Claire Connolly offers a cultural history of the Irish novel in the period between the radical decade of the 1790s and the gaining of Catholic Emancipation in 1829. These decades saw the emergence of a group of talented Irish writers who developed and advanced such innovative forms as the national tale and the historical novel: fictions that took Ireland as their topic and setting, and which often imagined its history via domestic plots that addressed wider issues of dispossession and inheritance. Their openness to contemporary politics, as well as to recent historiography, antiquarian scholarship, poetry, song, plays and memoirs, produced a series of notable fictions, marked most of all by their ability to fashion from these resources a new vocabulary of cultural identity. This book extends and enriches the current understanding of Irish Romanticism, blending sympathetic textual analysis of the fiction with careful historical contextualisation.

Claire Connolly is Professor of English Literature at Cardiff University.
This series aims to foster the best new work in one of the most challenging fields within English literary studies. From the early 1780s to the early 1830s a formidable array of talented men and women took to literary composition, not just in poetry, which some of them famously transformed, but in many modes of writing. The expansion of publishing created new opportunities for writers, and the political stakes of what they wrote were raised again by what Wordsworth called those ‘great national events’ that were ‘almost daily taking place’: the French Revolution, the Napoleonic and American wars, urbanisation, industrialisation, religious revival, an expanded empire abroad and the reform movement at home. This was an enormous ambition, even when it pretended otherwise. The relations between science, philosophy, religion and literature were reworked in texts such as *Frankenstein* and *Biographia Literaria*; gender relations in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* and *Don Juan*; journalism by Cobbett and Hazlitt; poetic form, content and style by the Lake School and the Cockney School. Outside Shakespeare studies, probably no body of writing has produced such a wealth of comment or done so much to shape the responses of modern criticism. This indeed is the period that saw the emergence of those notions of ‘literature’ and of literary history, especially national literary history, on which modern scholarship in English has been founded.

The categories produced by Romanticism have also been challenged by recent historicist arguments. The task of the series is to engage both with a challenging corpus of Romantic writings and with the changing field of criticism they have helped to shape. As with other literary series published by Cambridge, this one will represent the work of both younger and more established scholars, on either side of the Atlantic and elsewhere.

*For a complete list of titles published see end of book.*
For Maura Cullinan
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