regarded himself as quite competent to sit in judgment on the whole range of Sanskrit Literature, which he had never studied, and to sum up its demerits in a sarcastic paragraph. Feeble as this judgment was, it was yet powerful enough to carry conviction at the time; and even Seeley, writing fifty years later, does not see clearly that its deficiency lay rather in its contempt of the East than its neglect of the Vernaculars. . . .<sup>10</sup> Theoretically Macaulay's position was one-sided, practically it was probably the right one for the time.<sup>11</sup>

**AP:** Andrews saw the crucial point here that it was Macaulay's contempt for the East that was at the heart of the issue. His famous Minute has so often been quoted as the archetypal statement of the colonial intent to spread English, yet this emphasis overlooks both that his views were minority views—the British supported vernacular education more than they did English—and that it was his deep-seated disdain for the East rather than his lack of support for vernacular languages that was the core problem. Andrews was also of course aware of the importance of English in India as part of the struggle for independence.

**VR:** But let's pull back a bit from Gandhi and Andrews briefly to address how what they say resonates with strains in our discipline. Isn't there a troubling binarism there that we need to not cooperate with? Our discipline's signifying processes around English and vernacular languages have, over the years, spawned and been related to discourses on, among other things, bilingualism, mother-tongue education, and "effective" language pedagogy (whatever that means!). Valuable as these discourses are, we don't seem to be adequately problematizing our participations in them nearly enough, and are generally reluctant to question what the "rules of formation" (à la Foucault) of these discourses are. Discipline-wise, we are, thus, caught in the very binary oppositions latent in Gandhi's and Andrews' views above (arguing against monolingualism or against the imposition of a foreign tongue), and are not thinking about our individual or collective historicities that have brought us to the present point in our thinking. While the binarism in Gandhi's and Andrews' views has to be understood against a most complex political colonial canvas, visiting their writings today from a postcolonial vantage point makes me realize how unchanged some language-related polarities still are.

So I am left wondering: How can we critically assess our positionalities vis-à-vis polarizing disciplinary discourses? How do we get to a stage where we recognize how completely sutured we are in narratives of our own and others' making, and the importance of, at least occasionally, swimming against and not cooperating with these currents? It is when we get to those spaces in our thinking that sedimented disciplinary strains start coming untied, and concealed and forbidden voices and issues start to emerge. Indeed, our conversation has emerged because we each recognized particular frozen strains and felt the need to write against them.

**AP:** Indeed, and this is where my work with Sinfree Makoni starts. This is why, although it has been derided as postmodern madness and unhelpful impracticality, Sinfree and I have maintained our terminology of "disinventing language" (while arguing too for the need to reconstitute language). Our argument has been that too many of these debates around mother tongues, language rights, vernaculars, linguistic imperialism, and so forth, are fought exactly on the same terrain that produced them, a linguistic ideology of separate, countable languages linked to nations, territories, and ethnicities. The frameworks with which we address questions of language in the world—frameworks such as world englishes, which, as Bruthiaux (2003) argues, is a "20<sup>th</sup> century construct that has outlived its usefulness" (161)—are frameworks forged in the same era that constructed the differences we are trying to unravel here. Which is why, in the end, we need to cease to cooperate with the disciplines of linguistics and applied linguistics and their narrow, normative stances. Language-rights activists, promoters of diversity and multilingualism, bilingual educators often express their frustration that we will not necessarily cooperate with their campaigns. Andrews implored of his English readers:

**A:** Cannot you see that there comes a time when, if the Government persistently refuses to co-operate with the people, the people in their turn will refuse to co-operate with the Government? This, it appears to me, is what has happened in India today.<sup>12</sup>

We might well say the same of our intransigent disciplines. Cannot (applied) linguists see that there comes a time when, if they persistently refuse to cooperate with the people, the people in their turn will refuse to cooperate with them? And this reminds me of one of Sinfree's remarks, urging us to stop talking about the richness of indigenous languages and

to speak instead of the poverty of their speakers. Our disciplines have reified language at the expense of the language users. Too often we are presented with dichotomous choices, like political elections and beer or washing powder ads (“we asked which people prefer, product A or B . . .”), we are asked either to support bi/multilingualism or to be condemned as an agent for monolingualism, to combat the spread of English or be condemned as an opponent of language rights, to be for pluralism or an agent of monoparadigmatic blindness, without it being realized that it is the framework itself that is blind.

Let us return for a moment to Gandhi, Andrews, and our own histories. As Robert Young (2001: 317) notes, “Like so many anti-colonial and postcolonial activists, Gandhi was a diasporic product: he left India when he was eighteen and did not return to resettle until he was forty-six. Completing his legal education in Britain, and spending twenty-one years of his life in South Africa, he, like many diasporic intellectuals, came to his understanding of his own culture, and developed the basis of politics, abroad.” This is true of many postcolonial leaders, Paris being one of those key sites of political learning for figures as diverse as Ho Chi Minh, Zhou Enlai or Frantz Fanon. For Andrews, of course, the trajectory is a different one, though he too developed that ability to see his own culture from a different perspective and to engage with other cultures in profound ways. Both were then able to use their own religious beliefs to argue for Indian independence:

A: My dear man, let us who are Christians, put to ourselves a plain and simple question. Would we like to be continually ruled by a foreigner for our own so-called benefit? Don't you think it would make us perfectly miserable? Then, if that is the case, why do we not apply the rule of Christ, and love the Indian, the Burmese, the Bangla, the Egyptian, the Irish, as our own self? Why do we not do to others that which we should wish them to do to us? If we would not like to be ruled by foreigners, why do we not wish them to be independent? As a Christian, it seems to me, there is no other way to meet that interrogation, except to desire earnestly and to strive all we can for the independence of every foreign part of what is called the British Empire. Don't you think that this follows from Christ's teachings? <sup>13</sup> (p. 4–5)

G: [Given my own Hindu faith] I accept the interpretation of Ahimsa, namely, that it is not merely a negative state of harmlessness but is a positive state of love, of doing good, even to the evil doer. But it does not mean helping the evil-doer to continue the wrong or tolerating

it by passive acquiescence. On the contrary, love, the active state of Ahimsa, requires you to resist the wrong-doer by dissociating yourself from him even though it may offend him or inure him physically. . . . Non cooperation is not a passive state, it is an intensely active state—more active than physical resistance or violence. . . . I do not believe that the Gita teaches violence for doing good. It is pre-eminently a description of the duel that goes on in our hearts. The divine author has used a historical incident for inculcating the lesson of doing one's duty even at the peril of one's life . . . The Gita distinguishes between the powers of light and darkness and demonstrates their incompatibility . . .<sup>14</sup>

But from these diasporic lives arose also more complexity in terms of cultural connections. As Ashis Nandy (1983) says about Andrews, citing Gandhi, "he was to become the one person who, to many of his friends, 'was an Indian at heart, at the same time a true Englishman'" (46–47). As Nandy goes on, "It was modern Britain Andrews disowned, not the traditional West. When Gandhi described him as an Indian at heart and a true Englishman, it remained unstated that it was by being a true Englishman that Andrews became an Indian" (48). This, then, opens up different ways of thinking about cultural identity: Andrews was able to become "an Indian" by being a "true Englishman." From which we might read several possibilities: being Indian and English are not incompatible; and colonialism produced ways of being British rather than the other way round.

And so back to ourselves, both diasporic wanderers.

**VR:** If colonialism produced ways of being British, then, it seems to me that our postcolonial narratives have produced their own ways of being one thing rather than many. Stepping back and thinking about our dialogue, we've made a textual circle of sorts. We are back to asking: What are identities for? What do discourses of identities do? What sense do we make of Gandhi when he says that his relationship with Andrews was "not a friendship between an Englishman and an Indian . . . [but] an unbreakable bond between two seekers and servants"? How does this statement counter the historicizing around our pasts and speak to our current disciplinary discourses of identities and differences? Like you and I, Andrews and Gandhi both experienced diaspora, although at different points in their lives, and they both knew firsthand what it was like to be marked as "different" and as "minorities." Their experiences of being-in-difference undoubtedly led them to questioning many things

including artificial and societal distances, historical overdeterminations around differences, the ethical need to counter societal slottings, and perhaps most of all, ambivalences of what “identities” even mean. Their relationship prods us to go way beyond national or sovereign selves, beyond cultural and political formation of identities, beyond poststructuralist notions of multiple identities, to consider spaces where identities and nationalities and borders dissolve, since discourses of them can be seen to be binding, to spaces where differences—racial, cultural, linguistic—evaporate because the other person becomes a mirror reflection of us, to spaces where our very languaging about differences is rendered irrelevant because if differences cease, then can there be language about them?

**AP:** I don't think it's a question of difference evaporating or ceasing to exist. We need to keep difference very much alive—that's why I wrote a chapter on the politics of difference in my 2001 book—but we need to think how difference can be re-scripted. You and I are very different but not in the ways that cultural and historical scripts perhaps want us to be. The point we've been getting at is that the particular forms of difference that were inscribed through colonialism, particularly in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, need to be seen in their historical, cultural, and temporal contexts: These categories of race, ethnicity, culture and class were produced in very particular ways and with very particular (and massive) effects. But they were not the only story of colonial interaction (which was far more diverse) or the only story historically (things were very different particularly before the 19<sup>th</sup> century). What I want to suggest is in fact the “ordinariness of difference” (not its dissolution). I take the phrase from Higgins' and Coen's (2000) study of the transvestite prostitutes, the disabled and the poor in urban Oaxaca in Mexico. Difference, diversity, hybridity are not rare and exotic conditions to be sought out and celebrated but the quotidian ordinariness of everyday life. In accord with Higgins and Coen, I “do not think that as humans we have anything in common but our differences; there is no general human nature to be found, nor will the deconstructing of social or cultural practices reveal some kind of common human core” (14–15). From this point of view, “diversity is the given reality of human social action” (15).

**VR:** So, then, how might one speak of “the ordinariness of difference”? Perhaps it is time for our discipline to move the discussion about differences to another plane. Our current discourses about them—grounded as they

are in issues of multiculturalism, valuing diverse pedagogic practices (indeed, I have written about the latter myself), societal slottings (of gender, race, caste, sexuality)—fall short because they hinge on notions of “pure” difference. The present context, though, makes one wonder if there is indeed such a thing, that after all my various slottings of difference—as female, academic, Indian—there is still something left over. In other words, everything about difference is uncontained, slippery and floats free for our discipline’s discursive practices. The phrase “being-in-difference” that I used earlier is intended to capture this messiness because it allows us to move to a space where we think of differences not only in terms of societal slottings, but in terms of historico-political issues around silences and silencing conditions, in terms of questions such as: who is rendered silent and why? Whose voice am I not hearing, and what in my speaking is rendering somebody else mute? How is difference being constructed by silencing? Each of us, in our quiet, self-reflective moments know what historical, societal, disciplinary tropes silence us, and how so much of our mutedness is because of unconscious pacts we’ve made with history. Moving “difference” to this other plane frees us up to see all of us, anywhere in the world, as Beings-in-difference who are sutured into historical narratives, all of which need unceasing and careful prising apart. Earlier in the dialogue, Alastair, you spoke briefly about your mother being separated from her parents for 10 years because of historical and world events at the time, a point that I was afraid would get lost. The enduring and searing pain in that story—one to which I can only respond as a mother myself—is a classic example of Being-in-difference; it is a voice that has been submerged because the historical meta-narratives around our pasts have been so very dichotomous. It is in the recognition of that kind of story, in creating textual spaces for such voices to be heard, that our field needs to move towards. Our visitation of Gandhi and Andrews allows her story to rise to the surface and so effectively counters the overblown, self-assertive rhetoric of postcolonial discourses. It also prods us to get beyond tired arguments about whether or not differences fall along cultural lines or the strident, anti-west arguments about Orientalizing to thinking about differences being caused by silencing. Differences and silences are far more complexly and interestingly intertwined than we think, aren’t they? . . .

**AP:** Yes, but, here is Andrews on silence (amongst other things):

**A:** Some time ago now, I was present at a Committee meeting that

was being held up-country about a vital Indian question, with which Englishmen were only remotely and indirectly concerned. There was a little group of English men there, and the rest were Indians. The great majority of the Indians said nothing at all, because the chairman, an Englishman, conducted the whole meeting in English. There was one Indian gentleman, who knew far more about the subject than almost anyone in the room. He spoke English fluently, but happened to be what I might call, for want of a better name, “vernacular-minded.” That is to say, he thought with his own Indian mind, in an original manner, and not always with an English tendency. There were there, on the Committee also, two or three Indians, who were “English-minded.” I mean, they had dropped to a great extent their Indian mode of life and Indian way of thinking, and had become so cut off from their own people as to think on these Indian questions in an English manner. The bulk of this Committee were almost entirely ignored because they did not speak English. Only now and then certain points were translated to them. It was quite noticeable, now it was possible for the Englishmen present to “cooperate” with the “English minded” Indians. But they could not “cooperate” with the “vernacular-minded” Indian, who spoke English, because they could not follow his train of thought. Nay, something further happened,—try as we would to prevent it, discussion always drifted into the hands of the little group of Englishmen, and in the end we decided everything. Why;—Why of course, because the medium was English. We, Englishmen, to all intent and purpose, were “non-cooperating” with our Indian colleagues, who had not made themselves into Englishmen.<sup>15</sup>

Silence isn't always complex. But yes, it's true, the fact that when my mother and her sister went to meet my grandmother when she made it back from India after WWII, and they walked right past each other, they didn't even recognize each other after ten years, is not the kind of story, the kind of ordinariness, that gets told here. But it's part of my history and perhaps part of what turned me into a permanent voyager. The point here again is not to deny difference but to try to understand it. How do we rethink our old terminology (rethinking our frames of reference, being unafraid to jostle our old thinking), and how do dialogues, revisitations, and retracing our steps—both in individual pasts and collective histories—open up new textual territories that allow us to recast “difference” and “critical practice”?

**VR:** Conceiving of “difference” this way, in terms of historicized silences, does also prod into rethinking what “critical” or “critical

practice” means, doesn’t it? Given everything we’ve been emphasizing so far, it seems that “critical” responses or critical practices are responses that emerge from a heightened awareness of how our present contexts are constellations of particular historical, political, societal, disciplinary narratives, which as we just said are tied to forms and kinds of silencing. Because all presences are marked by absences, it seems to me, that critical practices and responses are about uncovering in sensitive, nuanced ways, the complex dynamics around absences and silences. In terms of the two people informing our dialogue, who could’ve engaged in better critical practice than Andrews himself? Here was one who saw the local kinds of silencing that colonialism perpetrated and chose, as Clark (1970) puts it, “to present the Indian case to the British public and government, not in political terms, but through an appeal to conscience which only he, a Westerner, could make.” And he did this by drawing on his Christian faith, by educating himself about Hinduism, by drawing on the best of Hindu traditions, and by being sensitive to the most local of Indian needs.

So what can we draw from the Gandhi-Andrews relationship that can energize our thinking about critical practices in our discipline? That some of the most interesting critical practices are mixed ones that go beyond ideological rifts, that it is time to think of critical practices in terms of recognizing historicized trajectories of silences and silencing conditions in the most ordinary of contexts and to work to undo them, to recognize that best critical practices are often about making deliberate and concerted efforts to swim against prevailing, silencing currents, not by overblown, self-assertions but by engaging in the very acts that might be diametrically opposed to repressive ones, sometimes by rendering oneself silent, if it means making room for a historically silenced voice. Perhaps it is time to think of us all as Beings-in-difference where each of us is simultaneously voiced and silenced and sutured into historical narratives. In terms of our discipline, then, as applied linguists, it remains up to us to repeatedly work at ungluing history pages so as to turn them in other ways, isn’t it? Perhaps it calls for some kind of moral re-education, a divesting at the level of the psyche, of assumed cultural positions expressed at the level of languages.

**AP:** But how, asks Andrews, “to create a psychological revolution? How to bring about an entire reversal of Indian sentiment from dependence to Independence?<sup>16</sup> How to bring about an entire reversal of applied linguistic sentiment from dependence to independence? One of the

sources of renewal here, as we have been reminded by Canagarajah, Makoni and others, is local knowledge, knowledge that is “context-bound, community-specific, and non-systematic because it is generated ground-up through social practice in everyday life” (Canagarajah 2005: 4). But here I want to bring in Tolstoy and Tagore. Andrews was influenced by the great Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore and had many discussions with him. One of the biggest influences on Gandhi, meanwhile, along with Ruskin and Thoreau (“On the duty of civil disobedience”), was Tolstoy, with whom he corresponded until Tolstoy’s death in 1910. My point here is not to juxtapose the old trope of “writers of universal appeal” against local knowledge but rather to suggest that the local readings of these authors is another point of locality: The English/Indian missionary anticolonial Andrews talking with Tagore about nationalism; the cosmopolitan/tropicopolitan (Aravamudan 1999) Gandhi with his politics embedded in local traditions of resistance, weaving and salt gathering, corresponding with Tolstoy about pacifism; these are some of the intertwined influences we are trying to get at here as we look at our pasts, connections, histories.

**VR:** You’re absolutely right. It is in the local that we find the most interesting interconnections between our pasts. How did postcolonial narratives lose sight of this most crucial point? And as we wind down then, we ask of ourselves: Where has this journey led us? It has prompted a deep shift in our thinking of several terrains including disciplinary, personal, and historical ones. Discipline-wise, it’s made us rethink several issues, including those around identities and the dissolution of boundaries (what are we to make of the Gandhi-Andrews relationship?); it’s made us rethink differences and has prompted us to consider them in terms of silencing conditions; it has also made us consider alternate critical practices that tend to go unnoticed because they happen in local languages and take forms that are different in the non-west. But beyond this space of smaller disciplinary debates, this visitation to Gandhi and Andrews has opened up a way for us to understand how particular kinds of historicizing impact everything from individual emplacements, to dichotomies in the discipline, to silencing histories. The dichotomies between our pasts are a result of particular kinds of historicizing that have chosen to value and embed particular relations of “colonizer” and “colonized.” Stretching a long arm back into history to bring forward a friendship that defied these dichotomies suddenly casts into light a whole

knot of forgotten ties and connections and reminds us that the divisions around our positionings are a result of particular ways of narrativizing our pasts and can be and beg to be rethought. Hearing Alastair speak of his mother listening to Malayalam, or of his grandfather being able to speak it makes me want to know from them what India was like. It makes me wonder: Did they like Alfonso and Kesar mangoes (how could they have not)? What did they think of the torrential monsoons? But it also makes me wonder about the pain in it all: what it must've been like for his grandmother to put her girls on a ship not realizing that she would not see them for 10 long years, to not be able to hold her daughters' hands as they crossed a street in Indian traffic, or not to get cross-eyed with decimals and fractions as they did their Maths homework. And what about his mother and sister as they waited for letters from their parents in India; what were their days in boarding schools like, accounts of which get romanticized in Enid Blyton books? As for his grandparents readjusting to England after 35 years in India: what did they take back with them? Did the peacocks calling for rain sound in their sleep? Did they dream of the decorated elephants that are so much a part of the Kerala scene?

Our visitation of Gandhi and Andrews has brought all this to the fore. What would Gandhi and Andrews say about the "colony-postcolony" dichotomy? Splintering the discourses and narratives around these terms that have overscripted differences between us and moving the discussion towards seeing each of us as a being-in-difference suddenly allows us to see the (colonial and postcolonial) trajectories of silencing that have positioned us in specific ways. Non-cooperation, as Gandhi and Andrews remind us, is committed to unraveling these historical silences; critical practice, from this point of view, is indeed about asking those questions brought up earlier: whose voice am I not hearing and why? What in my speaking renders somebody else mute? In what ways am I complicit in the silencing trajectories around me? Our grandparents aren't here to tell their stories, but others may hear them through us; we hear our mothers and grandparents stories echoing in the silences that were forced upon them by history and the cultures within and across which they charted their life journeys; and then we hear our stories, and so hear Gandhi and Andrews through the years.

## Notes

1. Andrews, C. F. 1922. *The Claim for Independence: within or without the British Empire*.
2. Gandhi, *Young India*, 5<sup>th</sup> Jan., 1921; in Rajendra Prasad 1924: 254.
3. Gandhi, *Young India*, 26<sup>th</sup> May, 1920; in Rajendra Prasad 1924: 147.
4. Gandhi, *Young India*, 2<sup>nd</sup> June, 1920; in Rajendra Prasad 1924: 174.
5. Andrews, *Non-Cooperation*, 1922: 8.
6. Gandhi, In N. S. Prabhu 1958, Ed., *Young India*, 27-4-'21, p. 10.
7. Gandhi, In Prabhu (1958, Ed) *Young India*, 1927, p. 8.
8. Andrews, C. F. 1908. "The Future of Indian Education," *Modern Review*, July 1908. In S. R. Bakshi (ed), *C. F. Andrews: The Gandhian Thought*, Vol. 1, 1907–20. Delhi: Akashdeep Publishing House, p. 27.
9. Gandhi, *Young India*, 19<sup>th</sup> Sept., 1921; in Rajendra Prasad 1924: 389–90.
10. Andrews, C. F. 1908. "The Future of Indian Education," *Modern Review*, July 1908. In S. R. Bakshi (ed), *C. F. Andrews: The Gandhian Thought*, Vol. 1, 1907–20. Delhi: Akashdeep Publishing House, p. 8.
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12. Andrews, *The Indian Problem*, 1924, p. 85.
13. Andrews, *Non-Cooperation*, 1920: 25.
14. Gandhi, 25<sup>th</sup> Aug., 1920, *Young India*; in Rajendra Prasad 1924: 325.
15. Andrews, *The Indian Problem*, 1924, p. 29–31.
16. Andrews, *The Indian Problem*, 1924, p. 17–18.

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