



**Call for Papers  
Fiction and British Politics  
Organised by the Centre for British Politics, University of Nottingham  
To be held at the British Academy, Friday 11<sup>th</sup> December 2009**

Since at least Shakespeare's time, fictions - whether depicted on the screen, stage or page - have addressed a variety of political subjects; they have as a consequence helped inform how Britons think about power, those who seek it, exercise it, and are subject to it. Traditionally, fictions were thought to merely reflect wider values; today their constitutive role is often emphasised. Indeed, while in the Cabinet Hazel Blears blamed predominantly negative depictions of politics for discouraging people from being politically engaged; and called for a 'British version' of the *West Wing*, hoping more optimistic dramatisations would challenge popular cynicism.

There certainly seems to have been a dramatic shift in emphasis in how fictions treat politics. In *Can You Forgive Her?* (1864), Anthony Trollope wrote that to be an MP was to have done 'that which it most becomes an Englishman to have achieved'; the 2005 film *V for Vendetta* ended with the Palace of Westminster blown up by a modern-day Guy Fawkes, to signify the people's liberation from oppression.

The conference will draw together academics from across the disciplines interested in different aspects of the relationship between fiction and British politics, both past and present, as well as those who have written fictions with political themes. Amongst the latter who have confirmed their participation number: Joe Ashton, former MP (*Grassroots*, *Majority of One*) Michael Dobbs (*House of Cards* and *Thomas Goodfellowe* trilogies), Trevor Griffiths (*The Party*, *Bill Brand*, *Food for Ravens*), Chris Mullin MP (*A Very British Coup*) and Tony Saint (*Margaret Thatcher: The Long Walk to Finchley*).

Papers are especially invited on the following topics:

- What themes emerge from political fictions?
- Has there been a change in emphasis over time?
- What has been the role of gender?
- Is British political fiction inherently cynical?
- What do political fictions say about 'Britishness'?
- What are the motives of those who write about politics in fiction?
- Is politics tackled any differently in the US and continental Europe?
- What is the effect of political fiction on audiences and readers?
- What is the relationship between political fiction and political 'reality'?

It is intended that selected contributions will be published as part of a special edition of *Parliamentary Affairs* during 2011.

**Those interested in presenting a paper should contact  
Professor Steven Fielding by 25<sup>th</sup> September 2009 and submit a one  
page abstract: [Steven.Fielding@Nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:Steven.Fielding@Nottingham.ac.uk)**

**Centre for British Politics website:  
<http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/politics/cbp/>**