Symbolic Capital and the State's Unconventional Weapon Against Insurgent Terrorism: Howard Barker's *Credentials of a Sympathizer*

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Abstract. *Due to the power differentials between insurgent terrorists and the state, the former typically challenge the latter's authority, that is, its legitimacy, rather than its military power. Since terrorists and the state compete for the claim to justice and rightfulness, it is not surprising that many of their fights are carried out through language. At the center of Howard Barker's* Credentials of a Sympathizer *is the quarrel between the British government and the Irish Republican Army over the status of the IRA captives as "criminals" or "political prisoners." My paper examines how the IRA's authority has been hijacked even before the language battle can begin. By mobilizing a range of "symbolic capital" such as upper-class manners and language, and by manipulating the complex meanings and connotations attached to different cultural artifacts, the British negotiator Gildersleeve sets up the British as civilized and refined, in contrast to their "violent and low-bred" adversary. By setting up the conference room as a space for "civilized" talks, and by aestheticizing their politics, the British manage to assert social authority, which is then subtly translated into political domination. The British and the IRA, in other words, are both actors consciously staging a show for a world audience. The British do so with their "upper-class" posture, the IRA with terrorism, dirty protest, and hunger strikes.*

Keywords: *terrorism*, *IRA*, *legitimacy*, *recognition*, *master/slave*, *symbolic capital*, *violence*, *unconventional weapons*, *propaganda*, *aestheticization of politics*, *power politics*, *Pierre Bourdieu*, *Howard Barker*, *style*, *taste*

Lacking sufficient military power to topple the state on their own, terrorists have to either coerce or inspire public support for their cause. This is why

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terrorism and counterterrorism usually go hand in hand with propagandistic war. Since insurgent terrorists and the state compete with each other for the claim to justice and rightfulness, it is not surprising that many of their struggles pertain to symbols of authority. Given that terrorists and the state each try to claim exclusive legitimacy, winning on the symbolic level is more important than a purely military victory.

It is precisely on the symbolic level that the British government attempts to defeat the IRA in Howard Barker's *Credentials of a Sympathizer*.[1] Given that terrorists have to rely on public support, if the British succeed in making the IRA appear disreputable and ridiculous from the start, the latter's cause would be doomed without further ado. This is what goes on in *Credentials*. The play does not feature any physical violence on stage. Rather, looming large in the play is the invisible but heavy-handed symbolic violence inflicted by the British negotiator Gildersleeve on the IRA representatives. By skillfully manipulating a range of social symbols—by effecting a subtle equivalence between upper-class social style and political authority—Gildersleeve seeks to hijack the IRA's credibility, respectability, and even self-esteem and confidence. By mobilizing a range of "symbolic capital" such as upper-class manners and language, and by manipulating the complex meanings and connotations attached to different cultural artifacts, Gildersleeve sets up the British as the "civilized" and "refined" party in contrast to their violent and "low-bred" adversary. Gildersleeve's careful stage-managing of the conference room enables him to assert social authority that provides the capital for political domination. The objective of my paper is to examine the British negotiator's pernicious *aestheticization of politics*: how, through meticulous engineering of his symbolic capital, he attempts to strip the IRA's credibility and confidence even before the negotiation can begin. In doing so, I will go beyond the common argument that associates terrorism with unconventional weapons. It is my contention that the state can mobilize its own form of unconventional weapons against insurgent terrorists—the kind of unconventional weapons that aim at neutralizing insurgent terrorists' endeavor to gain public support and their ability to instil fear and panic by making them appear low-bred, irrational, absurd, and stupid.

Just as terrorists can use "surprise weapons" such as an airplane for a bomb, the state can mobilize what appear to be the most conventional practices—that is, bourgeois manners and language—as their unconventional weapons to overpower their adversary. If terrorists are known for

secret weapons that take people by surprise, the unconventional weapons used by the British in *Credentials of a Sympathizer* are even more secretive in that they can go totally unnoticed even after their "detonation"—unnoticed because they are conventional and apparently peaceful means that nonetheless hide a coercive and oppressive agenda. To demonstrate how the British negotiator corners his adversaries by means of opaque power relations—that is, by exercising domination in relations and spheres of life commonly thought to lie outside of the arenas of power and politics—I will draw from Pierre Bourdieu's analysis of symbolic capital and symbolic violence. Bourdieu's writings suggest a correspondence between the "symbolic violence" of pedagogical practices and the state's monopoly on the "legitimate" use of physical violence. In this paper, I will demonstrate a link between the symbolic violence mobilized by the state via its cultural and social capital, and the state's ownership of material force. The state's material infrastructure contributes to its accumulation of symbolic capital, and its symbolic capital lends credence and legitimacy to its military power.

I. CULTURE, SYMBOLIC POWER, AND SYMBOLIC VIOLENCE

> There is no symbolic power without the symbolism of power.
> —Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*[2]

In *Credentials of a Sympathizer*, the IRA representative Tully observes of his British counterpart Gildersleeve: "His style . . . his style is all of him" (74). After the first round of negotiation, Gildersleeve concludes that "It's our self-assurance niggles him [Tully]. Gnaws his prestige. We have this style. This famous style all the great dictators have remarked upon. He has nothing but his exhibitionism to pit against our polish and stability . . . ." (82). While insurgent terrorists typically emphasize issues of right and wrong in their symbolic battles and propagandistic wars against the state, in Barker's play, Gildersleeve understands that gaining the upper hand in the symbolic field does not depend so much on one's moral assets—that is, whether one is right or wrong—as on skilful engineering of symbols to *present* oneself to be in the position of authority and legitimacy. The decisive factor in a battle for legitimacy, Gildersleeve believes, is style rather than substance.

I will now demonstrate how Gildersleeve manipulates a range of social symbols to establish the British's "social superiority" in order to justify the British redefinition of IRA captives as "criminals" rather than "political prisoners."

In order to gainsay the IRA in public opinion, the British representative focuses on making his side appear respectable, socially superior, and thus more creditable than the IRA. The British already have superior military power. What they need now is the public's recognition of their authority and the legitimacy of their stance against their adversary. To gain such recognition, the British must present themselves as having the "moral" upper hand instead of being brute oppressors of their opponent. Gildersleeve thus orders all weapons to be hidden out of sight: "I won't have firearms visible" (68). The conference is designed in every way to present the British as civil and reasonable, while the IRA is deliberately framed as violent, perverse, low-class, stupid, and downright contemptible. By replacing visible force with symbolic manipulations, Gildersleeve manages to exercise inconspicuous forms of violence, domination, denigration, and exclusion that would present the IRA as unruly and low-bred in contrast to the "civilized" British. This way, the British undermine the IRA's credibility and moral authority even before the real negotiation can begin.

Gildersleeve prides himself on the real tactical efficacy of style with unshakable and unsettling self-assurance. He reflects that the Republican "has nothing but his exhibitionism to pit against our polish and stability" (82). As David Rabey points out, "the British government's annexing of sharply decorous dress implicitly drives the Republicans into a counter-uniform, 'The raggedness of phoney populism' (78)."[3] Gildersleeve capitalizes on a phenomenon well captured by Bourdieu's statement that "[c]ulture is the ultimate fetish." Cultural preferences mark one's class background, "breeding," and social standing. As such, culture can be mobilized as a tool of domination. As G. K. Chesterton puts it, "Good taste, the last and vilest of human superstitions, has succeeded in silencing us where all the rest have failed." Bourdieu elaborates a similar insight as follows:

> Taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier. Social subjects, classified by their classifications, distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make, between the beautiful and the ugly, the distinguished and the vulgar, in which their position in the objective classifications is expressed or betrayed.[4]

Gildersleeve securely believes, and correctly observes, that style denotes authority. Just as he fondly recalls the efficiency of an immaculately groomed ticket inspector enforcing a no-smoking railway regulation in contrast to a semi-apologetic "slovenly" guard, he looks forward to attending negotiations "[a]ppearing like star actors from our dressing rooms. And them all creased and sweaty from their car." This sense of "star actor" capabilities is associated in *Credentials* with successful, distinctly English (self-)perception and the stage-management of events to further government interests. The social superiority of the British is communicated through Gildersleeve's management of the conference room like a theater on which he stages a light and sound show of the superior British taste, style, and manners.

A. The Visual Effects—Dress Code

How does the dominating group assert its authority over the dominated?—through style. "Style" is originally a lexicon pertaining to aesthetics. However, in shifting attention away from content to form, from quantity to quality, the cultivation of style necessarily means the cultivation of the feeling of distinction or distance from the crude necessity characterizing the life of the underclass. Take, for example, the style involved in food preparation and consumption. As Bourdieu points out,

> The antithesis between quantity and quality, substance and form, corresponds to the opposition—linked to different distances from necessity—between the taste of necessity, which favors the most "filling" and most economical foods, and the taste of liberty—or luxury—which shifts the emphasis to the manner (of presenting, serving, eating etc.) and tends to *use stylized forms to deny function*.[5]

Due to its distance from the necessities of life, style tends to be removed from the social class most plagued by concerns for basic survival and making ends meet. Style thus comes to be associated with social superiority that can easily be mobilized as an instrument of political domination. This is precisely what Gildersleeve does. By seizing upon and transforming aesthetic engineering into political engineering, *Gildersleeve actively transforms the politics of aesthetics—that is, the politics of style—into an aestheticization of politics*. Style is the means through which Gildersleeve gains superiority in the symbolic system—a superiority that he tries to impose on the IRA.

Almost from the beginning, Tully is overtaken by Gildersleeve's smart dressing style, to the extent that Tully forgets his urgent political mission and is lost in admiration for his opponent's attire:

> TULLY (*taking in* GILDERSLEEVE): His suit. A most attractive suit that is. Cut by London tailors. I have heard Jomo Kenyatta buys in Saville Row. The badge, that is. Like picking up a crown. (*Pause*.) I am not averse to a decent suit myself. Look at De Valéra. He had an eye for gear, the old man did. And General Grivas. I have seen him in a bit of decent cloth. They don't have the monopoly of good taste. (78)

Here, it can be seen that style carries even more authority than political convictions, to the extent that Tully, far from finding his opponent objectionable, has become a willing slave to the ideology of the dominant such that he covets a "decent" suit himself. What is shown here, as Bourdieu observes in *Distinction*, is that the dominated often actively contributes to his domination by unconsciously reproducing the structure that enslaves him. Even as Tully appears to be challenging the British's right to "monopolize good taste," his mindset is already monopolized by the British taste in the first place. To adopt Bourdieu's analysis of symbolic violence, the British negotiator's symbolic domination of the IRA representative is so successful that Tully is colonized all the way down to "the obscurity of the dispositions of his habitus"—that is, his schemes of perception and appreciation, which are embedded in the habitus from "below the level of the decisions of the conscious mind and the controls of the will."[6] This is what Bourdieu and Wacquant mean when they point out how symbolic violence

> *is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity*. . . . What this means is that people come to experience systems of meaning (culture) as legitimate; there is a process of misunderstanding or misrecognition of what is really going on. . . . A key part of this process is the transformation of people's cultural habits or economic positions into symbolic capital that has legitimacy and is seen as real (167).

For Bourdieu, the legitimation of cultural capital is crucial to its effectiveness as a source of power. While "good taste" in attire helps reinforce the symbolic power of the British above the IRA, the latter's lack of symbolic capital is a further blow to Tully's self-confidence and even his sense of the

legitimacy of the IRA's cause. Interestingly enough, the establishment of the master/slave hierarchy requires no physical nor even a verbal combat in this particular instance. Given the dominated's subscription to the dominant ideology, looks (*les regards*) by themselves are enough to affirm who is the master and who is the slave. As is shown in the play, the slave *watches* the master in awe and admiration. Spellbound by Gildersleeve's smart outfit, Tully upholds Gildersleeve as his ego ideal to which he aspires. Thus Tully engages in an imagined conversation with the master as the former eyes the latter's stylish attire in fascination: "With the passing of time, could I end up like you, mister? When I'm *legitimate*, will I have your little grins?" (77; my italics). At first glance, the term "legitimate" here is a mere reference to the legal and political status of the IRA. However, legitimacy depends heavily on subjective recognition[7]—on whether a given subject is willing to accept a certain authority that postures itself as such. Given that the struggle between the state and insurgent terrorism is primarily a contention for legitimacy, the fact that Tully is so overpowered by the spectacle of Gildersleeve's upper-class dressing style as to subconsciously surrender himself to the British's definition of legitimacy is a telling proof of the efficacy of symbolic domination—the rebel can be so overcome by the grand spectacle of the master as to turn over legitimacy to the one who subjects him. Symbolic domination is thus more effective, more thorough, and invisible than physical coercion in that the subjected internalizes his own subjection.[8]

Barker tells us that "[e]veryone studies street maps except TULLY who watches GILDERSLEEVE" (77). While *looks* of admiration from the slave are enough to set up the master as master, *looks* of contempt from the master are also enough to reduce the slave to further slavehood. As much as Tully *looks up* to Gildersleeve's smart attire, Gildersleeve *looks down* on the IRA negotiators' "counter-uniform":

> GILDERSLEEVE (*looking back at* TULLY). Why are they so shabby? Is it a sort of uniform I wonder.
> TULLY: I am not to be looked at with that headmaster's look. I am not a specimen.
> GILDERSLEEVE. The raggedness of phoney populism . . . (78)

Without even so much as a word of exchange, Tully is reduced by Gildersleeve's *look* to defensiveness.

B. The Audio Effects—Discursive Style

There is a long tradition in the West from Socrates to Habermas associating language with reason (*logos*), in contrast to sight, which is at the mercy of sensory deceptions and distractions. Such logocentrism overlooks the fact that language is a primary means for establishing relations between human beings—including power relations. As Bourdieu points out, linguistic exchanges "are also relations of symbolic power in which the power relations between speakers or their respective groups are actualized."[9]

Linguistic struggles for power can take two forms: by the use of direct forceful language such as cursing, and by means of deliberately polished, formal, and stylized language to assert one's class superiority. The latter can prove to be even more effective in its power to coerce and bully, such as the sophisticated use of covert insults and veiled threats. Language, no less than dressing style, can be a means of distinction—a distinction that can be easily transformed into an instrument of domination and violence.[10] Speakers deprived of the dominant linguistic capital can get brutalized. The linguistic exchanges between the British and the IRA negotiators are a case in point. By analyzing the ways in which language is used, the social relations of the speakers, the forms of speech, the setting of speech and the style of speech, I will demonstrate how, as Bourdieu puts it, "relations of communication are always, inseparably, power relations. . . ."[11] Keith Topper correctly identifies how, for Bourdieu, symbolic power functions as a structuring and structured instrument of communication and knowledge in social fields: "Through various forms of linguistic-bodily discipline, individual agents develop what Bourdieu calls an integrated 'articulatory style' which reveals their class position, social position, and at times more specific identities."[12]

The domination of upper-class over lower-class articulatory style can be seen in the ways Gildersleeve asserts "authority" and easily defeats Tully in their exchange of insults. Gildersleeve understands too well that the political is dependent on the social, and that, given that the struggle between the British and the IRA is largely a struggle for public recognition of legitimacy, victory depends largely on the credit accorded to either side by the general public. For this reason, Gildersleeve takes great pains in stage-managing his manners and the manners of his IRA counterparts. In response to the IRA delegates' attempt to force him to accept their proposals, Gildersleeve "cordially" *demands* respect in "dignified" language: "The British government is not accustomed

to *carte blanche* acceptance of demands made upon it by unrepresentative authorities! I came here with a mandate for negotiation and negotiation is what I am prepared to do. I am not to be shouted at. I am not a target for your abuse" (76). To adopt Bourdieu's own words, one can say that Gildersleeve signifies to his interlocutor what he is by "acting in keeping with his social and cultural superiority and refusing to demean oneself."[13]

By contrast, Tully's ignorance about the skills of manipulating the symbolic order dooms him to defeat almost right from the start in his exchange of insults with Gildersleeve. Tully naively thinks that raw and virile verbal aggressions are the way to gain verbal supremacy. For this reason, he initiates the exchange of insults by trying to cower Gildersleeve with forceful swear words, only to suffer a total backlash when Gildersleeve uses Tully's own insulting metaphor against himself, albeit with a polished playfulness that asserts Gildersleeve's upper-class style and social superiority:

TULLY: The matter is, we are not here as some species of wild dog, mister. If you find us so distasteful, as I sense from your manner, then fuck off.

GILDERSLEEVE: Really, I had no idea I was behaving as if in the presence of wild dogs. I can assure you none of us has a muzzle concealed about his person.

GLAZING *roars with laughter*. GILDERSLEEVE *is gratified*.

TULLY (*On his feet*): Your manner! Your manner is!

Pause. GLAZING *recovers*.

GILDERSLEEVE: If I may take this opportunity of offering you—a bone—to prolong your metaphor—

TULLY: Oh, sit down!

GILDERSLEEVE: I am carrying out these preliminary talks in a manner totally unprejudiced I hope, by any private feelings of distaste.

TULLY: You are prejudiced.

GILDERSLEEVE: I do not think so.

. . .

TULLY: You have said your private feelings were of distaste.

GILDERSLEEVE: I have said I am not prejudiced by them.

TULLY: Well, from here it looks as if you are.

GILDERSLEEVE: I cannot help the distorted view from your seat.

. . .

TULLY: I went too far. They have that manner. They cannot help that manner. They were born with it. (78–79)

Note that, even as Tully begins by using foul language to rebel against the British upper-class parameters that Gildersleeve affects and tries to impose, Tully cannot help making references to "taste" and "manner," and his entrapment by these paradigms of cultural authority and social superiority dooms him from the start. The moment Tully says "If you find us so dis*taste*ful, as I sense from your *manner*, . . ." (my italics), he shows himself to be trapped by the dominant paradigms and that vulnerability of his allows Gildersleeve to immediately undermine his authority. The foul language Tully uses get capitalized upon by Gildersleeve as proof of Tully's performative contradictions: that is, contrary to Tully's assertion, his bad manners prove that the IRA is indeed a group of "wild dogs." Tully's metaphor thus backfires on him through Gildersleeve's linguistic manipulation. Lacking the linguistic capital for a smart response, Tully gasps helplessly, "Your manner! Your manner is!" Upon which Gildersleeve pushes his polished insult even more relentlessly by further "prolonging [Tully's] metaphor": "If I may take this opportunity of offering you—a bone—to prolong your metaphor—." In no time, Tully is reduced from his macho swearing to utter linguistic impotency. Note how Tully is reduced from brute aggressivity ("fuck off ") to inarticulation ("Your manner! Your manner is!") to well nigh acknowledgement of defeat ("I went too far. They have that manner. They cannot help that manner. They were born with it.") As Bourdieu points out, "Speakers lacking the legitimate competence are *de facto* excluded from the social domains in which this competence is required, or are condemned to silence." Such exclusion establishes those with the competency as socially superior. To quote Bourdieu again, Gildersleeve possesses "the competency necessary in order to speak the legitimate language which, depending on social inheritance, re-translates social distinctions into the specifically symbolic logic of differential deviations, or, in short, distinction."[14]

Gildersleeve does not hesitate to use this misrecognized superiority to tyrannize Tully's psyche, depriving the latter of his self-esteem and even belief in the legitimacy of his own cause. A skilled rhetorician, Gildersleeve hides in his rhetoric of professionalism and objectivity a deliberate move to draw attention to his contempt for the IRA's "low class" style: "I am carrying out these preliminary talks in a manner totally unprejudiced I hope, by any private feelings of distaste," Gildersleeve declares. Instead of trying to attack right away the IRA's moral authority, Gildersleeve begins by first undermining the IRA representatives at their most vulnerable—that is, their "inadequacies"

according to the dominant paradigms of taste and style. True enough, the IRA negotiators remain adamant about their righteousness, but they are much less prepared than the British to put up an upper-class front. Attacking the IRA representatives for social inferiority, Gildersleeve thinks, is the first and easiest step to undermine their self-esteem and confidence, after which it would be much easier to strip them of their belief in their own moral authority and legitimacy. Indeed, Gildersleeve proves to be right in his assessment of the situation—that is, as far as the chief IRA negotiator Tully is concerned.

Tully correctly interprets that Gildersleeve is trying to impress upon him the IRA's social inferiority ("distaste") when conducting the political negotiations. However, his objection to Gildersleeve's "prejudice" is immediately seized by Gildersleeve as another opportunity for abuse: Gildersleeve does not stop at exploiting Tully's social inferiority; he further assaults his sense of self-esteem by claiming that Tully was *born* into his low "seat": "I cannot help the distorted view from your seat," says Gildersleeve (79). Tully is so thoroughly humiliated by Gildersleeve's "upper-class" linguistic capital that he comes to blame himself for his defeat instead of imputing any blemish to his Big Other Gildersleeve: "I went too far. They have that manner. They cannot help that manner. They were born with it" (79). As much as Gildersleeve implies that Tully was born inferior, Tully accepts that Gildersleeve and his kind were "born" superior to himself and his comrades. The ideology of "noble manners" as the properties of noble birth is taken for granted by Tully. As Bourdieu observes,

> by a kind of paradoxical repetition, which is one of the standard effects of symbolic domination, the dominated speakers themselves, or at least certain groups among them, may apply to their own social universe principles of division (such as strong/weak, submissive; intelligent/sensitive, sensual; hard/soft, supple; straight, frank/bent, cunning, false, etc.) which reproduce within their order the fundamental structure of the system of dominant opposition pertaining to language.[15]

This way, forms of social misrecognition quietly (re-)produce, sustain, and legitimate patterns of domination even among those who have no conscious desire to do so.

Thoroughly accepting Gildersleeve's authority as his social superior, Tully sees himself as being in the wrong: "I shall have to patch it." His comrade Ducker, however, is correct in his intuition that what is at stake in

this verbal combat is self-esteem, and he correctly insists that Tully should uphold the IRA's dignity: "Don't crawl. Patch it, but don't crawl" (80). Likewise on the British side, Amber also senses that class superiority is their secret weapon, hence his remark to Gildersleeve: "The thing is not to sink to their level" (80).

C. Eating Habits

In addition to asserting social superiority through his distinctive style of dressing and articulation, Gildersleeve also tries to put down his IRA counterparts by trying to seduce them into a display of lower-class eating habits and manners. He orders refreshments to be served at the conference but instructs his staff to refrain from eating: "I shan't be picking at refreshments. In fact I think we might all abstain from biscuits. Let them [the IRA] pick. It's good psychology" (69).

By calling forth the IRA representatives' appetite with enticing refreshments, what Gildersleeve wants to achieve is to make his IRA counterparts internalize an image of themselves as a bunch of starving, uncivilized fugitives—a pack of *criminals* on the run from the law. The refreshments are served with the purpose of making the IRA representatives *experience* their bodies as similar to those of escaped convicts—an identity that the British government seeks to impose on the IRA and that the latter adamantly refuses.

Gildersleeve's stage management spotlighting the differences between the eating habits of the British and the IRA is continuous with his staging of the contrast between the two groups' dress codes and articulatory styles. In eating habits as in other cultural habits, the upper class distinguishes itself with its distance from the necessities of life. As Bourdieu points out, in contrast to the lower class, which focus solely on the functional aspects of food, clothing, and language, the bourgeoisie goes for aesthetics and for "the stylization of life"—that is, "the primacy of forms over function, of manner over matter."[16] In Kantian vocabulary, the bourgeoisie distinguishes itself with "disinterestedness"—that is, indifference to the utility values of objects they come into contact with—an attitude they extend even to food, which is normally regarded as one of the basic necessities of life:

> And statistical analysis does indeed show that oppositions similar in structure to those found in cultural practices also appear in eating habits. The antithesis

> between quantity and quality, substance and form, corresponds to the opposition—linked to different distances from necessity—between the taste of necessity, which favors the most "filling" and most economical foods, and the taste of liberty—or luxury—which shifts the emphasis to the manner (of presenting, serving, eating etc.) and tends to use stylized forms to deny function.[17]

In eating as well as in other cultural practices, society differentiates the "taste of luxury" from the "taste of necessity." The luxurious tastes of the middle and upper classes, when it comes to both art and food, place the emphasis on form over function. While eating, they exhibit a meticulous and pedantic concern for display and etiquette that is "first of all a matter of rhythm, which implies expectations, pauses, restraints; waiting until the last person served has started to eat, taking modest helpings, not appearing over-eager" (196). These elaborate rituals are defined by their distance from the working class's "tastes of necessity," which display a preference for function over form—"for filling, economical, and labour-saving foods." By insisting on not picking at the refreshments—a practice Gildersleeve is trying to seduce the IRA negotiators to engage in—Gildersleeve attempts to frame the "desperation" of the IRA "fugitives" against the British's aloofness from the necessities of life. Underlying all these, of course, is an implied but strongly felt statement as to whom credibility, authority, and legitimacy should belong.

Gildersleeve's arrangement of the refreshments, in other words, is a move calculated to degrade the IRA representatives by making them look like a hungry, barbaric horde acting out of desperation and animalistic needs.[18] Tully, however, understands the social implications and politics of eating in such a context. Before the IRA negotiators enter the conference room, he gives a set of instructions to his comrades similar to those Gildersleeve gives to his subordinates: "Should there be refreshments, gentlemen, just take the tea. Don't peck. We're not after charity" (72). Thus, Gildersleeve's strategy is foiled. Gildersleeve "looks at the full pastry trays" and says in a disappointed tone: "Not a bit. Not one of them has taken a bite" (87).[19]

Credentials of a Sympathizer was first performed on the radio in 1979. The play in hindsight reads like a prelude to the IRA hunger strike leading to ten men dead in 1981. In Kantian terms, the IRA hunger strike asserts the IRA's moral freedom against the enslavement by necessity that Gildersleeve tries to stage-manage the IRA representatives into instantiating.[20]

II. THE BACKLASH OF STYLE

As far as competing for the claim to authority, the IRA representatives are no match for Gildersleeve's skills at manipulating the symbolic order to undermine his opponents' respectability and self-esteem. As David Rabey observes, "Gildersleeve uses language and boardroom tactics with forceful precision, counting the dials, levers, buttons and knobs of his discourse like a pilot in his cockpit, living out his fantasies and impulses of control" (64). Rabey further points out how one character [Gildersleeve] has control of all the threads of power, thus retaining mastery of events" (65). However, Gildersleeve is the master only so long as the IRA negotiators stay inside the conference room, where Gildersleeve sets all the rules of the game. The moment the IRA delegates refuse to play along with Gildersleeve's games of taste and style, Gildersleeve falls from complete mastery to absolute impotency.

Lacking Gildersleeve's symbolic capital, the IRA is bound to lose so long as its members have to stay within the rules of his game. The British negotiators' heavy-handed deployment of their linguistic weapons is perceived by the IRA as yet another instance of British bullying. Already feeling imposed upon by British military might, the IRA negotiators now feel that they are even further deprived of their dignity by Gildersleeve's deliberate putdown of the IRA through his orchestration of British superiority in manners and language. As Bourdieu points out, the dominated's speech lacks the legitimacy and authority to accomplish its goals. By contrast, those with power can effectively accomplish what they want in speech, and impose their form, styles, and modes of expression upon others with their authority.[21] In other words, the speech of the dominant group carries the "magical" dimension of being *performative*, whereas the speech of the dominated remains ineffectual and hence *meaningless*. This is how the dominated feel being belittled. As Keith Topper points out, "symbolic violence shares with ordinary usage an accent on relations of domination and subordination, and on modes of domination or the breaching of human dignity, but in ways that do not issue from overt physical force" (47). By avoiding "overt physical force" and resorting instead to "civilized" ways of imposing themselves, Gildersleeve tries to present the British as the civilized party under the attack of the uncivilized IRA. This amounts to adding insult to injury for the IRA, for which reason the IRA rebels against Gildersleeve's "bourgeois theater."

Refusing to be trapped by the language game set up and monopolized by the British,[22] the IRA members walk out of the conference room and revert to using violence—that is, terrorism—to make their point. Their language having been trivialized, and their attempt to get the content of their message across having been hijacked by the British's shift of the focus to style, the IRA members resort to violence instead to make their statement. Gildersleeve has symbolic "capital," but such symbolic capital has efficacy only when speech is recognized as legitimate and worthy of attention. As Bourdieu states, "A speaker's linguistic strategies . . . are oriented . . . not so much by the chances of being understood or misunderstood . . . , but rather by the chances of being listened to, believed, obeyed."[23] However, symbolic power has to be

> defined in and through a given relation between those who exercise power and those who submit to it, i.e., in the very structure of the field in which belief is produced and reproduced. What creates the power of words is the belief in the legitimacy of words and of those who utter them.[24]

When the IRA members refuse to recognize and "submit to" British authority—that is, when they refuse to "belie[ve] in the legitimacy of words and of those who utter them," the force exerted by Gildersleeve's symbolic capital crumbles into nothingness. Without the colonized's recognition, Gildersleeve's language no longer carries any *magical* performative dimension. Indeed, the secret of symbolic power depends on its fetishization. As Bourdieu points out, symbolic power is based on the attribution of "magical powers" by the dominated to the dominating:

> Symbolic power is a power which the person submitting to *grants* to the person who exercises it, a credit with which he credits him, a *fides*, an *auctoritas*, with which he entrusts him by placing his trust in him. It is a power which exists because the person who submits to it believes that it exists. *Credo*, says "Benveniste, is *literally* 'to place one's *kred*,' that is 'magical powers,' in a person from whom one expects protection thanks to 'believing' in him" (Benveniste, *Indo-European Language and Society*, 99). The *kred*, the credit, the charisma, that "*je ne sais quoi*" with which one keeps hold over those from whom one holds it, is this product of the *credo*, of belief, of obedience, which seems to produce the *credo*, the belief, the obedience.[25]

What Gildersleeve is really interested in is not working out the terms and conditions with the IRA envoys, but belittling them as a low-bred and bloodthirsty group. Frustrated by their being under *fire* on all sides in the supposedly "cease*fire*" talk, and feeling further bullied in the symbolic order whose rules are controlled and manipulated by the British, the IRA members decide to quit the game with the British and revert to using physical violence—that is, terrorist attack. Note, however, that the terrorists' violence is not deployed for violence's sake. Rather, the main point of their violence is to make a statement and convey a message.[26] It is ultimately the attempt to blast across to the public their political idea or message, rather than the material consequences of killing, that terrorists are concerned with in their activities. Terrorists' obsession with having their messages heard is evident in the way most terrorists begin their careers by making speeches and distributing pamphlets. Failing to catch public attention, they try to bomb the public into listening. For this reason, Richard Rubenstein concludes that terrorism originates in despair about language.[27] This observation, however, is not entirely correct if language refers to any means of conveying a message. By returning to terrorism, the IRA is not giving up on delivering their political message—to do so would have meant pursuing violence for violence's sake. Rather, insurgent terrorists typically use violence as a means to an end—that is, as a way of making themselves heard by the public. In Barker's play, what the IRA negotiators are refusing is not the attempt to talk to the public, but rather the British style of doing so.

In other words, the IRA eventually decides to respond to the symbolic violence of the British (in Bourdieu's sense) with its own form of "symbolic violence"—a violence that is symbolic in nature because the real aim of terrorism is not destruction, but rather to make a statement. While Gildersleeve resorts to symbolic capital to reinforce the British subordination of the IRA, the IRA refuses to negotiate further with the British who hijack the IRA's political message with the British politics of style. Ambushed and overwhelmed by Gildersleeve's *unconventional* weapons—that is, the weapons of style[28]—the IRA refuses to engage the British in their surprise tactics and retreats back into the use of its own form of unconventional weapon—that is, terrorism. Note that terrorism does not mean refusing to speak any more. Rather, terrorism is an attempt to speak louder than words. Contrary to the prevalent academic position that violence is necessarily opposed to signification,[29] terrorist violence proves that violence itself can be

used as a form of language—a language of shock in the most extreme sense. It attempts to shock people into listening by flying in the face of bourgeois conventions—including the bourgeois conventions of style and good taste that Gildersleeve trumpets to the extreme.

IV. CONCLUSION: THE SPECTACLE AND THE AESTHETICIZATION OF POLITICS

Despite the differences in the nature of the two kinds of "symbolic violence" deployed by Gildersleeve and the IRA, both capitalize upon the visual. Gildersleeve wants to make a spectacle of the superior British style and of the IRA's "barbarism." Interesting to note is that while the IRA intends the conference to be a verbal combat, Gildersleeve intentionally turns this into a visual spectacle. Verbal combat is interactive. At least theoretically, discourse appeals to people's minds and engages their reasoning faculties. Yet Gildersleeve intentionally hijacks his audience's capacity for thinking and reasoning by bombarding them with a spectacle of style. Unlike the verbal exchanges that demand thinking and interaction, the visual holds its audience captive as "passive consumers." Its audience cannot help but allow its sensory apparatus to be assaulted by the visual images. It is important to know that in a visual presentation, those who stage the spectacle have absolute agency and control as to what they want their audience to see. The audience, by contrast, can be easily reduced to passive consumers.

1. Howard Barker, *Credentials of a Sympathizer*, in *That Good Between Us; Credentials of a Sympathizer*. (London: John Calder, 1980), 60. All citations in parentheses in the text of this article are to this edition of *Credentials of a Sympathizer*.
2. Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, ed. John B. Thompson, trans. Gino Raymond & Matthew Adamson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 75.
3. David Ian Rabey, *Howard Barker, Politics and Desire: An Expository Study of His Drama and Poetry, 1969–87* (London: MacMillan Press, 1989), 63.
4. Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1985), 6.
5. *Id.* at 6; my italics.
6. See Pierre Bourdieu et al., *Pascalian Meditations* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000). By showing Tully's attraction to the dominant ideology, Barker, no less than Bourdieu, highlights how resistance involves more than a Marxist raising of consciousness. *See* Pierre Bourdieu & Terry Eagleton, "Doxa and Common Life," 191 *New Left Review* 111, 113 (1992). Marx himself falls into the trappings

of idealism by failing to register that "cognitive structures are not forms of consciousness but *dispositions of the body*":

> to speak of "ideologies" is to locate in the realm of representations—liable to be transformed through this intellectual conversion called "awakening of consciousness" (*prise de conscience*)—what in fact belongs to the order of belief, that is, to the level of the most profound corporeal dispositions.

Pierre Bourdieu et al., *Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 54–55.

7. That recognition is the foundation of legitimacy is made clear by Hegel's explication of the Master/Slave dialectic. Bourdieu also emphasizes "recognition" (*reconnaissance*) and "misrecognition" (*méconnaissance*) as the primary constituents of symbolic power.
8. Indeed, Gildersleeve's symbolic capital is so potent that Tully suffers a lapse into private fantasies of himself appearing in a relish of personal style and a woman journalist about to fornicate with him. His fantasies betray Tully's subconscious homage to style as a superior quality—a superiority that is bound to arouse envy from his "low-class" IRA colleagues. Thus he imagines the following allegations from his colleagues:

> FRASER (to TULLY): You are so clean now . . . And your wardrobe, jammed with SUITS!
> SIMS: Suits. One dozen. For the wearing of in parliament.
> FRASER: Tailor and Cutter. Best Dressed Public Man award.

(83).
9. Bourdieu, *Language*, *supra* note 2, at 37.
10. This is why Gildersleeve diligently cultivates a very polished way of speaking, as even in his own private reflections: "Methinks he doth protest too much . . ." (88).
11. Bourdieu, *Language*, *supra* note 2, at 167.
12. Keith Topper, "Not So Trifling Nuances: Pierre Bourdieu, Symbolic Violence, and the Perversions of Democracy," 8 *Constellations* 30, 45 (2001).
13. Bourdieu, *Language*, *supra* note 2, at 120–21.
14. Pierre Bourdieu, "The Economics of Linguistic Exchanges," 16 *Social Science Information* 645, 655 (1977).
15. Bourdieu, *Language*, *supra* note 2, at 93–94.
16. Bourdieu, *Distinction*, *supra* note 4, at 5.
17. *Id*. at 6.
18. Since the rise of capitalism, a belief has increasingly gained ground in the West that people with more possessions are less driven by materialistic needs, and hence more likely to act with disinterestedness on matters of justice; poverty causes a man to think base thoughts and engage in falsehood and treason. This was indeed the argument used repeatedly in the West prior to the twentieth century by those arguing against extending the franchise to people without property. See Sinkwan Cheng, "The Chinese *Xia* versus the European Knight: Social, Cultural and Political Perspectives" 6:2 *Enter Text* 40, 59 (2006).
19. Barker is nonetheless able to poke fun at both sides' careful navigation through the politics of eating. Later on in Scene 20, the bodily needs of both sides overtake their concern for style: "The soldiers and the terrorists are eating with a will" (90). Note that the IRA members are doing so together with the British privates (90–91). Neither can claim refinement or superiority.
20. Anglo-American moral and political philosophy since Hobbes defines freedom as "the absence of external impediments" (Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. C. B. MacPherson (London: Penguin, 1985), 79). In contrast to the Anglo-American emphasis on natural freedom, Kant highlights the gratification of one's natural urges as a sign not of autonomy but of heteronomy, not of freedom but of enslavement by the dictates of nature. A hunger strike is a declaration of one's readiness to stand by one's moral and political beliefs even to the point of defying the natural instincts for self-preservation.

21. Bourdieu, "The Economics of Linguistic Exchanges," *supra* note 14, at 656.
22. In other words, the British state owns not only a monopoly on the "legitimate" use of force but also a monopoly on symbolic capital.
23. Bourdieu, "The Economics of Linguistic Exchanges," *supra* note 14, at 654.
24. Bourdieu, *Language*, *supra* note 2, at 170.
25. *Id*. at 192.
26. The Venezuelan Illich Ramirez Sanchez, one of the international terrorists in the service of the Palestinians, made the following remark: "[V]iolence is the one language the Western democracies can understand." *See* J. Bowyer Bell, *A Time of Terror: How Democractic Societies Respond to Revolutionary Violence* (New York: Basic Books, 1978), 168. Another terrorist internationalist who was a member of the Japanese United Army elaborated on Sanchez's statement: "We want to shock people, everywhere. . . . It is the only way of *communication* with the people." Gerald McKnight, *The Mind of the Terrorist* (London: Michael Joseph, 1974), 168; my italics.
27. Please *see* Richard E. Rubenstein, *Alchemists of Revolution: Terrorism in the Modern World* (New York: Basic Books, 1987), 7.
28. Note that although Gildersleeve's weapons are unconventional in that they are unexpected by the IRA in a political negotiation, the weapons themselves consist of nothing but the bourgeois *conventions* of style and "good taste."
29. *See*, *for example*, René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977); Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985); and writings by trauma theorists such as Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma*, *Narrative*, *and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).