A major new study of Percy Shelley’s intellectual life and poetic career, *Shelley and the Revolutionary Sublime* identifies Shelley’s fascination with sublime natural phenomena as a key element in his understanding of the way ideas like ‘nature’ and ‘imagination’ informed the social and political structures of the Romantic period. Offering a genuinely fresh set of perspectives on Shelley’s texts and contexts, Cian Duffy argues that Shelley’s engagement with the British and French discourse on the sublime had a profound influence on his writing about political change in that age of revolutionary crisis. Examining Shelley’s extensive use of sublime imagery and metaphor, Duffy offers not only a substantial reassessment of Shelley’s work but also a significant re-appraisal of the role of the sublime in the cultural history of Britain during the Romantic period.

**Cian Duffy** is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow in the Centre for Eighteenth-Century Studies at the University of York.
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 response 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.

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SHELLEY AND THE REVOLUTIONARY SUBLIME

CIAN DUFFY
for my family
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Discourse on the Sublime’, in Fiona Price and Scott Masson (eds.), *Silence, Sublimity and Suppression* (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 2001); part of chapter 2 appeared as ‘Revolution or Reaction?: Shelley’s *Assassins* and the Politics of Necessity’, in *Keats-Shelley Journal* 52 (September 2003); a further portion of chapter 1 was published as ‘“One draught from Snowdon’s ever-sacred spring”: Shelley’s Welsh Sublime’, in Lynda Pratt and Damian Walford-Davies (eds.), *Wales and the Romantic Imagination* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2005). I am grateful to the editors of these volumes for permission to use this material.
Abbreviations

Books

**EIPM**  

**ENPT**  

**BSM**  

**Byron**  

**Coleridge**  

**CPPBS**  

**Claire**  

**CPW**  

**D&F**  

**Esdaile**  
List of abbreviations

**H6WT,** Percy Bysshe Shelley and Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, *History of a Six Weeks’ Tour through a Part of France, Switzerland, Germany and Holland.* (London, 1817).

**Letters**


**MWSJ,**


**MYRS**


**Poetry & Prose**


**Prose**


**PW**


**Rousseau**


**Ruins**


**Wordsworth**


**Journals**

**ELH** English Literary History

**ELN** English Language Notes

**K-SJ** Keats-Shelley Journal

**K-SMB** Keats-Shelley Memorial Bulletin

**MLQ** Modern Language Quarterly

**MLR** Modern Language Review

**PMLA** Publications of the Modern Language Association of America
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<td>N&amp;Q</td>
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<tr>
<td>Notes and Queries</td>
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<td>PQ</td>
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<td>Philological Quarterly</td>
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<td>RES</td>
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<td>Review of English Studies</td>
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