

Topic Page: [Gray, Simon, 1936-2008](#)

Summary Article: **Gray, Simon James Holliday**

From *Chambers Biographical Dictionary*

1936-2008

English dramatist, director and novelist

Born in Hayling Island, Hampshire, he studied at Cambridge. He wrote novels and several television plays, but was best known as a stage dramatist. His first play, *Wise Child*, was produced in 1967. Subsequent plays included *Butley* (1971), *Otherwise Engaged* (1975), *The Rear Column* (1978), *Quartermaine's Terms* (1981), *The Common Pursuit* (1984, televised 1992), *Melon* (1987) and *Cell Mates* (1995), whose staging was the focus of much media attention following the walk-out and disappearance of Stephen Fry. He was a lecturer in English literature at Queen Mary College, London (1965-85), and many of his plays are set in the world of academics, publishers, or academics who publish. His best television play was *After Pilkington* (1987), a wry thriller set in Oxford. *They Never Slept* (1991), also for television, was a comedy about ghosts in World War II, with characteristically serious comment on war and the position of women. With *An Unnatural Pursuit* (1985) and *How's That for Telling 'Em, Fat Lady?* (1988), he began a series of professional and personal memoirs based on his diaries. This series culminated in the three part *The Smoking Diaries* (2004-8), and the posthumous *Coda* (2008). Seven of his plays were directed by Harold Pinter, including *The Old Masters* (2004). He was awarded the CBE in 2005.

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