

History of English Language and Literature
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Lecture 13a
The Rise of the Novel

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Good morning and welcome to yet another session of the NPTEL course, The History of English Language and Literature. We continue our discussion of the rise of the novel and we also begin noticing that the long 18th century was dominated by the drastic rule of different rulers. It was not the reign of a single monarch. We notice that it was ruled by William III in the beginning, then Queen Ann, George I, George II and George III. So overall it was also dominated by the House of Hanover.

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+The historical significance of the novel

- **Literary** and **social** value
- The growth of a reading public – numerous **women**
 - “novel reading probably increased as reading of plays declined”, ‘a popular leisure praxis’, also a “moral panic”
 - Literacy, book market, access, privacy
- Literature outgrowing the cramping limitations of classicism – offered a **fresh** field, able to work **independently**
- The result of the **democratic** movement in England – not an aristocratic genre
 - Of *Pamela*: ‘the landmark of a great social, no less than a great literary transition, when all England went mad with enthusiasm over the trials, the virtues, the triumphs of a rustic lady’s maid’ (Lord Morley)
- Wider scope than drama – the typical art-form of the introspective and analytical modern world


So having said that let us continue to look at the historical significance of the novel in the 18th century. Novel as a historical event, it does have a lot of literary as well as social value. Some of which we had begun to look at the in the previous session as well. And this was primarily characterized by the growth of reading public which also included a number of women. It was either to unknown kind of fact in history given that female literacy was much lower and also the access to public, and also the access to reading material by women was quite limited until that point of time.

But from the 18th century onwards with the various forms of newer kinds of dissemination of knowledge and dissemination of books, we find that women had an increasing access to reading material and especially novel. And we also notice that since women were not permitted to be a part of any other kind of amusement activity or any other kind of entertainment, for instance, they were not loved to go and watch the plays in public. We find them taking a lot of comfort and lot of interest in this particular activity of reading novels.

And some of the historians are also of the opinion that the novel reading probably increased as the reading of plays declined, primarily because of the, primarily because the 18th century also saw a decline in the production and writing and staging of drama in general. So there was a perfect kind of an ambience in plays for novel reading to emerge as a popular leisure praxis. But

however there was also another moral and ethical element to it. There was an increasing moral panic about the new found interest that women had particularly on reading novels.

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 *Women, of every age, of every condition, contract and retain a taste for novels. The depravity is universal. My sight is every-where offended by these foolish, yet dangerous, books. I find them on the toilette of fashion, and in the work-bag of the sempstress; in the hands of the lady, who lounges on the sofa, and of the lady, who sits at the counter. From the mistresses of nobles they descend to the mistresses of snuff-shops – from the belles who read them in town, to the chits who spell them in country. I have actually seen mothers, in miserable garrets, crying for the imaginary distress of an heroine, while their children were crying for bread; and the mistress of family losing hours over a novel in the parlour, while her maids, in emulation of the example, were similarly employed in the kitchen. I have seen a scullion-wench with a dishcloth in one hand and a novel in the other sobbing o'er the sorrows of Julia or a Jemima*

Sylph No. 5, Oct 6, 1796

There were lot of men of good standing who were of the opinion that the access to novel would corrupt the young women of England considerably. For example, if you take a look at one of those editorials that appeared in a magazine of those times named Sylph, you would be surprised at the kind of opinions that people of learned stature held against women reading in public.

If you allow me to read a paragraph from this particular writer, “Women of every age, of every condition, contract and retain taste for novels. The depravity is universal. My sight is everywhere offended by these foolish, yet dangerous books. I find them on the toilette of fashion and in the work-bag of the sempstress; in the hands of the lady who lounges on the sofa and of the lady who sits at the counter. From the mistresses of nobles they descend to the mistresses of snuff-shops – from belles who read them in town, to the chits who spell them in the country.

I have actually seen mothers in miserable garrets crying for the imaginary distress of an heroine, while their children were crying for bread and the mistress of a family losing hours over a novel in the parlor while her maids, in emulation of the example, were similarly employed in the kitchen. I have seen a scullion-wench with a dishcloth in one hand and a novel in the other sobbing over the sorrows of Julia or a Jemima.”

So this was the popular opinion of at least some of the learned men of those times but nevertheless we do find that novel continue to have, continue to enjoy a lot of popularity among women as well as men in the 18th as well as in the subsequent centuries. There is a general assumption that four factors together came, together contributed to this event of the rise of the novel in the 18th century which was an immense increase in literacy.

Secondly, thriving book market which also ensured the books reached every look-in corner of the country. And thirdly, there was enough and more access for novels no matter where you were placed and no matter which class you belong to or which gender you belong to. So this was fairly new thing because books until that point of time were extremely expensive and it was not affordable for everyone. So this access also led to the emergence of a new reading public and the thriving of the genre.


And fourthly this was also the time when an increasing sense of privacy was developing in the society and novel reading obviously also included the aspects of privacy. So the development of this quality also led to the emergence of novel in the 18th century. And in terms of the technique and craft of writing, we find that the novel was not limited to the cramping principles of classicism. So there is more freshness and the writers are also able to work independently freer from the many tenets that govern the other forms of writing.

And it was also the result of the democratic movement that was thriving in England during the 18th century. And that since novel did not emerge as an aristocratic genre like many other forms of writing did. And in fact about the success of Pamela, Lord Morley who was one of the influential writers of those times, he remarked, “it was a landmark of a great social, no less than a great literary transition, when all England went mad with enthusiasm over the trials, the virtues, the triumphs of a rustic lady’s maid.”

So it was a newer kind of trend which was catching up in England then. And this novel also offered a wider scope than drama because this was the typical art form which lent itself to the introspective and analytical modern world. And that is what England was transforming into by the end of the 18th century.

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+ Henry Fielding (1717-54)



- Long training in drama – started by writing plays
 - (“a notorious dramatist”: Pat Rogers)
- Unlike Richardson – started with a good preliminary preparation in technique
 - Richardson’s judgment of Fielding – ‘wretchedly low and dirty’
- Fielding’s first experiment in the novel – a direct offshoot from Pamela
 - 1740 – England was in raptures over Pamela – Fielding did not share the general enthusiasm
 - Found the underlying absurdities humorous, the downright artfulness of the heroine, disgusted by the author’s overwrought sentimentalism
- Decided to take advantage of the popularity of *Pamela*
- An anonymous satirical skit – *Shamela* (1741)
- *Jonathan Wild the Great* (1743)

Having already taken look at the life and work of Samuel Richardson, it is time to take a look at the second most important writer of this period, Henry Fielding who lived from 1717 to 1754. Unlike Richardson he had a fairly early start. He also had a long training in drama. He had started off his career by writing plays. However he is also recorded in the history as notorious dramatist and his plays are not of much significance.

He also in that sense had the advantage of having, had a good preliminary preparation in terms of techniques of writing. So in many ways he was unlike Richardson. Nevertheless Richardson did not have a good opinion about him. It said that Richardson had pronounced a judgment on Fielding’s writings by considering it as wretchedly low and dirty. Fielding is one of those writers who derived much mileage from the success of Richardson’s *Pamela*.

So in that sense though his work was quite influenced by Richardson’s *Pamela* though in a very different way, we do find that he also reaped an equal amount of success. Fielding’s first experiment in novel was a direct offshoot from Richardson’s *Pamela* which was a huge and instant success in England in 1740. While whole of England was in raptures over *Pamela* and its success, Fielding did not share his enthusiasm at all.

In fact much of the novel appeared quite ridiculous to him. Fielding was not in the least charm by the plot structure of *Pamela*. Far from it in fact he found the underlying absurdities quite humorous and he also thought that the downright artfulness of the heroine was getting paraded as

a form of virtue. And he was also disgusted by the author's, Richardson's overall sentimentalism. So Fielding wanted to respond to this in some form or the other and also capitalize on the success that Richardson had already read through Pamela.

So he decides to take advantage of the popularity of Pamela. And initially he published an anonymous satirical skit titled Shamela, obviously parading Pamela, this was in 1741. And at later point around this time he is also said to have started writing Jonathan Wild the Great which was published only much later in 1743.

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The Adventures of Joseph Andrews (1742)

- A **burlesque** - 'to raise an honest laugh against Pamela'
- **Reversal** of the situation in Pamela – parodies till the tenth chapter - The hero (supposedly Pamela's brother) – tempted by his mistress - An effective device for making fun of chastity (male) as a heavy moral issue
- Eventually becomes an 'epic of the highway' – full of adventures, horseplay and not too decent fun
- Experimental work but helped Fielding to find his proper way

THE HISTORY OF THE ADVENTURES OF JOSEPH ANDREWS, And of his FRIEND Mr. ABRAHAM ADAMS. Written in Imitation of The Manner of CERVANTES, Author of Don Quixote. IN TWO VOLUMES. VOL. I. LONDON: Printed for A. MILLAR, over-against St. Clement's Church, in the Strand. MDCCLXII.

But however the event that marked an instant success for Henry Fielding was the publication of The Adventures of Joseph Andrews in 1742 which was a direct parody of the novel Pamela by Samuel Richardson. The Adventures of Joseph Andrews could be classified as a burlesque and in his words it was the, the intention was to raise an honest laugh against Pamela. So in Joseph Andrews we find Fielding reversing the situation in Pamela.

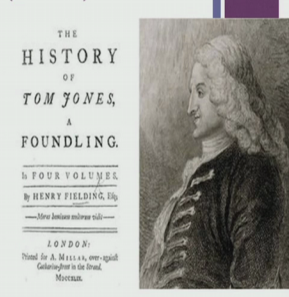
And he continues this parody until almost the tenth chapter. And in Joseph Andrews the hero of the same name, he is also supposedly Pamela's brother to, he is also supposedly Pamela's brother in the fiction. And this hero is tempted by his mistress. And this hero is tempted by his mistress and just like Pamela resisted the advances of her master we find Joseph Andrews resisting the advances of his mistress.

So he also uses this parody as a device for making fun of a male chastity and also mockingly engages with heavy moral issues. But however after the tenth chapter, we do not find him continuing with the same plot structure. He perhaps loses interest in the parody and we find Fielding transforming his work into an epic of the highway which is full of adventures, horseplay and even not too decent fun. This work was experimental in nature, so was most of the earlier novels of the 18th century. But this work especially held Fielding to lay foundations to his own craft and technique and also form a peculiar, also develop his own style of writing.

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+ *The Adventures of Tom Jones* (1749)

- Set against an enormous canvas
- The hero is a **foundling** who tramps up London in quest of fortune
- The first part – country men and manners
- The second part – metropolitan men and manners
- Fullest and richest picture of English life and manners of the late 18th century
- Lavishly praised by Coleridge and Thackeray (wildly extravagant praise?)



The image shows the title page of 'The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling' by Henry Fielding, published in 1749. The title page is divided into four volumes and includes a portrait of the author, Henry Fielding, on the right side. The text on the title page reads: 'THE HISTORY OF TOM JONES, A FOUNDLING. IN FOUR VOLUMES. BY HENRY FIELDING, Esq. LONDON: Printed by A. MILLAR, in the Strand, 1749.' The portrait shows a man with long, wavy hair, wearing a dark coat and a white cravat.

The success of Joseph Andrews prompted Fielding to produce the next one, *The Adventures of Tom Jones* in 1749. This unlike the earlier work, it was set against an enormous canvas. So it was really a vast and expansive work. So the hero titled Tom Jones is a foundling in this work and who tramps up London in quest of fortune. So in the first part this hero is living in the countryside and we find Fielding talking about countrymen and manners. And in the second part after the hero reaches London, we find a portrayal of metropolitan men and women. And in the second part once the hero reaches the city of London, we find a portrayal of the metropolitan men and manners.


So altogether both the books, both the parts put together the entire book gives a fullest and richest picture of English life and manners of the late 18th century. In that sense it is also interesting as a historical document, so to speak. This work was not as, this work in general was

not considered as successful as his earlier work. But however we do find some of the later writers such as Coleridge and Thackeray showing a lavish praise on Tom Jones. But later historians do feel that this sort of praise showered on this work was wildly extravagant.

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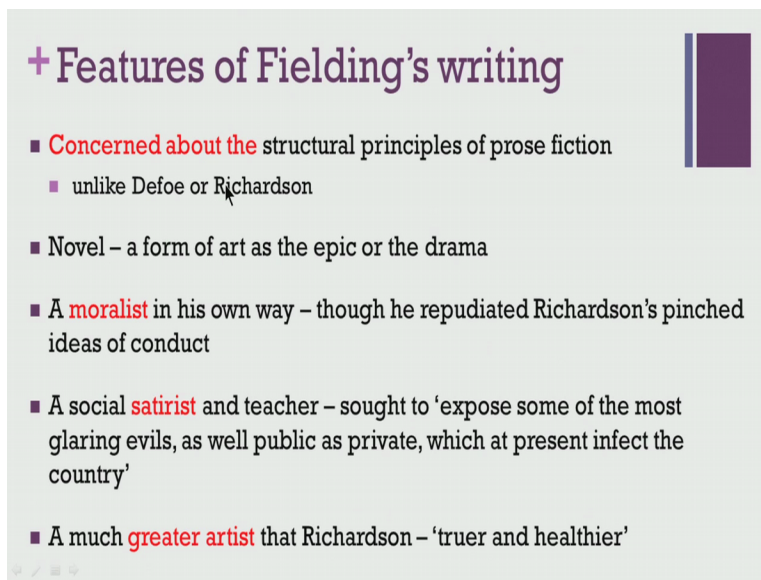
+ *Amelia* (1751)

- The courage and patience of a devoted wife and of the ill doings of her weak-willed husband
- Sadder, less vigorous, less humorous
- Not much of a success



Fielding also wrote another novel which was more female centric. This was in 1751. It could also be seen as kind of a response and antithesis to Sir Richardson, Richardson's *Clarissa*. In *Amelia* we find the courage and patience of a devoted wife and the ill doings of her weak-willed husband. They were also giving a lot of primacy to the female protagonist. But this work unfortunately it was sadder, less vigorous and less humorous. It also failed to make the kind of impact that *Joseph Andrews* and to a certain extent *Tom Jones* had left. And this was also not much of a success either literally or financially.

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+ Features of Fielding's writing

- Concerned about the structural principles of prose fiction
 - unlike Defoe or Richardson
- Novel – a form of art as the epic or the drama
- A moralist in his own way – though he repudiated Richardson's pinched ideas of conduct
- A social satirist and teacher – sought to 'expose some of the most glaring evils, as well public as private, which at present infect the country'
- A much greater artist than Richardson – 'truer and healthier'

Fielding's writing style was much different from any other writer of the earlier times or even compared to his contemporaries he could leave a very distinct mark in the writing style. He was more concerned about the structural principles of prose fiction. In that sense he was also unlike Defoe or Richardson who believed that one need not stick to any kind of rigid writing rules especially when one is writing prose or writing a novel. But for Fielding novel was just like an epic or a drama which could also, which should also follow a particular certain form and certain principles in terms of composition, in terms of structure, in terms of treatment et cetera.

Fielding also was a moralist in his own way though he was not exactly like Richardson. He in fact, he repudiated Richardson's pinched ideas of conduct. But nevertheless he did offer his own kind of satire and his own teaching in his writings. And we find that one of his objectives also quite similar to Richardson, was to expose some of the most glaring evils as well public as private which at present infect the country.

He also like Richardson thought that he had the responsibility to purify and modify the English society. In terms of his art and technique he was greater artist than (techn), greater artist than Richardson. He was also considered by later historians as truer and healthier in comparison to his contemporaries.

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Richardson	Fielding
■ Lower-middle class parents	■ Born to a well-connected but impoverished army-officer
■ Limited schooling	■ Educated at Eton
■ Flourished as a printer	■ <u>Feilding</u> / <u>Fielding</u> : "my branch of the family were the first that knew how to spell"
■ Asked to compose an elementary letter-writing manual	■ Turns to stage for a living - to law and journalism and writing after the Licensing Act
■ Tends towards the sentimental	■ Centres goodness in feeling

Many later critics and historians sought to undertake a comparison between Richardson and Fielding because both of them were equally important in laying the foundations of English novel in the 18th century. Richardson as we have noted earlier he belonged to a lower-middle class family. He had very limited schooling. He did not go to university and he, though his, he, his beginnings were from poverty, we do find him flourishing as a printer in London.

And the turning point in his literary career was when two of his publisher friends asked him to compose an elementary letter-writing manual. And in his works we find the tendency to shift towards the sentimental which also appealed to the reader's fancy during those times. In contrast Fielding was born to a very well-connected but an impoverished army officer. And he was also educated at London.

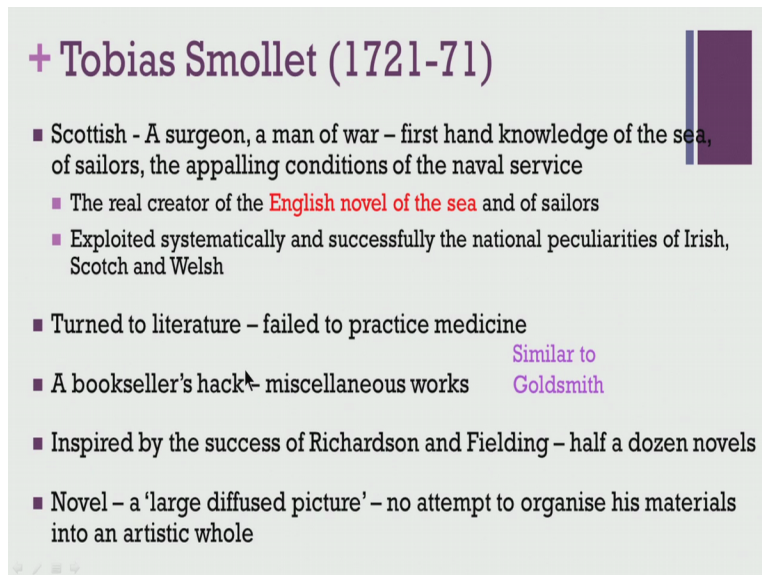
There is this interesting anecdote about, which also talks a lot about the kind of education that Fielding received and also about the immense pride that he had on his family lineage. On being asked why his spelling was a little different from that of the conventional spelling of those times, if you notice Fielding always spelt his name with 'Fie' whereas the prevalent spelling during those times was 'Fei' when it came to Fielding.

So when asked about this peculiar kind of spelling that he retained as surname, Fielding is said to have reported that, Fielding is said to have responded that my branch of the family were the first that knew how to spell. So this was the kind of intelligent arrogance this man possessed. We also

find Fielding turning to the stage for a living for a brief time though he did not live much of a reputation over there.

But however the Licensing Act forced him to leave theater and to move to law, journalism and writing which also proved to be a turning point in his literary career. And unlike Richardson we also find him focusing not on the sentimental but on the goodness in feeling. This is reflected in almost all of his works throughout.

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+ Tobias Smollet (1721-71)

- Scottish - A surgeon, a man of war – first hand knowledge of the sea, of sailors, the appalling conditions of the naval service
 - The real creator of the **English novel of the sea** and of sailors
 - Exploited systematically and successfully the national peculiarities of Irish, Scotch and Welsh
- Turned to literature – failed to practice medicine
- A bookseller's hack - miscellaneous works Similar to Goldsmith
- Inspired by the success of Richardson and Fielding – half a dozen novels
- Novel – a 'large diffused picture' – no attempt to organise his materials into an artistic whole

Moving onto the next most important writer of the period, Tobias Smollet, he lived from 1721 till 1771. He was of Scottish origin and it also reminds us that Scottish Enlightenment did play a, did continue to play a significant role in the shaping of English literature in the 18th century. He was trained, Smollet was trained as a surgeon. He was also a man of war. Since he was also quite well-versed in naval expeditions, he is said to have had firsthand knowledge of the sea and sailors and also of the appalling conditions of the naval service which prevailed in England during those times.

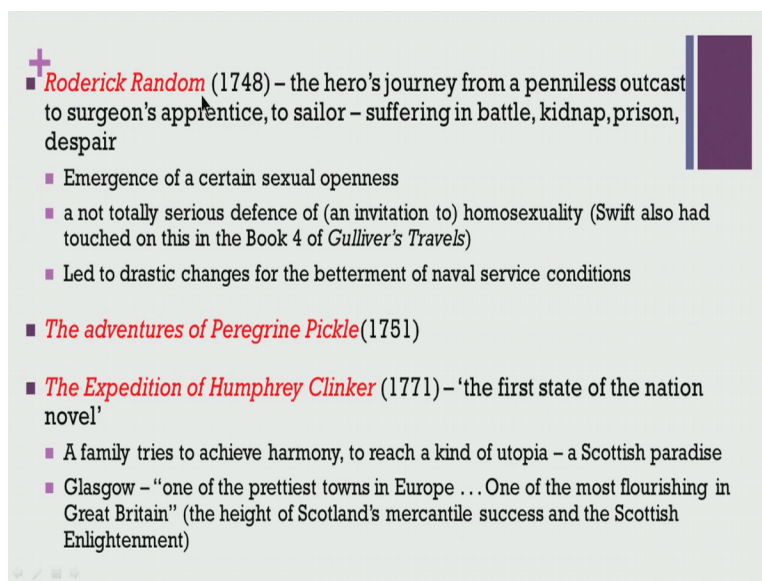
He in that sense is considered as the real creator of the English novel of the sea and of sailors. He also systematically exploited the national peculiarities of people with different origin such as Irish, Scotch and Welsh. This was also immensely appreciated by the English public because there was an ongoing different kind of relationship between all these inhabitants of the Great Britain. Smollet's life could be compared in minor ways with that of Goldsmith because like

Goldsmith we find Smollet also turning to literature because he did not want to continue practicing medicine in which he was trained in.

He also worked for a while as a hack writer with miscellaneous bookseller. He also had produced number of books during those times which were obviously not named after him. What inspired him to begin writing novels during that time was the instant success that Richardson and Fielding reaped in England during those times. So inspired with this we find Smollet on a writing spree and he produced almost half a dozen novels.

And for him novel was just a large diffused picture. We do not find him making any deliberate attempt to organize his materials into an artistic whole because he like many others of those times believed that novel need not be structured or need not follow any kind of principles because there was no precedence or there was no particular model for anyone to follow.

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- **Roderick Random** (1748) – the hero's journey from a penniless outcast to surgeon's apprentice, to sailor – suffering in battle, kidnap, prison, despair
 - Emergence of a certain sexual openness
 - a not totally serious defence of (an invitation to) homosexuality (Swift also had touched on this in the Book 4 of *Gulliver's Travels*)
 - Led to drastic changes for the betterment of naval service conditions
- **The adventures of Peregrine Pickle** (1751)
- **The Expedition of Humphrey Clinker** (1771) – 'the first state of the nation novel'
 - A family tries to achieve harmony, to reach a kind of utopia – a Scottish paradise
 - Glasgow – "one of the prettiest towns in Europe . . . One of the most flourishing in Great Britain" (the height of Scotland's mercantile success and the Scottish Enlightenment)

Roderick Random published in 1748 is perhaps the most famous and the most important work of Smollet. In this he portrays a hero's journey from a, from being a penniless outcast to a surgeon's apprentice and then to a sailor. So there is this particular hero who continues to have different kinds of varying experience in his life. He suffers in battle. He is kidnapped. He (suffer), he is also forced to serve a sentence in prison. He also falls into utmost despair.

So we find that this work was immensely popular during those times not just because of the variety of experiences that it hosted, also because of the way in which it dare to address certain subjects which were considered taboo until then. So in that sense this work also celebrates the emergence of a certain sexual openness in English society. And for example, Smollet undertakes not totally serious defense and even an open invitation to homosexuality. We find that there is a certain reference to the subject of homosexuality even in Swift's Gulliver's Travels.

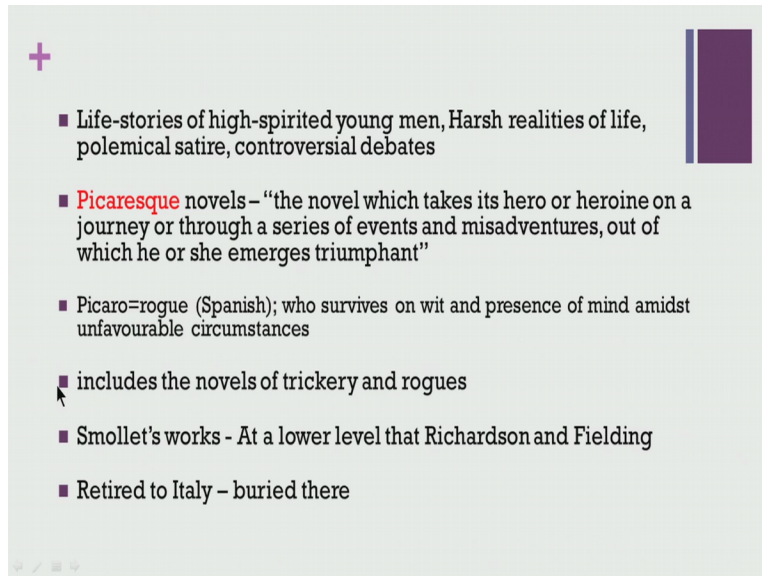
So all of these were controversial and at the same time people were more open to newer ideas and debating about newer kinds of tendencies because the 18th century was all about reason, rationality and also making oneself available to newer kinds of experiences. And the work Roderick Random was particularly significant in the national history of England because since he had portrayed the great sufferings at the and, since he had portrayed the great sufferings that the sailors were forced to undergo when they were out in the sea, this really influenced certain policy changes and it said that it led to drastic changes for the betterment of naval service conditions not just in Britain but also in certain parts of Europe.

The success of Roderick Random was followed by The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle published in 1751. But again another important work was published in 1771, The Expedition of Humphrey Clinker. This work is considered as the first state of the nation novel. In this one we find a family trying to achieve harmony and trying to achieve the state of utopia which they locate in Scotland as a Scottish paradise.

And in this work we also see this ongoing tussle between England and Scotland. We also see that Smollet is again one of many Scottish writers who try to live a lasting imprint on English writing but by also including a detailed portrayal of life, manners, geography and everything about Scotland. In this work, The Expedition of Humphrey Clinker, there is a detailed description about Scotland and particularly the reference to Glasgow is very interesting.

It is spoken Glasgow is introduced as one of the prettiest towns in Europe, one of the most flourishing in Great Britain. This also reflects upon the heights that Scotland's mercantile activities had achieved then and also about, also a very pointed reference towards the when Scottish Enlightenment.

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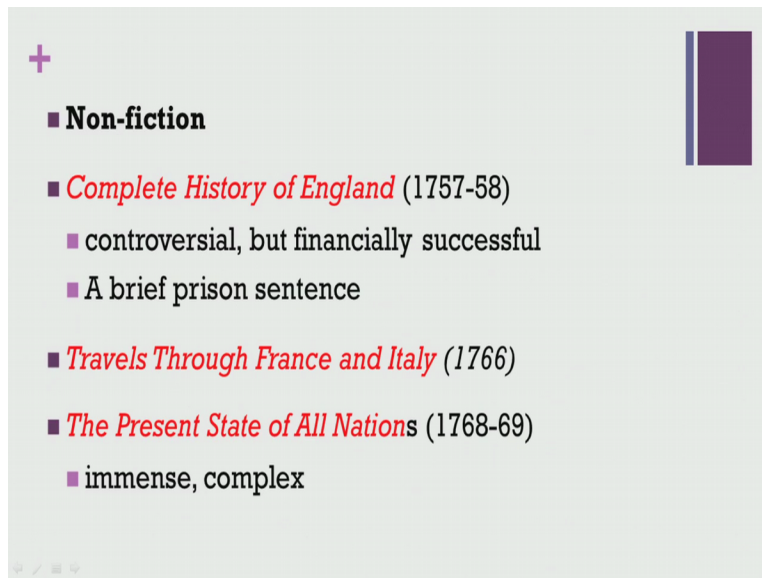
- Life-stories of high-spirited young men, Harsh realities of life, polemical satire, controversial debates
- **Picaresque** novels – “the novel which takes its hero or heroine on a journey or through a series of events and misadventures, out of which he or she emerges triumphant”
- **Picaro**=rogue (Spanish); who survives on wit and presence of mind amidst unfavourable circumstances
- includes the novels of trickery and rogues
- Smollet's works - At a lower level than Richardson and Fielding
- Retired to Italy – buried there

When we look at the kind of stories that Smollet produced keeping in mind that he had produced almost half a dozen novels, most of his stories were stories of high-spirited young men. They dealt with harsh realities of life. He also engaged with polemical satire and controversial debates in his writings. His works in general could be classified under this term picaresque novels. The term, the same term which could use, which could be used for work such as Tom Jones as well.

Picaresque novel is a novel which takes its hero or heroine on a journey or through a series of events and misadventures out of which he or she emerges triumphant. The term is derived from Spanish in which picaro means rogue. So picaresque novel is also the kind of novel which talks about a hero who survives on wit and presence of mind amidst unfavorable circumstances. So altogether it is not a negative portrayal of the picaro or the rogue but also a humorous and entertaining depiction of the life of a picaro.

The picaresque novels also include novels of trickery and rogues. And Smollet's work though it could be (())(22:56) in many levels with Fielding and that of Richardson's, it was also considered at a lower level than that his contemporaries. And in terms, and when we talk about his personal life, it said that eventually he retired to Italy where he dies and he was buried there as well.

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- **Non-fiction**
- *Complete History of England* (1757-58)
 - controversial, but financially successful
 - A brief prison sentence
- *Travels Through France and Italy* (1766)
- *The Present State of All Nations* (1768-69)
 - immense, complex

Smollet also wrote some non-fiction. For instance, the *Complete History of England* published in 1757-58, it was hugely, it was a huge success in terms of the revenue that it generated. But nevertheless it was also controversial because of some of the inputs that he provided and he also was forced to serve a brief sentence in prison. He also had published *Travels Through France and Italy* in 1766 and also *The Present State of All Nations* in 68-69 which was an immense and complex work and also considered as one of the best works of the 18th century.

So led by these great stalwarts such as Richardson, Fielding and Smollet, England had become a very fertile ground for the production of novels. There was also a growing reading public who were waiting for the next edition to come out. So in multiple ways England was also emerging as the land in which novel as an art form not just emerged but also reached its perfection. We shall continue to look at the impact of 18th century novel in English writing and as well as in world literature in the coming sessions. That is all we have for today. Thank you for listening and look forward to seeing you in the next lecture.