

Pinter Rips Bush, Demands War Crimes Trial For Blair

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The Nobel prize-winning playwright Harold Pinter has called for Tony Blair to be tried for war crimes, in his acceptance speech to the Nobel committee.

The 5,000-word speech excoriates the US government over Guantánamo Bay and its attempts to destabilise Nicaragua in the 1980s.

But he saves his most savage comments for the UK, described as "pathetic and supine" and a "bleating little lamb" tagging along behind the US in its support for the Iraq war.

"The invasion of Iraq was a bandit act, an act of blatant state terrorism demonstrating absolute contempt for the concept of international law," he said.

"The invasion was an arbitrary military action inspired by a series of lies upon lies and gross manipulation of the media and therefore of the public ... a formidable assertion of military force responsible for the death and mutilation of thousands and thousands of innocent people.

"We have brought torture, cluster bombs, depleted uranium, innumerable acts of random murder, misery, degradation and death to the Iraqi people, and call it 'bringing freedom and democracy to the Middle East'."

The 75-year-old will not be attending Saturday's award ceremony at the Swedish Academy in Stockholm because of poor health. He will be sending his publisher, Stephen Page, in his place to receive the 10m kroner prize.

But the author of *The Caretaker* and *The Birthday Party* has recorded a video of himself reading the speech, looking frail in a wheelchair with a red blanket over his legs.

In recent years he has been treated for cancer, and appeared with a bandaged head earlier this year when it was announced that he had been awarded the prize.

One of the original "angry young men" who revolutionised British theatre in the 1950s, he has lost none of his fury in the speech.

"How many people do you have to kill before you qualify to be described as a mass murderer and a war criminal? One hundred thousand? More than enough, I would have thought," he said.

"Therefore it is just that Bush and Blair be arraigned before the international criminal court of justice. But Bush has been clever. He has not ratified the international criminal court of justice ...

"But Tony Blair has ratified the court and is therefore available for prosecution. We can let the court have his address if they're interested: it is Number 10, Downing Street, London."

He also discusses his early plays, the creative process, and the ambiguity of language.

Beginning with a 1958 quote in which he claims that "a thing is not necessarily either true or false", he says that sometimes a writer has to escape questions about the uncertainty of truth and stand up for what they think is right.

"I believe that these assertions still make sense and do still apply to the exploration of reality through art

"So as a writer I stand by them, but as a citizen I cannot. As a citizen I must ask: what is true, what is false?"

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/Iraq/Story/0,2763,1661531,00.html>

Playwright Takes A Prize And A Jab At US

By Sarah Hall
NY Times
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LONDON - The playwright Harold Pinter turned his Nobel Prize acceptance speech on Wednesday into a furious howl of outrage against American foreign policy, saying that the United States had not only lied to justify waging war against Iraq but had also "supported and in many cases engendered every right-wing military dictatorship" in the last 50 years.

"The crimes of the United States have been systematic, constant, vicious, remorseless, but very few people have actually talked about them," Mr. Pinter said. "You have to hand it to America. It has exercised a quite clinical manipulation of power worldwide while masquerading as a force for universal good. It's a brilliant, even witty, highly successful act of hypnosis."

Sitting in a wheelchair, his lap covered by a blanket, his voice hoarse but unwavering, Mr. Pinter, 75, delivered his speech via a video recording that was played on Wednesday at the Swedish Academy in Stockholm. Doctors told him several years ago that he had cancer of the esophagus and recently ordered him not to travel to Stockholm for the speech, his publisher said.

The playwright, known in recent years as much for his fiery anti-

Americanism as for his spare prose style and haunting, elliptical plays like "The Caretaker" and "The Homecoming," was awarded the \$1.3 million Nobel literature prize in October. In its citation, the Swedish Academy made little mention of his political views, saying only that he is known as a "fighter for human rights" whose stands are often "seen as controversial." It mostly focused on his work, saying that Mr. Pinter "uncovers the precipice under everyday prattle and forces entry into oppression's closed rooms."

The literature prize has in recent years often gone to writers with left-wing ideologies. These include the European writers José Saramago of Portugal, Günter Grass of Germany and Dario Fo of Italy.

When he won the award, Mr. Pinter said he did not know if the academy, whose deliberations and reasoning are kept secret, had taken his politics into account. He clearly welcomed the platform the award gave him to bring his views, long expressed in Britain, to a larger audience.

Dressed in black, bristling with controlled fury, Mr. Pinter began by explaining the almost unconscious process he uses to write his plays. They start with an image, a word, a phrase, he said; the characters soon become "people with will and an individual sensibility of their own, made out of component parts you are unable to change, manipulate or distort."

"So language in art remains a highly ambiguous transaction," he continued, "a quicksand, a trampoline, a frozen pool which might give way under you, the author, at any time."

But while drama represents "the search for truth," Mr. Pinter said, politics works against truth, surrounding citizens with "a vast tapestry of lies" spun by politicians eager to cling to power.

Mr. Pinter attacked American foreign policy since World War II, saying that while the crimes of the Soviet Union had been well documented, those of the United States had not. "I put to you that the United States is without doubt the greatest show on the road," he said. "Brutal, indifferent, scornful and ruthless it may be, but it is also very clever. As a salesman it is out on its own and its most saleable commodity is self-love."

He returned to the theme of language as an obscurer of reality, saying that American leaders use it to anesthetize the public. "It's a scintillating stratagem," Mr. Pinter said. "Language is actually employed to keep thought at bay. The words 'the American people' provide a truly voluptuous cushion of reassurance. You don't need to think. Just lie back on the cushion. The cushion may be suffocating your intelligence and your critical faculties but it's very comfortable."

Accusing the United States of torturing terrorist suspects in Guantánamo Bay and Abu Ghraib, Mr. Pinter called the invasion of Iraq - for which he said Britain was also responsible - "a bandit act, an act of blatant state terrorism, demonstrating absolute contempt for the concept of international law." He called for Prime Minister Tony Blair to be tried before an international criminal court.

Mr. Pinter said it was the duty of the writer to hold an image up to scrutiny,

and the duty of citizens "to define the real truth of our lives and our societies."

"If such a determination is not embodied in our political vision, we have no hope of restoring what is so nearly lost to us - the dignity of man," he said.

[http://www.nytimes.com/2005/12/08/international/europe/08pinter.html?
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adxnln=1&emc=th&adxnlnx=1134043748-0lRIX8oVsUSWrb9OUUn4H+w](http://www.nytimes.com/2005/12/08/international/europe/08pinter.html?th=&adxnln=1&emc=th&adxnlnx=1134043748-0lRIX8oVsUSWrb9OUUn4H+w)

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