

CHAPTER 1

Texts and the Authority Relation

Recently, I began one of my university courses in a way that was for me unusual. I told the students that one of the books we were going to read was new to me, that I had never read it before. I justified my choice of the book, and the fact that I had not read it yet, by mentioning that it had come highly recommended by two colleagues whom I respected very much and who had read it in manuscript form. And it was a brand new book, I told my students, hot off the press. Thus, I thought it reasonable that we read the book together. We would learn from each other.

Actually, what was unusual for me was that I *told* my students this. I had, when teaching a course, read texts with my students, for the first time, quite a few times. But I had never prefaced a course by admitting that we would do so.

The students seemed to take the admission in stride, until the day we discussed the book. One student, let's call him Darrel, was visibly upset with the book. His classroom comments were highly critical of the text. And while he spent some time in class offering judicious and well-argued critiques of the book, it seemed as if he was biding his time, holding back. Darrel finally burst out, "You know, I promised myself I wasn't going to say this, but I don't think this book has anything to offer to teachers, to schools, or to anyone concerned with education. This book has nothing to offer educators, Dr. B!"

This sort of critique is not what was remarkable, though. Many other students critique texts that I have chosen. They are encouraged to do so and should do so. What surprised me happened about a week

later when I was talking with Darrel in the hallway. Going out of his way to explain his outburst in the previous week's class, Darrel said that he still did not think the book was useful for educators. "But what bothered me even more," he said, "was that you had not even read the book before you assigned it. That's what got to me."

What struck me about Darrel's comment was mainly that I had never had my own authority as a professor positioned in quite this way, between flattery and condemnation, between all-knowing and unknowing, between progressive and traditional, between one who learns along with his students and one who lets them learn something wrong, between the 782 books on the shelves of my office that I had read and this one that I *hadn't* read. Given these encounters with Darrel, both in class and out, I am sure that my own teaching authority was in play, but I was not quite sure how.

In this chapter, I want to examine the authority relation and the place of texts therein. Why look first to texts? Because it is important to start examining the relation of educational authority not in general, but with an eye toward the context in which such authority gets enacted. In education, this context is, quite literally, a *con-text*, a "with text." The text is an integral part of the educational relation of authority. For, authority comes in many forms: familial authority, legal authority, religious authority, institutional authority, state authority. . . . Yet, not all of these noneducational forms of authority include a use of the written word. I examine here the place of texts in the authority relation because texts are an inevitable component of *educational* authority. When authority gets enacted in education, it is most often through the use of texts.

Indeed, as I will put forth in this chapter, the text enters the relation of education authority in some complicated ways. For, texts are not only *used* as part of this relation. In addition, texts become an integral part of the relation itself. Students and teachers engage with texts and these texts become, to a greater or lesser extent, a part of them. In this regard, it is worthwhile to note another etymological link: The very word, *authority*, has its history in matters of *author-ship*. Who writes what, and who reads what, are central to authority, and especially central to educational authority. It is thus very important to look at the place of the book deep within relations of educational authority. The place of the book in the relation of educational authority is not a distant one. Students and teachers are intertwined with the book when authority gets enacted. The relation of authority in education makes us readers and authors. It ties us in organic ways to the text. Authority in education is thus not only a relation between people who use texts; it is also a relation between people who are in the process of

becoming, themselves, textual. To partake in educational authority is to partake in authorship.

To think about the place of the book, this chapter will outline two theoretical frameworks for interpreting the textual nature of authority: one based on the hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer and one based Jacques Derrida's logic of the "supplement."¹ By outlining these two frameworks, I try to shed some light on the complicated link between teaching authority and the text. I find that the works of both Gadamer and Derrida are vital in teasing out the messy relationship between the learner, the teacher, and the book. It is this messy relationship that I believe my student Darrel was pointing out. For Gadamer, the authority of the text is separate from, and preferable to, the authority of the teacher. Gadamer sees a difference between textual authority and human authority. He sees the former as more beneficial and the latter as less beneficial. However, Derrida sees more of an organic link between the two. I therefore use Derrida's logic of the supplement to extend the Gadamerian analysis. Derrida reminds us that we are an actual part of the texts we teach.

As well, this chapter will examine a work of literature that helps to further elucidate the place of texts within the authority relation. I will examine the play, *My Country! My Africa!*, written by Athol Fugard and set in South Africa during the Apartheid regime.² Fugard's play offers a powerful lens for further analysis of the central, yet complicated, role that texts play within relations of educational authority. His play reminds us that texts bear not only on the relation between a student and his or her teacher, but also on larger social movements where authority is at stake, social movements such as the anti-Apartheid struggle in South Africa.

GADAMER ON AUTHORITATIVENESS VERSUS AUTHORITARIANISM

Gadamer's analysis of teaching authority is based on his more general understanding of hermeneutic authority. So I begin with synopsis of hermeneutic authority as described by Gadamer. Hermeneutic authority, as a part of the to-and-fro interchange between text and interpreter, derives from the cultural "horizon" upon which a text rests in order to make sense to the reader, in order to lay claim on the reader. According to Gadamer, the authority of a given text rests in its ability to be understood within a set of cultural and historical cues that are available for understanding not only because they wait to be discovered within the closed pages of the text, but also because they draw upon a tradition of understanding that is to some extent already shared with the

reader or interpreter of the text. (Such a tradition may be shared either consciously or unconsciously.) For Gadamer, authority is thus not merely a way of describing the quality of the knowledge or theory or narrative that a text imparts. Authority is also a description of the extent to which a book participates in a conversation whose language the reader is familiar with. Following Gadamer, a book is authoritative to the extent that it is informative and to the extent to which it lends itself to a cultural and historical understanding that takes place between the reader and the book.

That is not to say that authority works only in positive ways, however. As Gadamer points out, there are certainly times when authority contributes to rigid thinking, when it promulgates prejudices. He notes,

If the prestige of authority displaces one's own judgment, then authority is in fact a source of prejudices. But this does not preclude its [authority's] being a source of truth, and that is what the Enlightenment failed to see when it denigrated authority.³

Authority is certainly in a position to restrict freedom, but it is also in a position to let freedom run its course by allowing a conversation to take place. In his later work, Gadamer gives names to two different kinds of authority, the sort that is restrictive and the sort that is productive. He points out that if a person is "authoritarian," then he or she draws upon institutional power and hierarchical position in order to demonstrate authority. For Gadamer, this sort is restrictive. But he also points out that if one is "authoritative," then one draws upon superior knowledge and insight, upon cultural traditions that allow conversations to take place instead of shutting them down.

"The word 'authoritative,' " writes Gadamer,

precisely does not refer to a power which is based on authority. It refers, rather, to a form of validity which is genuinely recognized, and not one which is merely asserted. . . . Anyone who has to invoke authority in the first place, whether it be the father within the family or the teacher in the classroom, possesses none.⁴

Authoritativeness is a quality that depends upon learning and knowledge, upon texts and shared cultural understandings. Authoritativeness, unlike authoritarianism, is a productive version of authority. And, following this distinction, a teacher should be authoritative, but should not be authoritarian. An authoritative teacher, like a text that "speaks"

with authority, can lay claim to a wide array of knowledge, draws upon a wide cultural horizon that serves as backdrop for a conversation in which curriculum becomes intelligible to students.

What is significant here is precisely the link that Gadamer makes between teaching and authoritativeness. He points out that teaching authority can be construed from a hermeneutic viewpoint, from an appeal to the cultural and historical horizons that make understanding available in the first place. Critiquing the Enlightenment's "subjection of authority to reason," Gadamer asks us to reconsider the possibility that teaching authority is not necessarily a bad thing, and that a student's being made subject to teaching authority is not necessarily a loss of freedom.⁵ Yes, it is oppressive if one exercises authority over another by virtue of institutional position. Yes, the Enlightenment tendency to eschew authority is valid when the authority of church or state or school impinges on one in a way that is a threat to personal autonomy or the use of reason. However, Gadamer points out that there are elements of authority that are useful and empowering as well. Just as the authority of a text derives in part from a larger cultural horizon that actually makes the text intelligible to begin with, so too, for Gadamer, teaching authority derives in part from a shared set of understandings. He argues that the cultural and historical background that supports teaching authority is empowering rather than hindering as it contributes to the growth of others rather than curtailing their freedom.

What I find interesting about Gadamer's hermeneutic understanding of authority is that it points to the territory that is at stake in my student's comments. Gadamer's analysis suggests that teaching authority, if it is to be empowering instead of hindering, should be based upon the knowledge of the teacher, that teaching authority is shored up by the books the teacher has read. Following Gadamer, one can envision the authoritativeness so vividly depicted in many professors' offices today: all of the books behind the professor's desk, those books that she has read with such care, serve to shore up authority in a legitimate way. Looked at in this way, the book that I did not read before the course started is missing from the shelf. My authoritativeness is weakened and illegitimate to the extent that I had not read the text long before.

Gadamer's analysis of authority distinguishes "genuine" authority from nongenuine authority by separating the knowledge-based-ness of authoritativeness from the power-based-ness of authoritarianism. If we were to follow Gadamer here, we would conclude that knowing the text backward and forward and keeping one's aims "genuine" vis-à-vis students (aiming to impart knowledge rather than aiming to manipulate) is the basis of valid teacher authority. Along these lines it is perfectly reasonable to suggest that the professor acts authoritatively by assuming full

responsibility for the book, for *reading* the book before it appears on the syllabus, for taking authoritative (as opposed to authoritarian) responsibility for the book. Being authoritative by knowing the book well is a primary responsibility the professor has for his or her students. *Not* reading the book beforehand, but assigning it nevertheless, Gadamer's analysis implies, the professor practices authoritarianism; the professor relies on her institutional position, not on her firsthand knowledge of the work, to convince the student to read that text. This is the sort of authoritarianism that Darrel had every right to question.

As I see it, though, Gadamer's analysis of teaching authority stops short of being able to provide a more nuanced understanding of Darrel's complaint. While Darrel's complaint makes a lot of sense when set against Gadamer's distinction between authoritativeness and authoritarianism, his complaint also points to the limitations of the way in which Gadamer applies his own hermeneutic project to the matter of teaching authority. For when Gadamer speaks of the two types of teaching authority, he creates an either/or scenario that forces an instructor into a corner: either he has genuine knowledge, or he employs institutional power. In this way, Gadamer's thinking on teacher authority contradicts the much more nuanced thinking of his overall hermeneutic project. While Gadamer's overall project is concerned with the incredibly complex interpretive relationship between people and texts, his thinking on teacher authority ghettoizes the teacher/text relationship into a matter of good and bad authority.

Teacher authority should not be split into the two categories of authoritativeness and authoritarianism and then left at that. Such dichotomizing forces an explanation of Darrel's complaint that is too simplistic. What is needed is a way to push farther into the teacher's relation to the text in order to see if Darrel's complaint might be something other than a complaint about authoritarianism. In other words, there is a need to push Gadamer's educational thinking along.

I AM THE MISSING PAGES OF THE TEXT I TEACH

Jacques Derrida, with his notion of the "supplement," opens an important brief on this question of how teaching authority relates to the text. In a very straightforward sense, the teacher can be construed as a supplement to the text, as a welcome addition that makes the text itself more intelligible to the student. This understanding of the instructor-as-supplement follows a long tradition of educational thought that calls upon the teacher to clarify curriculum for students, to make texts more available to their understanding. It's important to think more thoroughly about this role of the instructor as supplement, and that can be

done with the more complex notion of supplementarity that Derrida introduces, especially in *Of Grammatology*.⁶

As Derrida points out, the straightforward understanding of supplementarity is limited. The supplement must not be construed solely as something that is *in addition* to a given text. The process of supplementarity entails a double gesture that must be thought in its doubleness. The supplement to a text must be construed both as something that adds to that text *and* as something that makes that text whole, that both augments and completes.

For Derrida, remembering this doubleness of supplementary is absolutely essential. To forget the supplement's doubleness is to practice a forgetfulness of textual complexity. To begin with, a textual supplement enriches a text by bringing it more fully into the light of day, into the realm of human understanding, into presence. Noting this first role of the supplement, Derrida writes,

The supplement adds itself, it is a surplus, a plenitude enriching another plenitude, the *fullest measure* of presence. It cumulates and accumulates presence. It is thus that art, *techne*, image, convention, etc., come as supplements to nature and are rich with this entire cumulating function.⁷

But also, the supplement instills itself as a *natural* part of that which it supplements. We might think here of a person who takes a vitamin supplement. The vitamin supplement is an addition, yes, but it stands in for a *natural* lack. It becomes a *natural* part of the body. So for Derrida,

the supplement supplements. It adds only to replace. It intervenes or insinuates itself *in-the-place-of*; if it fills, it is as if one fills a void. If it represents and makes an image, it is by the anterior default of a presence.⁸

More than a merely an add-on by which a presence such as a text is made more present, the supplement also instills itself as a necessary part of the text. The supplement represents the text, yes, but in doing so it also becomes part of the text's economy, part of its very health.

One way to begin considering the link between supplementarity and pedagogy is to remember that teachers are in a relation to their texts that to some extent parallels the complicated relationship between the spoken and the written word. Teachers are often called upon to relate or facilitate the written word by spoken means. This oral/written distinction has connections with Derrida's project. For Derrida, the logic

of supplementarity follows from his critique of philosophers who prioritize either the spoken or the written word. Long-standing paradigms of linguistics such as Rousseau's or Hegel's or Saussure's have tended to prioritize either the spoken or the written pole of the speaking/writing binary. Speaking is taken to be either the ideal form of writing or its messy human counterpart. The written word is often considered to be merely a conduit for the spoken or, conversely, what is spoken is often considered to be merely a conduit for the written word.

But, as Derrida points out, language theory has been unwilling to think about the ways that writing actually infects the spoken work and, vice versa, the ways in which spoken word continues to infect language. There is no way to cleanly separate the spoken from the written because neither of them works *simply* as a conduit for the other. The spoken word has a written-ness that can no longer be left out of consideration; the written word has a spoken-ness that will not go away. To put it very simply, the word *period* now has an ordinary meaning based on its grammatical function ("I am done with this book, period!") and the word "ain't" is now in the dictionary. Both the period (".") and "ain't" have become supplementary. This cross-infection of the spoken/written has ramifications for the teacher/text relationship.

While the above is a general (and admittedly cursory) description of supplementarity, it is interesting, and germane to this discussion of my student's concern, that Derrida links his notion of supplementarity more explicitly to pedagogy in his analysis of Rousseau's *Emile*. For Derrida, pedagogy is fundamentally grounded in a tradition of supplementarity, in a tradition of putting the instructor in place of a parent, of supplementing parental teachings. Reading *Emile*, Derrida notes that pedagogy functions within an economy where "it is indeed culture or cultivation [supplied by the instructor] that must supplement a deficient nature, a deficiency" that cannot be adequately supplied by the parent.⁹ Quoting Rousseau, Derrida goes on to say that "[a]ll organization of, and all the time spent in, education will be regulated by this necessary evil: 'supply [suppleer] . . . [what] . . . is lacking' and to replace Nature."¹⁰ Pedagogy is an endeavor caught up in the logic of supplementarity: children need to be given their supplements not only because they lack a certain amount of knowledge, but also because such knowledge completes them and becomes inseparable from them. Education is both *an addition to* and *a natural part of* childhood; the instructor's role is an addition to the parent's and is itself parental; the classroom both contributes to certain habits of nature and creates a naturalness out of certain habits.

This Derridian discussion of supplementarity is not as far from Darrel's concern as it might seem. What is striking and provocative in

Darrel's comment is that there is a logic of supplementarity that works alongside of or, to stay with Derrida's theme, seems to supplement, such a straightforward discussion of authority as Gadamer's. For while there is a sense in which pedagogical authority must depend upon the instructor's grounding in textual knowledge, in what Gadamer names the "genuine knowledge" of the "traditionary text," there is also a sense in which the instructor and the text stand within an economy of supplementarity that makes the instructor both *an addition to* the text and *an integral part of* the text. Following Derrida's logic of supplementarity, Darrel's experience of lack when he discovered that the book had not been read by me is not only a matter of disgust with the teacher's lack of authoritativeness. It is also a reminder that the book is somehow incomplete without the instructor's presence. The book experiences the teacher not only as an extension of itself, but as a supplement that it cannot do without. Like the teacher whose introduction of culture into the "natural" family life of the child becomes part and parcel of that "natural" family life, the instructor whose job it is to supplement the text also becomes part and parcel of the very text whose message she attempts to convey. When I complain that my teacher has not read the book, I am not only complaining that she is not authoritative enough; I am complaining also that the book is missing some pages.

Comparing Gadamer's description of "authoritativeness" to Derrida's understanding of "supplementarity" is instructive. While both versions link up with Darrel's concern about the relation of the book to teacher authority, this comparison points out how Gadamer relies on a one-way understanding of authoritativeness that is limiting. For Gadamer, the movement of text and textual tradition runs from historical tradition, through texts, then out to the mouth and fingers of the instructor. The instructor is a conduit for the message of tradition and for the message of the text. That is not to say the text of the tradition must be conservative or regressive; only that the movement is from what has been previously known to what the student is to learn. The pedagogical problem, as I see it, with Gadamer's understanding of authority is not that it depends upon tradition in any regressive sense. Indeed, the textual authority upon which I build my syllabus, and upon which I speak, may be based on progressive or even radical education. The problem with this understanding of authority is that it depends upon a pedagogical movement that is one-way.

In contrast, Derrida's logic of the supplement highlights the two-way movement that complicates the teacher's position with respect to the text. The teacher participates in more than a one-way trajectory from tradition to text to teacher to student. She is also a complicatedly *real* part of the text that he teaches. Teachers and students are in a

relation with their texts. When I teach subject matter, I am not only a representative of, nor only an addition to, the tradition from which I have constructed my syllabus; I am also an active part of that tradition. I act as a spokesperson of the book that I may or may not have read, but I also push the book this way or that way as if I am one of its chapters. This supplementary understanding of the teacher's role vis-à-vis the text suggests that Darrel's critique was more than a claim that I wasn't properly prepared to teach the text, more than a claim that I was not authoritative enough; it was also a claim that the text itself was somehow lacking a part of itself without which it would fail to be whole. Because the supplement is both an addition to, and a part of; because of this, my disconnection from that text threatened the authority of the book itself. My *not*-reading was a weakening of the book.

BEING CONTENT

So I consider it important to follow Derrida's logic of supplementarity when it comes to the complicated connection between teacher and texts. I have been inspired by Darrel's challenge. It was a challenge that I assumed initially to be a questioning of my authority, but that I now see as a questioning of the authority relation between me and the book that I hadn't read. I think it is too easy for educators to think along one-way lines when it comes to curriculum, authority, and pedagogy. It is too easy for educators to assume, like Gadamer, that pedagogical authority is primarily a matter of deploying one's knowledge of curriculum in a judicious manner. Following Derrida's lead, we must also think about the relation of pedagogical authority vis-à-vis the text. Because, as the instructor, I am part of the educational text, it follows that, in spite of the way I teach, I nevertheless have an active role in constructing the way educational texts are read by my students. Assuming that Derrida has a (supplementary) point, it is impossible for a student to read a classroom text without, in some way, reading me. Thus, the habits that students form around reading curriculum are going to reflect, at least in part, the habits they form around reading *me*.

To make this notion of "reading the instructor" more specific, imagine that I am a white man and that I have chosen to read Toni Morrison's *Playing in the Dark* with my class.¹¹ (To summarize inadequately, Morrison's text is an analysis of how the white racist imagination that has come to structure canonical literary works in the United States.) Having assigned this text, the problem of teacher authority rests not only on whether I have understood the text deeply enough, on whether I can refrain from *forcing* the text on my students. It refers also to how I, as a white man, become part of the text's own analysis.

Morrison's text, as complicated as this may seem, becomes in my class a text that is co-authored in black and white, by Morrison and me. To become educated about Morrison's argument means, at least in my class, also to become educated about how a white man can be in relation to that argument.

When I teach Morrison's text, and when I do so with the logic of the supplement in mind, I must be cognizant of the perlocutionary (to borrow John Austin's term) effects that I put into play as a white man who teaches that text.¹² Being part of that text, I will also be part of the ways in which my students read that text now and in the future. As part of that text, my whiteness will be a barrier for some students and an invitation for others. Importantly, I cannot shirk that barrier status, or that invitational status. That status will not go away by laying the onus of learning on my students nor will it go away by presenting the text as if I am merely a conduit through which my students reach text directly. The white perspective that I bring to this text on white racism will be part of the lesson that this text teaches. And conversely, if my teaching strategy is to act as if I do not have a perspective on this text, then the message this text sends may very well be that a white person has no pages to add to Morrison's text. Whatever I say—even if I say nothing—speaks pages about a white understanding of the racist imagination.

To return to the objections raised by Darrel, I now have a deeper respect for the validity of his reaction. It now seems to me that there are at least two distinct reasons for his response. On one hand, it may have been that Darrel was reacting to what he thought of as a particularly authoritarian act on my part. Here I am following Gadamer: because authority becomes authoritarian when not based on genuine knowledge, it is entirely justified to accuse an instructor of resorting to authoritarianism when he chooses texts based not on knowledge, but upon his institutional position. Following a Gadamerian logic, my choosing of that text can justifiably be criticized because it depended more on my institutional power to set curriculum than it did upon my genuine knowledge of the text. On the other hand, Darrel may have been reacting to the textual incompleteness that my admission revealed. Here I am following Derrida: because the instructor resides in a position of supplementarity vis-à-vis her text, curriculum is simply not complete unless it is supplemented by the instructor's own authoritative voice. Pedagogical authority can be described as the authority that books borrow from teachers. Because I had not read the book before I assigned it, the *text's* authority became permanently marred in this student's eyes. Along with Derrida, a case can be made that Darrel knew the text he had purchased was missing some pages.

SUPPLEMENTARITY AGAINST THE BACKDROP
OF PREDOMINANT PEDAGOGIES

One way or another, both of these versions of textual authority (the authoritative and the supplemental) show how the book supplements the teacher. On the one hand, we have a picture of a teacher who enacts authority because he or she has the ability to draw upon the authority of the book. Drawing upon the authority of the book rather than drawing upon the authority of one's position as teacher, is, at least according to this first version, a helpful way to enact authority. In this first picture, we find that the teacher has a choice to make between the extrinsic and the intrinsic. Either she can put in play the external authority of the institution to which she belongs, or, she can enact the internal authority that comes with the book's knowledge. In this first picture, there is a difference in distance between the illegitimate, institutional authority that one might enact and the legitimate, textual authority that one might enact. One is far away, while the other is close. It is in this way that the authoritarian person draws on an authority that is distant while the authoritative person enacts authority that is close. The judicious enactment of authority deals with knowledge that is close at hand, with a text that is sutured in tight.

On the other hand, we have a picture of a teacher who stands in a certain relation with the text that she teaches. In this picture, there is also something that is far away and something that is close. This something is the *same* thing. It is the book. When one thinks of the teacher as a spokesperson for the book, as a voice for the written text, then the book seems far away from the teacher. The spokesperson can stand at a great distance because she is merely an echo of what the book says. She is like the stereo speaker that can stand at a great distance from wherever the recording itself is being played. When, however, one thinks of the teacher as a spokesperson who is part and parcel of the book's presentation, then the teacher and the book turn out to be located at the same place. When the spoken word is taken to be central to the written word, then the teacher is closely bound to the text that is being taught.

Indeed, a lot of educational theory about authority hinges on the sort of relation that exists between teachers and texts. In the introductory chapter, I gave a brief overview of three different orientations toward educational authority: the progressive, the traditional, and the critical. I described the progressive orientation as a complete dismissal of authority, the traditional orientation as an embracing of authority, and the critical orientation as a pragmatic embracing of authority, an embracing that endorses authority as long as that authority serves liberatory purposes. Actually, each of these three orientations also in-

cludes an orientation toward the relation that exists between teachers and texts. Let me explain.

The progressive orientation toward educational authority assumes that texts need little support from teachers. Progressives assume for the most part that texts can stand on their own, can speak for themselves. Thus, in classrooms inspired by progressive pedagogy one often finds a rather hands-off approach to the content matter of the texts being learned. In such classrooms it is most often assumed that the text is better learned if it is kept separate from the instructor, if it is dealt with by the student, for the student, rather than by the teacher, for the student. To give one small example, I need only recall the responses that I have received from progressive educators when they have listened to me tell my story about Darrel. I am not exaggerating when I say that most of my *progressive* colleagues who have listened to my story have doubted whether Darrel's complaint was legitimate. Those colleagues who call themselves progressive have, for the most part, few qualms about teaching a book that one has not already read. After all, from the progressive perspective, it is not the teacher's role to offer direct instruction on a text's content. To put this in terms of the teacher's relation to the text: the progressive teacher keeps his or her distance from the texts that are being learned. The progressive orientation sees the relation between teacher and text as a distant one.

If the progressive orientation construes the relation between teacher and text as a distant one, the traditional orientation is just the opposite. For traditionalists, it is just fine for teachers to teach the content matter of a book. After all, the use of authority for such a benign purpose—that of teaching texts—is perfectly acceptable. Indeed, because students seem to benefit from the direct use of pedagogical authority by the teacher, the use of such authority is more than acceptable; it is pedagogically necessary. It is necessary in that it aids in the learning of texts. And because of this pedagogical necessity, traditionalist theory carries with it a perspective on the proximity of teacher to text. Because of the necessity of pedagogical intervention on the part of the teacher, the traditional teacher is a *confrere* of the text. The teacher keeps the text close at hand.

As one might expect, the critical perspective blends the progressive and the traditional. From the viewpoint of the criticalist, the ultimate aim of education is to foster a healthy distance between text and teacher. The steady-state at which a critically educated student eventually arrives is one where the student no longer depends upon the authority of the teacher to shore up her own knowledge of the text. However, from the critical perspective, the student may not be able to arrive at such a steady-state on her own. Why? Because hegemonic ideology prevents

the student from reading texts properly. While the criticalist might want to keep her distance from the text, while she might hold such a distance as an ideal, she knows that, in fact, hegemonic ideology requires her to intervene in the student's reading of the text. If students are to read texts on their own, as in the progressive tradition, they might not be able to see past the implicit ideology of those texts. Hence the necessity of an enlightened, critical educator who can help students to see past ideology and into the "true" message of the text. As one might expect, the criticalist is a mixture of progressive distance from the text and traditionalist proximity. She tries to be distant from the text, but is willing to be close to the text when such proximity is required in order to debunk hegemonic ideology.

Once again, I have stereotyped these three positions—the progressive, the traditional, and the critical—unreasonably. I have done so for heuristic purposes. Indeed, these stereotypes are not far off the sorts of general orientations that guide many a thoughtful teacher. By explicating these three ways that educational authority gets positioned vis-à-vis the text, I have wanted to show the various ways that texts enter into the relation of educational authority. Texts are part and parcel of the authority relation. Depending upon how one theorizes the authority relation, depending upon the orientation that one takes toward pedagogy, texts can be construed as either more central or less central to that relation.

TEXTUAL AUTHORITY AND RELATION

Actually, I would say that each of these positions gets it all wrong. A text is not to be distanced from the teacher because one is progressive, held tight because one is conservative, nor held tight strategically because one is a criticalist. In contrast, I would take up Derrida's position, namely, that texts *always* supplement the one who teaches. In contrast to the orientation of these three popular positions, the teacher is always part and parcel of the text that is being taught—even if he or she has not read the text! A mistake is made by the progressive, traditional, and critical orientations alike. Their mistake is twofold. First, these orientations assume that one's relation to a text is somehow voluntary, that it is based upon the will of the teacher, upon either the unwillingness of the teacher to teach the text through direct instruction, or upon his willingness to do so. On the contrary, the will of the teacher has very little to do with the teacher's textual authority. Teachers supplement texts whether or not they *want* to do so, as the story of Darrel so clearly illustrates. Teachers are always already close to their texts, but this has nothing to do with some traditionalist orientation that advocates direct instruction based on the teacher's knowledge of the text. Teachers are

always already close to their texts because the pedagogical relation of authority is thoroughly textual.

Second, these orientations are off the mark because they see the text as a matter of monological authority (coming from the teacher) rather than as part of a *relation* of authority. As is the case when progressive, traditional, and critical educators treat authority as a substance, when these folks theorize the place of the book, they do so solely from a teacher-sided perspective. That is to say, these perspectives assume that it is the distance or proximity of the teacher to the text that is paramount. They assume that the decision of the teacher to stay close (in the case of traditional and critical orientations) to the book, or the decision of the teacher to stay far (in the case of progressive orientations) from the book, is primarily the teacher's. Following these three conceptions of the textual life of authority, it is the teacher's stance vis-à-vis the text that is paramount. The student is hardly involved.

Yet in contrast to this picture of a teacher who has monological authority over the educational life of the text, let's remember Darrel (and for that matter Julie, too). Darrel is intimately involved in the way his instructor gets positioned in relation to the text. Far from being the passive recipient of the teacher's textual orientation, students (and not only Darrel, but all students) are integral to the ways in which teachers get configured as supplements. As I have argued above, teachers are supplemental to texts whether or not they choose to be, whether or not they disavow their role as textual authorities. It is precisely because of the fact that students construe their teachers as textual authorities that teachers become supplemental to their texts. In this way, the textual authority of teachers is relational: students impute textual authority to teachers whether teachers "want" that authority or not.

DISCOUNTED SUPPLEMENTARITY

In this section I would like to further illustrate the textual relation by looking more closely at instances when students discount the teacher and the text. One of the problems with discussions of educational authority, a problem that I tried to articulate in rehearsing the "common" assumptions held about authority, is that they tend to focus too narrowly on the teacher side of the educational relation. Such discussions tend to be monological. Indeed, when I examined my own interaction with Darrel and the supplemental position it put me in vis-à-vis an educational text, I still focused too narrowly on the ties between teacher and book. Surely, this teacher/book tie means something to the student as well. If the teacher is tied to the book, how does this bear on the one who is receiving the education? What circumstances lead a student to

break with supplemental authority? When is supplementarity an intrusive aspect of the authority relation rather than a benign one? What are the political dimensions of the tying-together of the teacher and the book? How can student resistance be understood in light of such tying?

To further explore this matter, I turn to Athol Fugard's play *My Children! My Africa!*¹³ Fugard's play is set in the fascist South African regime during the Apartheid era. It explores the relationship between two high school students and one of their teachers. Thami, a black South African student and Isabel, a white South African student of Afrikaaner descent, attend different high schools. They come into contact, though, because each has been chosen to take part in a literary competition, a competition that tests their respective knowledges of English literature.

Mr. M is their coach. He is a black South African and is a teacher of English at Thami's school. Although he is a black South African teaching in an all-black school, he helps to coach an extracurricular literary competition in which the teams are comprised of both blacks and whites. Thus, although Thami is Mr. M's student in an all-black school while Isabel attends an all-white school, Mr. M coaches both Thami and Isabel after school hours as they prepare together for the competition. Isabel ventures into a black neighborhood where she has never been before in order to take advantage of Mr. M's coaching.

The play is set in the late 1980s when there is considerable student resistance, in schools and on the streets, against the Apartheid government. It is this militant anti-Apartheid unrest that serves as a political backdrop for the play. Although the play starts out during a time when students are attending school regularly, as the play progresses, students have begun to show their resistance by boycotting the black high school where Thami attends and where Mr. M teaches. They are refusing to attend school in order to force reform in the Apartheid system. By the end of the play, Mr. M, being himself opposed to the boycott, gives names of some of the boycotting students to the police. Mr. M, the teacher, becomes Mr. M the informer. He is denounced as such by the boycotting students. Toward the end of the play, he is killed by an angry mob because of his status as an informer. This happens in spite of Thami's efforts to make a public apology in his name. Let this suffice as an introduction to the play. In what follows, I want to use some of the words of the characters in this play to investigate the relation between students and textual authority.

To get at this relation, let us first examine the textual authority of the teacher in Fugard's play, Mr. M. In particular we can look at the way he stands as a supplement in relation to the English literature that he teaches and that forms the basis for his coaching of Thami and

Isabel. As the play unfolds, we learn about Mr. M's unwavering love of the texts he teaches. In the terms I have presented in this book, we learn that he has become part and parcel of the texts he teaches. He and they have entered a supplemental relation. For example, as play proceeds Mr. M reveals to us that his entry into the teaching profession is marked not only by a desire to teach young people, but more importantly by a desire to supplement the experiences of his own life with the experiences that he reads about in books. He has decided to enter the teaching profession because he believes that a lifelong apprenticeship to books will serve him better than any other sort of career might do. He decides to follow a career of teaching because he believes that a career of reading will, in fact, change him for good.

Mr. M's decision to take up a career of books is described as follows. I quote at length Fugard's beautiful rendering of this decision:

This was my home, my life, my one and only ambition . . . to be a good teacher!. . . That ambition goes back to when [I] was just a skinny little ten-year-old pissing on a small gray bush at the top of the Wapasberg Pass. . . .

I went to the teacher who was with us and asked him: "Teacher, where will I come to if I start walking that way?" . . . and I pointed. He laughed. "Little man," he said, "that way is north. If you start walking that way and just keep walking, and your legs don't give in, you will see all of Africa! Yes, Africa little man! You will see the great rivers of the continent: the Vaal, the Zambesi, the Limpopo, the Congo and then the mighty Nile. You will see the mountains: the Drakensberg, Kilimanjaro, Kenya and the Ruwenzori. And you will meet all our brothers: the little Pygmies of the forests, the proud Masai, the Watusi . . . tallest of the tall and the Kikuyu standing on one leg like herons in a point waiting for a frog." "Has teacher seen all that?" I asked. "No," he said. "Then how does teacher know it's there?" "Because it is all in the books and I have read the books and if you work hard in school little man, you can do the same without worrying about your legs giving in."

He was right Thami. *I* have seen it. It is all there in the books just as he said it was and I have made it mine.¹⁴

In this moving passage, Mr. M tells of the ways that books have become part of his very life. By choosing teaching as a career, he has had the chance to go on the very same journeys of the mind that his former teacher had been able to go on. Importantly, his choice to become

a teacher was made precisely because being a teacher would require a rigorous assimilation of books. He knew early on that becoming engrossed in books would change his life, that such a textual profession would take him places both literally and metaphorically. Mr. M is indeed a dedicated teacher. He follows through with this teacherly ambition to let books change his life. Having been a teacher for decades, he is now able to say, in a very supplementary way, “It is all there in the books just as he said it was and I have made it mine.”¹⁵ Mr. M has let the teacherly reading of books supplement his life experience. He and the books he has read are now intertwined.

The books that Mr. M has read also supplement his life experience in a particularly political way. During this time of political upheaval and student resistance in the South African townships, he has clung to the notion that learning itself will set the stage for political change in a way that no other political activities will be able to do. He maintains that the words used by those in the South African freedom movement are very weak compared to the articulate political phrases that a well-educated person can construct. Says Mr. M:

Slogans don’t need much in the way of grammar do they. . . .
 [Picks up his dictionary. *The stone in one hand, the book in the other*] You know something interesting, Thami . . . if you put these two on a scale I think you would find that they weighed just about the same. But in this hand I am holding the whole English language. This . . . [*the stone*] is just *one* word in that language. It’s true! All that wonderful poetry that you and Isabel tried to cram into your beautiful heads . . . in here!¹⁶

Weighing the stone and the dictionary together, Mr. M demonstrates that even his political strategies are supplemented by, are shaped by, the books that he values so much. His strategy for changing the South African political system is tied to the books that he has taught, and learned from, over the course of his teaching. For Mr. M, these books, and the articulate language they represent, are linked not only to his authority as a teacher but to the authority that he claims to have about how politics should be conducted. The educational authority of Mr. M’s texts has gotten under his skin even when it comes to politics.

Mr. M’s relation to his texts is quintessentially “traditional” if the traditional orientation toward texts can be said to entail a fairly blind faith that canonical texts carry the moral weight to change things for the better in this world. It is also a traditional orientation in the sense that this teacher assumes it to be his role to pass down the wisdom of

these canonical texts, to “stay close” to his texts as I have described earlier. Indeed, Mr. M has good reason to stay close to his texts. He has been a successful teacher who has “seen” the great rivers and mountains of Africa, who has made them his own as a result of the texts to which he has been devoted. This experience alone is proof enough, at least for Mr. M, that texts carry a moral weight to change people’s lives for the better. And, when it comes to political change, Mr. M’s belief in the power of texts seems to have borne fruit as well. For, by coaching Thami and Isabel, a black student and a white student, together, Mr. M has successfully caused the color line of Apartheid to be crossed. His coaching of Thami and Isabel, and their surprising friendship in spite of Apartheid laws, proves Mr. M’s position: that social change can be effected when people of different races use literary texts as a common ground for gathering.

At least at the personal level, and in one small instance of the political arena, it must be admitted that Mr. M and his texts have, together, created the circumstances for moral change in the world. They have enriched Mr. M’s life and they have enabled a subversive engagement between a black and a white student to occur in spite of a fascist Apartheid regime. With the aid of Mr. M and his favorites—Coleridge, Wordsworth, Byron, Keats, Arnold, Shelley—Thami and Isabel forge a close friendship during a time when their paths might otherwise not cross at all. It might be said, from the two versions of textual authority that we looked at earlier, that Mr. M has been admirably authoritative (rather than authoritarian) and that the educational texts he has been involved with have been a true supplement to his life. Mr. M holds a traditional reverence for his texts, one that keeps texts close at hand. And, his supplementary relation to his texts has benefited both himself and his students.

LESSONS FROM ATHOL FUGARD

However, from the perspective of Thami, Mr. M’s prize student, the supplementary relationship between teacher and text looks quite different. Indeed, Fugard’s entire play hinges upon Thami’s *relation* to Mr. M’s text-driven authority. For, Thami’s relation to Mr. M’s text-driven authority cannot be extricated from the authority of the great number young black students (and young black *former* students who have already quit school), people who, like Thami, want a different version of authority than Mr. M has in mind. Thami does not have a straightforward respect for the textual authority of his teacher. Thami knows that Mr. M’s textual authority does not have power to change society. He knows that Mr. M’s moral stance is in conflict with the political action

needed to change a country steeped in racist laws. Mr. M himself describes this conflict:

Respect for authority, right authority, is deeply ingrained in the African soul. It's all I've got when I stand there in Number One [his classroom]. Respect for my authority is my only teaching aid. If I ever lost it those young people will abandon their desks and take to the streets.¹⁷

Thami is one of those young people who will take to the streets.

From Thami's perspective, the authority of Mr. M does not stand alone; it stands in competition with the authority of those students who decide to take to the streets. From Thami's perspective, there is a choice to make about *which* authority he will enter into a relation with. As the play progresses, Thami's political place in the anti-Apartheid struggle becomes more firmly affixed "to the streets." Mr. M's literary knowledge, his supplementary relation to the texts he teaches, is discarded by Thami in favor of more pressing political commitments. Speaking of Mr. M, Thami says that "[h]is ideas about change are the old-fashioned ones. And what have they achieved? Nothing. We are worse off now than we ever were. The people don't want to listen to his kind of talk anymore."¹⁸ In Thami's eyes, the "old fashioned" quality of his teacher's authority undermines its more positive potential. Thami is faced with the textual authority of his teacher and the political authority of his comrades. He chooses to authorize the latter rather than the former. This, in spite of the benevolent, textual authority of Mr. M, authority which, as we have seen, does change lives for the better, at least on some small scale.

Let us draw a few insights from Fugard's play. First, the relation of the student to the authority of the teacher/text does not only depend upon the sincerity of a teacher's engagement with the text. Indeed, Mr. M is sincere to the core about his teaching, about his love for literature, about the potential for literature to actually *create* experience and opportunity. Mr. M has concrete experience from his own life that literature can make one's life more worth living. Because of his own life experience, he assumes that he can change his student's life for the better in the same way. He is sure of this fact:

He is my favorite. Thami Mbikwana! Yes, I have waited a long time for him. To tell you the truth I had given up all hope of him ever coming along. Any teacher who takes his calling seriously dreams about that one special pupil, that one eager and gifted young head into which he can pour all