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## Women Novelists of the Romantic Age

Maria Edgeworth, Fanny Burney and Jane Austen are the three great women novelists of the romantic age and of the three Jane Austen is by far the greatest.

Maria Edgeworth (1767-1849)  
She published her first novel 'Castle Rackrent' in 1800 and it was followed by The Absentee and Belinda. Her work has a unique importance in the history of the English novel, for she is the founder of the 'Regional Novel' in England. She gives to her novels a local habitation and name and her characters are conditioned by the fact that they live in a particular locality which has its own traditions and distinctive way of life. Her characters are generally rounded life like figures which live long in the memory once one is acquainted with

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them.

Fanny Burney (1752-1840) - She preceded Jane Austen by several years her masterpiece 'Evelina' was published in 1778 when Jane was but three years old, 'Cecilia' came four years later, and 'Camilla' in 1796 the same year in which 'Pride and Prejudice' was written, though it was not published till 1813. There is no doubt that Jane Austen owed much to her predecessor, but her gifts were far greater. Miss Burney's cleverness consists in the portrayal of feeling in a young girl's sensitive mind, her stories are stories of country life and simple everyday activity. Miss Burney had her vogue only for a short while as she dealt with contemporary manners. The only one of her novels which is still read is 'Evelina' (1778) but it is not to be compared

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With any of Jane Austen's novels which are for all time Jane Austen is far ahead of Miss Burney in the field of characterisation also. In this respect, Macaulay compared her to Shakespeare. Jane Austen is also as far ahead of Fanny Burney in the use of simple direct English as well as she is in construction and effect.

Jane Austen (1775-1817) -  
'Sense and Sensibility' (1811),  
'Pride and Prejudice' (1813),  
'Northanger Abbey and Persuasion' (1818), 'Mansfield Park' (1814) and 'Emma' (1816) are the greatest novels of Jane Austen. She is regarded as ~~modern~~ modern novelist, for she is the leading exponent of what Robert Liddell calls "the pure novel" for she delights us by the formal qualities of her composition by her study of the relation between the characters or of

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their relations to a central theme. The pure novelist's criticism of life is an aspect of his design, it is the formal ordering of his material that in itself constitutes his criticism of life. Pure art often tends to become abstract, it often distorts reality in the interest of the design or the pattern. But this does never happen with Jane Austen, she is artist enough to avoid this fault. Perfection is achieved by a recognition of one's limits and Jane Austen is perfect precisely because she recognises her limits.

The end.

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