What does it mean to be human? The Brontë novels and poetry are fascinated by what lies at the core – and limits – of the human. *The Brontës and the Idea of the Human* presents a significant re-evaluation of how Charlotte, Emily, and Anne Brontë each responded to scientific, legal, political, theological, literary, and cultural concerns in ways that redraw the boundaries of the human for the nineteenth century. Proposing innovative modes of approach for the twenty-first century, leading scholars shed light on the relationship between the role of the imagination and new definitions of the human subject. This important interdisciplinary study scrutinises the notion of the embodied human and moves beyond it to explore the force and potential of the mental and imaginative powers for constructions of selfhood, community, spirituality, degradation, cruelty, and ethical behaviour in the nineteenth century and its fictional worlds.

ALEXANDRA LEWIS is Senior Lecturer in English Literature, and Director of the Centre for the Novel, at the University of Aberdeen. She is editor of the Norton Critical Edition of *Wuthering Heights*, and has published extensively on the Brontës, memory and trauma, and nineteenth-century literature and psychology.
Nineteenth-century British literature and culture have been rich fields for interdisciplinary studies. Since the turn of the twentieth century, scholars and critics have tracked the intersections and tensions between Victorian literature and the visual arts, politics, social organization, economic life, technical innovations, scientific thought—in short, culture in its broadest sense. In recent years, theoretical challenges and historiographical shifts have unsettled the assumptions of previous scholarly synthesis and called into question the terms of older debates. Whereas the tendency in much past literary critical interpretation was to use the metaphor of culture as ‘background’, feminist, foucauldian, and other analyses have employed more dynamic models that raise questions of power and of circulation. Such developments have reanimated the field. This series aims to accommodate and promote the most interesting work being undertaken on the frontiers of the field of nineteenth-century literary studies: work which intersects fruitfully with other fields of study such as history, or literary theory, or the history of science. Comparative as well as interdisciplinary approaches are welcomed.

A complete list of titles published will be found at the end of the book.
THE BRONTËS AND THE IDEA OF THE HUMAN

Science, Ethics, and the Victorian Imagination

EDITED BY

ALEXANDRA LEWIS

University of Aberdeen
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Abbreviations

Unless otherwise stated in the notes to a chapter, references to the Brontës’ novels are to the following Oxford World’s Classics editions and the below abbreviations are used in parentheses where required for the sake of clarity.

Anne Brontë

AG  Agnes Grey, Robert Inglesfield and Hilda Marsden, eds., with an introduction and additional notes by Sally Shuttleworth (2010)

T  The Tenant of Wildfell Hall, Herbert Rosengarten, ed., with an introduction and additional notes by Josephine McDonagh (2008)

Charlotte Brontë

JE  Jane Eyre, Margaret Smith, ed., with an introduction and revised notes by Sally Shuttleworth (2008)

P  The Professor, Margaret Smith and Herbert Rosengarten, eds., with an introduction by Margaret Smith (2008)

S  Shirley, Margaret Smith and Herbert Rosengarten, eds., with an introduction and additional notes by Janet Gezari (2007)

V  Villette, Margaret Smith and Herbert Rosengarten, eds., with an introduction and notes by Tim Dolin (2008)

Emily Brontë
