

WORLD'S



CLASSICS

HENRY FIELDING

TOM JONES



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Tom Jones

Edited by

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With an Introduction by

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INTRODUCTION

ALTHOUGH Henry Fielding's comic novel *The History of Tom Jones, A Foundling* was not formally published until February 1749, favoured readers already possessed its first volumes by December 1748 when the final part of Samuel Richardson's tragedy *Clarissa* appeared. These two large novels, opposite in their every aspect, together map out the technical and spiritual terrain of fiction-writing in England for the rest of the century and even beyond. Fielding's literary talent was comedic to the core yet, for all his devastating attacks on Richardson's epistolary comedy *Pamela* (1740), he reviewed the first instalment of *Clarissa* with unreserved enthusiasm a month after its appearance late in 1747 when *Tom Jones* was too far along to have been influenced. After the next instalment, with his own novel in press, he wrote a letter to the author brimming with praise and offering friendship. The thin-skinned Richardson, possibly alert to double-dealing tendencies in Fielding's rhetoric, reciprocated first with silence and, later, with contemptuous remarks about *Tom Jones* and its author. Fielding's last novel, *Amelia* (1751), dark in atmosphere and concerned with the trials of an ideal wife, pays further tribute to Richardson. Still, their two masterworks are poles apart.

In *Clarissa*, Richardson had perfected the technique he called 'writing to the moment', by which the thoughts and emotions of the four chief characters are minutely reflected in letters composed immediately after, or even during, the course of events. The letters become physically part of the action not only because they purport to be written in the real time of the novel but because they are intercepted, redirected, delayed, copied, and forged. *Clarissa's* death-bed epistles even affect the paths of others after she is gone. Although Richardson later loaded the text with notes and commentary in order to guide readers toward a 'correct' understanding of the novel (right down to a moral for each of the more than 500 letters), in the first edition he presented the heroine's fate at the hands of Lovelace—her would-be lover, possible husband, and ultimate rapist—almost exclusively through the ebb and flow of the letters themselves, with a mini-

num of intervention by their supposed 'editor'. *Tom Jones*, on the other hand, is written almost exclusively in the third person. Both through the commentaries that begin each of the eighteen books and through countless interventions during the telling, its 'author' emerges in many ways as its chief protagonist. This narrator is usually called 'Fielding', both for the sake of convenience and because his voice rings true as the historical author's ideal self-depiction. We rarely glimpse the thoughts of characters without Fielding's mediation and his by-play moves in ongoing counterpoint with the action.

Like earlier English novelists such as Aphra Behn, Delarivier Manley, Daniel Defoe, or Eliza Haywood, Richardson and Fielding both laid claim to a wide, socially varied audience. They strove, however, to guide readers toward conclusions about personal virtue in much more authoritative ways than had been characteristic of the hair-splitting pros and cons weighed by Defoe's rather common protagonists or the amorous and courtly intrigues that dominate the concerns of Behn's and Manley's more uppish characters. Though choosing opposite methods and embracing quite different values, Fielding and Richardson, like contemporaries who joined the debate over their respective merits, saw themselves as raising the moral stakes of novel-writing and -reading. They shifted the focus away from the topical referentiality of *romans à clef* like Behn's and Manley's, and from the questions about literal factuality that Defoe and his critics considered crucial in judging the effect of his novels. They devised differently compelling new techniques for engaging their readers in the predicaments of fictional characters. Richardson worked to increase the moral capital of his readers through the overwhelmingly detailed representation of model subjects under conditions of extreme stress. Fielding worked to the same end through direct intervention in the experience of the story and through virtual conversation with the reader about the complexities involved in knowing and judging. They saw their books as fully consonant with Christianity in both precept and spirit, though Richardson loaded *Clarissa* with specifically religious themes and symbolism—even allegory—whereas Fielding concerned himself with issues largely in the domain of ethics.

Fielding was the first among the still widely read trio of early masters of the English novel, including Defoe and Richardson, to have been born in the eighteenth century (1707); the first to have a classical education, at Eton (1719-24); and the first to come from a genteel, even obliquely aristocratic, family. His important connections yielded few assets apart from schooling, which quite early enabled him to live as a writer, but family probably did help later to speed his certification as a lawyer and to pave his way to office. Pride in his social background and education had its snobbish aspect given Fielding's proximity to the Grub Street milieu. All the same, he could truly claim that his own first-hand experience with the full range of life from high to low lent a veracity to his writing that few of his rivals, especially Richardson, could match.

Fielding turned late to fiction, like Defoe, the journalist, political spy, and failed businessman who published *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) at the age of 59, and like Richardson, the prosperous printer whose *Pamela* (1740) appeared when he was 51. From 1728 until a crackdown on the theatres by Robert Walpole's government through censorship instituted by the Licensing Act of 1737, he authored a brilliant succession of satiric plays, including the heroic burlesque *The Tragedy of Tragedies; or the Life and Death of Tom Thumb the Great* (1731). Put out of work as a political dramatist by the Licensing Act, he fell back on family tradition and began legal training at the Middle Temple in order to support Charlotte, his wife of three years, and their two children. Admitted to the Bar in 1740 after only three years of study, he regularly rode the Western Circuit as a barrister and later, during the autumn and winter when *Tom Jones* appeared, took the bench as magistrate in the courts of Westminster and Middlesex. While sitting in the Bow Street court, Covent Garden, Fielding devised new methods that would become models of future law enforcement. He introduced strategies for identifying evidence through systematic advertisements, assembling facts, and running down criminals through the use of a quasi-official police force called the Bow Street Runners. He and his half-brother John, who continued this work after Fielding's health failed in 1754, are usually considered

the founders of London's Metropolitan Police, an institution that was to wait until 1829 for parliamentary sanction.

The Licensing Act by no means stopped the flow of Fielding's pen. Inclination and talent must have played a part. More compelling still were lifelong habits of personal extravagance and generosity to others that left him continually in need of money and often on the edge of financial collapse. Just two years after his 1737 entry to the Middle Temple, Fielding again took up the cry against Walpole as frequent author of leading articles in a new paper called the *Champion*. In form, as well as in the use of a distinctive character to voice much of its commentary, the paper resembled Joseph Addison's and Richard Steele's *Spectator* (initial run, 1711-12). In content it differed sharply from the *Spectator*, which eschewed politics and articulated a conversational, seemingly artless, yet meticulously balanced style of writing that soon became the gold standard for English prose. Samuel Johnson wrote, in his *Lives of the English Poets* (1779-81), that Addison's 'prose is the model of the middle style: on grave subjects not formal, on light occasions not grovelling; pure without scrupulosity, and exact without apparent elaboration; always equable, and always easy; without glowing words or pointed sentences'. Fielding, though at first comparably gentle in his *Champion* pieces, soon shifted to a keen satiric tone, embraced political controversy, and wrote an edgy prose in keeping with his adoption of the character of Captain Hercules Vinegar. Indeed, it is true of Fielding's writing more generally that, while he typically hews to the Addisonian stylistic virtues, his capacity for moral indignation, rapier wit, and sly irony spice his easy style with a bite reminiscent of Alexander Pope's or Jonathan Swift's brilliant diction and pointed sentences.

Writing continued to supplement Fielding's income from the law during the pre-novelistic years, as it would in one form or another through the rest of his life. Around 1740 he was ranging from journalistic work to verse satires, from Grub Street tasks like translation to the beginning, most probably, of his acerbic anti-Walpole narrative *Jonathan Wild* (published in the *Miscellanies* of 1743). In November 1740, however, just as Fielding was producing his last significant contributions to the *Champion*, an advertisement appeared in the paper for the first part of a book that would occasion his transformation into the novelist we re-

member today. It was a technically and socially revolutionary anonymous novel called *Pamela: or, Virtue Rewarded*. The story is simple. A lady's maid—a girl of some accomplishment thanks to tutelage in the household—upon the mistress's death finds her virtue under siege by the son and heir, Mr B. We witness her plight through a long series of breathless, enormously detailed letters that are interrupted but occasionally by those from other correspondents or by third-person narration. At first, Mr B. assails Pamela verbally, becoming evermore threatening physically until, having imprisoned her on a remote estate in the care of a housekeeper who lacks only fangs to scare young girls to death, he attempts rape. After Pamela talks him out of it, Mr B. turns into a devotee of her virtue, largely through his reading of her letters and journals. He proposes marriage and the fairy-tale dream comes true with Pamela's transformation into a great lady. To Fielding and some others, the moral was all too clear: chastity is a commodity that can be exchanged for wealth and social position.

Since Richardson, a tradesman working in the City of London far from the court, the government, and the newly developed West End, was not a recognized writer, his authorship of *Pamela* remained hidden for some while. But his heroine's name was on every lip. The popularity of her story went far beyond anything literary England had witnessed before. Fake continuations, poems to Pamela's glory, stage versions including an opera, high-class paintings, and cheaper decorative objects like fans, flooded England and turned the novel into something akin to a modern media event. Although the chorus of praise for *Pamela's* compelling combination of moral seriousness and stunning immediacy was deafening, Fielding was not to be alone in satirizing the heroine's sanctimonious verbosity, her at times less-than-innocent scheming, her covert attraction to Mr B., the greedy materialism of her inventories, and her conflation of moral virtue and material goods. But his *Shamela* (1741) was the first parody and his abilities were uniquely suited to expose these defects through devastatingly precise imitation of the febrile immediacy of *Pamela's* moment-to-moment epistolary manner. Given this mastery, he needed only to reverse Pamela's pious character into a conniving and rapacious wench narrating the success of her scheme to trap Squire Booby into marriage with the lure of sex.

Fielding's authorship was recognized at once and has never been doubted even though he never acknowledged the work.

Shamela laid the groundwork for Fielding's hugely successful first novel, *Joseph Andrews* (1742), which presents Pamela's sincerely chaste, comically straightfaced brother as a footman working in the house of Mr B——'s uncle. The novel's Shamelesque aspect fades quickly once Joseph takes to the road after being fired for refusing to service Lady Booby's lust. He soon joins the wonderfully preoccupied Parson Abraham Adams—scholar of Greek, idealist, and true Christian—on a series of adventures overtly modelled on those of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza in Cervantes's paradigmatic novel from the previous century. Ironic distance, often reinforced by the ridicule that had figured in *Shamela*, accompanies a heavy schematization of characters in *Joseph Andrews* but this was Fielding's first novel to attempt the narrative stance combining detachment, an appearance of disinterested enquiry into factual detail, and a good-natured conversational alliance with the reader that he would bring to perfection in *Tom Jones*. Cervantes inspired both Fielding's narrative stance and his use of the mock-heroic and the mock-romantic to mark off boundaries for the novel as he conceived it.

In *Joseph Andrews* Fielding sought to raise the literary standing of the novel (not to mention increasing the stakes on Richardson) both by imitating the prestigious and popular *Don Quixote* (1604–14) and by importing classical generic categories and narrative devices into the novel. The preface, like a number of passages in *Tom Jones*, ingeniously finds a place for Fielding's kind of novel in the traditional hierarchy of genres or literary types, where tragedy and the serious epic ranked above comedy. He declares this new work to be a 'comic epic-poem in prose', alluding to the lost comic epic by Homer. Although mock diction will sometimes find admission to this new way of writing, says Fielding, the burlesque of sentiments and characters will be rigorously excluded along with all forms of the grotesque associated with low satire but often confused with comedy. True comedy must be founded in the observation of nature and thus cannot admit bizarre extremes. It deals, instead, with the ridiculous, which in turn arises from the discovery of affectation, the most notable forms of which are vanity and hypocrisy: 'great vices are the proper objects of our detestation, smaller faults of

our pity; but affectation appears to me the only true source of the ridiculous.' Ideas such as these are more fully explored in the essays prefatory to each book of *Tom Jones*, which stands as Fielding's fullest illustration of the possibilities open to the new genre he was defining. Mock diction recalling the great classical epics of Homer and Virgil, as well as John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667), also appears in many parts of *Tom Jones*, for instance in scenes such as the battle outside the church over Molly Seagrim's borrowed fancy dress (iv. viii) or the introduction of Sophia Western in the language suitable to a classical heroine (iv. ii). Given Fielding's redefinition of the comic novel in *Joseph Andrews*, it is possible to understand Richardson's turn to tragedy in *Clarissa* as a riposte to Fielding's elevation of the novel to comic-epic status. For tragedy was above comedy in the traditional literary pecking order and, while for want of a classical education Richardson could not link his tragic story to the serious epic, he could and did saturate it with the language of the Bible—a work of divine inspiration occupying the very pinnacle of the hierarchy of literary types. In any case, it is clear that Fielding's epic send-ups in *Joseph Andrews* and in *Tom Jones*, as well as his echoes of *Don Quixote*, are part and parcel of a programme to define a new kind of novel that is strongly marked as part of 'literature', and thus morally—even stylistically—serious in ways that novels of adventure and of amorous intrigue by his immediate predecessors in England had not been.

Fielding appears to have started *Tom Jones* in the winter or spring of 1745 after a break in literary activity of well over a year following the considerable successes of *Joseph Andrews* in 1742 and the *Miscellanies* in 1743. There are signs that he may have possessed a draft of about six books when the forces of the Young Pretender, Prince Charles Edward Stuart, invaded Britain in the summer of 1745. This invasion, which had succeeded brilliantly in a feudal Scotland disaffected ever since the Act of Union of 1707, faltered as it advanced into England despite having set London in panic by penetrating as far as Derby. Although hindsight allows us to see the invasion as an evanescent affair, doomed from the start, in the eighteenth-century perspective and indeed in that of Sir Walter Scott writing in the earlier nineteenth, it was experienced as one of the signal events of British history. Fielding, like the majority of his contemporaries,

saw this Jacobite uprising as a profound threat to legitimate government. One sign of the importance of 1745 to Fielding was his six-month editorship of the *True Patriot*, a journal in which he wrote with fervour defending the constitutionalist position and the Hanoverian monarchy. Given his topical approach to writing, it would have seemed entirely natural to Fielding to weave the momentous events of 'the Forty-Five', as it was called, into the texture of his novel, making Tom take up with troops fighting for the Hanoverian King George II and letting Sophia's identity be confused with that of the Pretender's mistress. No doubt, Fielding also had in mind the historical dimension obligatory to the classical epic when he involved the action of *Tom Jones* with these great events.

The leader of the invasion, called 'Bonnie Prince Charlie' by his supporters in Scotland, was the grandson of the Catholic James II who had been exiled after a brief and disastrous reign that ended in 1688 with the bloodless election to the throne of his daughter Mary and her Dutch husband William of Orange. They were both Protestants. Mary's sister Anne took the throne in 1702 but since her many children died before her, it passed in 1714 to George I of the German house of Hanover, which was distantly connected to the English royal line through Princess Sophia, the granddaughter of James II and the nearest Protestant heir. The ultimate outcome of the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688 was the Settlement Act of 1701, which reacted both to the absolutist, crypto-Catholic rule of the Stuarts and to the moralistic militarism of William by placing the King in contractual relationship with Parliament. The Settlement imposed constitutional limits on the throne, which henceforth was to be Anglican, vastly broadened Parliament's powers, and set the stage for toleration of religious dissent. Ideological conflict over the succession and the place of the Church of England continued, however, ultimately enabling the alarms of 1745. The dominant Whig faction, in general, consisted of urban, professional, and mercantile interests reinforced by a number of aristocratic magnates and country gentlemen of the politically independent and commercially minded sort. The lesser Tory faction, still strong enough at times to control the government, could count on numbers of conservative aristocrats and landed gentry, country clergy and craftsmen, for whom tradition and loyalty to the hereditary mon-

arch were paramount and who believed in the absolute right of the Church of England. Still, only a few Tories continued actively to fight the Settlement and, while many among them might sentimentally toast the 'King over the water', few were ready to take up arms either for the Old Pretender, James Edward, around whom there had been a Scottish uprising in 1715, or for his son in 1745. We can see with this background that Squire Western's support of the 'King over the water' fits his character perfectly and that the incorporation of urgent current events into the novel lent a public weight to *Tom Jones* that it might otherwise have lacked. More importantly, the world as Fielding imagined it, not to mention life as he led it, depended crucially upon the relative freedom from social hierarchy and the comparatively open communication that had prevailed in England since the Settlement that immediately preceded his birth.

Tom Jones is governed by an ideal of intelligent, broadly educated sociability that lies at the heart of Fielding's achievement as an author no less than of the eighteenth century itself. In this novel Fielding fused the all-but-sensual pleasure wrought by intricate, tightly structured storytelling with the indomitable, yet thoroughly problematic, human compulsion to judge the conduct of others. This fusion took place under the aegis of commercial, social, and cultural institutions that mark the period's turn toward modernity and that link its concerns to ours today. In particular, the explosion of printed materials was a significant feature of the eighteenth century's expanding marketplace and a sign of the increasing economic, educational, and class mobility of urban society. Fielding was far from alone in viewing these phenomena with considerable ambivalence. Publications ranged from ephemeral political pamphlets and newspapers like Fielding's *Champion* or *True Patriot*, through business manuals and conduct books like Richardson's own *Familiar Letters* (1741), to the elegantly written treatises and compendia on philosophic, scientific, moral, and historical topics produced by famous Enlightenment figures such as Denis Diderot, David Hume, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Adam Smith.

In the midst of this outpouring of print, popular novels—whether by Manley, Haywood, Defoe, Richardson, or Fielding himself—appeared as a new and rather threatening permutation

of literary culture because they represented the conditions of society in graphic, unidealized, even shocking, terms and gave priority to the thoughts, feelings, moral dilemmas, and practical experience of autonomous individuals as over and against traditional wisdom and established authority. In part because of their wide distribution, novels often were condemned as dangerous amusements that kept youths, women, and servants from their proper occupations. Samuel Johnson trenchantly voiced this attitude in a *Rambler* essay of 1750:

These books are written chiefly to the young, the ignorant, and the idle, to whom they serve as lectures of conduct, and introductions into life. They are the entertainment of minds unfurnished with ideas, and therefore easily susceptible of impressions; not fixed by principles, and therefore easily following the current of fancy; not informed by experience and consequently open to every false suggestion and partial account.

Johnson elsewhere showed his appreciation of *Clarissa* but it is not far to seek why a book like *Tom Jones* would be disliked by the stern moralist who rejected novels because they 'confound the colours of right and wrong, and instead of helping to settle their boundaries, mix them with so much art that no common mind is able to disunite them'.

Yet novels were such successful consumer products that criticism could not stem the tide. Richardson's *Pamela* went through five editions in its first year. *Joseph Andrews*, Fielding's parodic antidote to Pamela's sanctimonious, highly profitable chastity, quickly sold 6,500 copies and *Tom Jones* 10,000 copies at a time when the population of London numbered something over 600,000. It is easily plausible that a tenth of that population had substantial knowledge of Fielding's book. Frequent comments about reading aloud tell us something of the broad audience for novels, and we know, for example, from William Shenstone's having borrowed and then loaned out Lady Henrietta Luxborough's volumes of Fielding's masterpiece shortly after their publication, that each copy could well have served several families even apart from sets circulated by lending libraries. Novels were popular, in part because they proffered unauthorized pleasure and found value in unsanctioned stories of thieves and courtesans like Defoe's Moll Flanders and Roxana, social-climbing servants like Pamela, or, in the case of *Tom Jones*, an

illegitimate ladies' man. But novels were popular, too, because they partook in a broad public exchange about the basic values of the society they depicted—a discussion occurring, largely outside the official channels of Church and State, in newspapers, popular accounts of law cases, conduct books, privately circulated correspondence, literary circles, and clubs.

Although the early reception of *The History of Tom Jones, A Foundling* included frequent comments debating its truth to life, as well as the *Monthly Review's* identification with readers who chose to give themselves 'pleasure by the perusal of a work chiefly calculated for entertainment', most comments focused on questions about the moral worthiness of the hero (not to mention the author); on the validity of Fielding's inclusion of 'low' and 'vulgar' characters, diction, and behaviour; or, in Johnson's case, on the dangerous influence of such novels on the ideas and behaviour of young people. During the late spring following publication, for instance, Elizabeth Carter wrote as an educated woman and balanced observer of the world—in reply to a dismissal by Catherine Talbot, a fellow admirer of Richardson—declaring that 'Fielding's book is the most natural representation of what passes in the world, and of the bizarreries which arise from the mixture of good and bad.' Richardson, imbued with the high seriousness of *Clarissa*, fussed in his letters about the 'coarse-titled *Tom Jones*' and, surprisingly, given his steadfast claim not to have read more than a few passages, made disparaging remarks about its hero and heroine. The title was 'coarse' because of the hero's generic name and because 'foundling' could be experienced as synonymous with 'bastard', the lowest of social categories. Members of Richardson's circle, who timorously defended aspects of the novel in correspondence with the master, wished that it had as much 'heart' as 'head', found that it had 'bold, shocking pictures', and finished judiciously with the complaint that although 'in every part it has humanity for its intention, in too many it seems wantoner than it was meant to be'. One anonymous critic, styled Orbilius, felt compelled late in 1749 to publish a substantial pamphlet of chapter-by-chapter commentary, condemning *Tom Jones's* 'incredibilities', its 'bad morals', and its 'counterfeit wit'. But in a pamphlet titled *An Essay on the New Species of Writing Founded by Mr Fielding* (1751), another critic (probably Francis Coventry) lavished

praise on the author's originality and his ability to see 'all the little movements by which human nature is actuated'. With it all, *Tom Jones* decisively marked the success of Fielding's effort to legitimate novels as objects of and forums for critical discussion.

Critical discussion is a vital term here—with its implication of a reach toward rational consensus through sociable commerce. For none of the eighteenth century's cultural institutions was more characteristic than that of critical exchange. Whether in print, in conversation in dining- and drawing-rooms, or in debate at any of the more-than-500 coffee houses that graced London in the 1740s, the idea recurs that informed discussion leads to understanding and then to cogent action, first by individuals and then by society as a whole. Fielding acknowledged the centrality of conversation in the essay that begins one of the two books at the symmetrical heart of *Tom Jones*:

There is another sort of knowledge beyond the power of learning to bestow, and this is to be had by conversation. So necessary is this to the understanding the characters of men, that none are more ignorant of them than those learned pedants whose lives have been entirely consumed in colleges and among books; for however exquisitely human nature may have been described by writers, the true practical system can be learnt only in the world. (ix. i)

Here, Fielding mirrored his age, for the ideal of impartial enquiry, tested through critical discussion among equals, emerged in the eighteenth century first in settings now associated with the 'public sphere' such as coffee houses, clubs, lodges, exchanges, and salons and much later as a theoretical conception memorably crystallized in Kant's brief essay 'What is Enlightenment?' (1784). Medical and experimental sciences during the same period adopted impersonal forms of observation and presentation, while thinkers like David Hume and Adam Smith theorized the ways in which the moral order of society functioned by inhabiting individual, first-person awareness with an 'impartial spectator' or third-person conscience founded on the sympathetic bond among human beings. Real character, like scientific knowledge and legitimate government, was recognizable only when tested against public consensus. In every area of knowledge, the assumed model of communication was of a flow from

private contingency to public affirmation through critical investigation and discussion outside the framework of the State. For this reason, though personal conversation was paradigmatic, and remained of signal importance, printing—with its capacity to involve a far-flung community of readers—was a crucial medium. Critical conversation and the commerce in print went hand in hand. In addition to authors and presses, this commerce required not only widespread literacy but technical innovations that enabled communication such as above-grade road-building and systematic postal service. Fielding was attuned to these developments as a writer supported by paying readers, as an innovative law enforcement official who used promptly circulated advertisements to apprehend criminals, and as an author who counted as a loyal patron Ralph Allen—the man who grew rich and famous through his reorganization of the post.

Addison's and Steele's continually reprinted and obsessively imitated periodical, the *Spectator* (1711–12), served as a virtual handbook for sociable conduct and literary practice in the new public sphere where, for purposes of critical discussion, and in contrast to exchange within the traditional courtly milieu, external marks of rank were laid aside. Especially in the earlier phases, aristocratic privilege everywhere penetrated the new intellectual institutions, and the kind of education necessary for entry into the realm of critical discussion was available to few beneath what were called the 'middling sort'. But this is not the point. A powerful convention had come into being: the convention that ideas are equally accessible to educated men and that, in the realm of public discussion, men are judged by the degree of their information and the quality of their ideas, not by rank, office, or wealth. Aristocratic patronage of literature, which had fostered relatively formal, classically inspired writing, was progressively displaced by a paying, literate public that favoured the informality and utilitarian clarity of prose like Addison's or Fielding's and the flexibility of literary forms such as the familiar letter, the essay, the lecture, the experimental report, and, of course, the novel.

In the tenth issue of the *Spectator*, Addison estimated his daily audience at 60,000—more than 10 per cent of London's current population—and expressed his aspirations for readers in words that we have seen Fielding echo at the core of *Tom Jones*: