The Brontës and War

Fantasy and Conflict in Charlotte and Branwell Brontë's Youthful Writings

Emma Butcher

palgrave
macmillan

The Brontës and War

Emma Butcher

The Brontës and War

Fantasy and Conflict in Charlotte and Branwell Brontë's Youthful Writings

palgrave
macmillan

Emma Butcher
University of Leicester
Leicester, UK

ISBN 978-3-319-95635-0 ISBN 978-3-319-95636-7 (eBook)
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-95636-7

Cover illustration: © The Bronte Society

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

To Valerie

Preface

The Brontë men have fascinated generations of readers and researchers. This book stemmed from a simple question that was once put to me. Why are the men in the Brontë books so awful, so violent? Although there are more dimensions to it than that, this book traces the siblings' fascination with authority and violence back to their juvenilia, opening up future territories in Brontë research that have previously been unexplored.

This is the first full-length book dedicated to a theme in the Brontë juvenilia. Much of the groundwork has been laid by encyclopaedias, edited collections and transcription notes, which are detailed and plentiful. This book is the first result of those labours, which have enabled future generations to access a toolkit and explore important undercurrents within the narratives.

This book was born from my Ph.D. thesis, 'The Brontës and the Military', which was generously funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council at the University of Hull. Gratitude in plenty is given to the Brontë Parsonage Museum, especially Ann Dinsdale and Sarah Laycock, for access and use of their collections, as well as the exciting opportunity to translate my research into an exhibition, 'The Brontës, War and Waterloo' in 2015. Thanks also to Patsy Stoneman and a warm dedication in memory of Sarah Fermi. Thanks are owed to my thesis examiners, Christine Alexander and Catherine Wynne; the British Association for Victorian Studies committee; and the board members of the Juvenilia Press. Special thanks to Chawton House Library and

Tony Yablon for awarding me with the Tony Yablon Visiting Fellowship. Thanks also to Jessica Cox and Valerie Sanders, this would not have happened without you. Final thanks to my colleagues, family, friends, and loving partner, Andrew.

Leicester, UK Emma Butcher

Contents

Abbreviations

Tales: Tales from Glass Town, Angria and Gondal. Edited by Christine Alexander

Angria: Tales of Angria. Edited by Heather Glen

EEW (I, II, III): Edition of the Early Writings of Charlotte Brontë. Edited by Christine Alexander

WPB (I, II, III): The Works of Patrick Branwell Brontë. Edited by Victor Neufeldt

PCB: The Poems of Charlotte Brontë. Edited by Victor Neufeldt

Blackwood's: Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine

List of Figures

CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Youth Writing War

Charge on the enemy
Victory leads
Capture their battery
Footmen or Cavalr'y
He shall be conqueror
Fastest who speeds

Think not of danger now
Enter the breach
Dream not of cannon-ball
Mount by the shattered wall
Soon shall their banner-staff
Bend to your reach

War is an ecstasy
Risk is wild
What though their battlements
Stand like a rock[1]

Charlotte's youthful poem, 'Charge on the Enemy' (1837), is not situated within her other Angrian writings, acting as a stand-alone example of her interest in war. Throughout, the verse's exhilarating, progressive form captures the essence of war, demonstrating multidimensional knowledge of militarism ranging from battlefield terminology to feelings of near-death

E. Butcher, *The Brontës and War*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-95636-7_1

experience. It is heroic and patriotic, yet also dark: 'risk is wild'. It is playful and euphoric, yet considered and poignant. It is a deeply multifaceted response to the experience of war.

Like this poem suggests, young people are integral witnesses to history, yet, over time, their voices have been marginalised in the grand scheme of authoritative adult narratives. Even in the nineteenth century, when childhood became a social category in its own right, young people were caught in a passive consumer culture where their identity was shaped by the literature written *for* them, rather than *by* them. By returning to the past and analysing events through the lens of youthful penmanship, it is clear that youth's imaginative agency captures previously (un)interrogated moments of history. In the instance of war, it is the uninhibited, inquisitive nature of youth that paints a vivid canvas of some of the most important military events in history. This is the case in regard to the focus of this book, which examines Charlotte and Branwell Brontë's youthful writing partnership in the years following the Napoleonic Wars.

The Brontës contribute to a legacy of young people writing war in the nineteenth century. Samuel Coleridge's son, Hartley Coleridge, reworked the Napoleonic Wars into his imaginary war-gaming kingdom, Ejuxria. His map, drawn between 1804 and 1810, is the only surviving material of this kingdom from his hand, yet surviving family correspondence confirms the kingdom's content. His brother Derwent, writing of the kingdom after Hartley's death, stated that, after declaring that he had letters from Ejuxria, he [Hartley] would launch into his kingdom's news, which regularly revolved around wars fought between sovereign powers.[2]

Hartley Coleridge is just one example. Other notable authors such as George Eliot, Robert Louis Stevenson and Iris Vaughan wrote war narratives as children.[3] The Juvenilia Press has published numerous volumes of child authors, highlighting the sophisticated, interesting and playful forgotten content of important writers. The war stories and accompanying drawings written by these young prodigies tend to rework and play with past military periods; their tales usually revive or reimagine historical wars. Although these writings do not demonstrate the same sophisticated level of sustained content as the Brontë juvenilia, or perhaps Hartley Coleridge, they do, however, highlight the importance of war in the creative development of well-known authors, demonstrating early understandings of conflict, death, heroism and military masculinity.

Charlotte and Branwell Brontës' collaborative writings take the form of a war-fuelled fantasy world, first titled Glass Town (1829–1834) and then

evolving into Angria (1834–1839). Over the course of approximately ten years, Charlotte, aged 13–23, and Branwell, aged 12–22, constructed an elaborate encyclopaedia of characters, places, and events, which are a complex conflation of real-life influence and imaginative play.[4] A majority of the literature does not fall under the usual category of 'child author', as, technically, these are 'coming of age' or 'teen' writings. Yet, with the Brontës, there has become a clear divide between the siblings' adult published works and the labyrinth of youthful writings they produced in the safety of their tight family unit. Childhood, despite its categorical placing in legal and social circles, is a fluid, abstract concept that is relative to the process of 'growing up'. Both Charlotte and Branwell's saga is often in line with youthful nature, it is experimental, imitative, and playful.

Despite its youthful execution, their saga demonstrates an ever-evolving recognition of one of the most adult topics that a young writer could tackle: war. As this book will go on to demonstrate, this was an exciting time in war writing, with British soldiers and journalists putting pen to paper and trying to make sense of a particularly conflict-riddled period, ranging from large-scale wars and their legacies—namely the Napoleonic Wars—to other colonial conflicts around the globe, such as the First Anglo-Ashanti War. The Brontë children were part of this nationwide conversation, using writing as an outlet to process and evaluate the varying post-war opinions they were exposed to through the material they read. The following chapters demonstrate that both siblings read widely and had a strong knowledge of formal and opinion-based war histories gained from canonical texts, biographies, newspapers and periodicals circulating in the 'adult world'. Using these texts as their source material, both brother and sister created a fantasy theatre of war, spending over a decade crafting their worlds of Glass Town and Angria. Within, they built a playful, alternative military history. The sagas draw on conflicts ranging from the ancient to the recent past and go further to consider and imagine wartime feeling and sensation. In sum, their writings offer an important socio-historical reading of war's impact on the social and artistic climate of Britain in the post-Waterloo years. Ultimately, this book shows that, if listened to, youthful voices are a rich spectrum of sources for understanding military mentality; the young mind occupies a twilight zone that responds and is sympathetic to the most serious real-world situations, yet is also emotionally intuitive enough to tap into wartime states of feeling and create uninhibited, imaginative war commentary.

Celebrating the Brontë Juvenilia

The Brontës' early writings remain a complex and uncertain, yet fascinating, area of scholarship. The majority of manuscripts were written deliberately in miniature hand, almost illegible to the naked eye. The siblings' saga was a private microcosm constructed by a shared imagination, which was mutated and adapted through various forms. It began with three different play sagas—Our Fellows' Play, Young Men's Play and Islanders' Play—the latter two morphing into the Glass Town saga in 1829. Finally, this fully formed saga evolved into Angria in 1834. This trajectory goes some way to explain why confusion exists between who wrote what and when parts were written. It is still unknown how many undiscovered fragments of juvenilia exist and how much content has been destroyed, either by the Brontës themselves or posthumously. The main focal worlds of this book, Glass Town and Angria, appear to be fairly complete, yet even in recent years, more manuscripts are being discovered. In 2017, a Glass Town manuscript—retrospectively titled *A Visit to Haworth*—written by Charlotte was discovered when a book previously belonging to the Brontë family was sold by a private collector in America. In 2019, a little book by Charlotte turned up at an auction house in Paris. Although finding new Brontë material is rare, the extensive nature of the Brontë universe leaves extra stories and layers of detail open to discovery and interpretation.

Emily and Anne were involved in the Plays and Glass Town writings (1825–1832). The early Brontë sibling unit—Charlotte, Branwell, Emily and Anne—acted as a form of collaborative, playful 'think tank'. It is well known that the Reverend Patrick Brontë gave Branwell a set of toy soldiers in 1826, and each of the four siblings picked one, named him and used him for their creative collaborative stories. Emily and Anne's soldiers—Parry and Ross—make appearances in the early stories but have less involvement as the saga goes on.[5] Despite Emily and Anne's evident presence within these early stories, no manuscript is written in their hand. Emily and Anne's non-vocal, marginal role in the Glass Town saga is potentially why, in 1832, the two younger siblings made a decisive move away from Glass Town and distanced themselves from the Angrian writings. They formed their own saga, Gondal, which was separate yet in-keeping with their shared writing tradition. Emily and Anne's move away from Glass Town consolidated Charlotte and Branwell's writing partnership and confirmed them as the primary owners of their ever-evolving Glass Town and Angrian events and characters.

The Glass Town and Angrian manuscripts are notoriously difficult to navigate. Within these private spaces, Charlotte and Branwell had the freedom to discuss explicit, problematic content in an uncensored literary environment, without any intention for it to be shared with a public audience. The result of this is, however, a problem for future critics. Unlike published material, the saga is an organic, ever-changing conversation between the sibling unit and therefore signposting and clarity in regard to direction and any last-minute character changes is often omitted.

Christine Alexander and Juliet McMaster's *The Child Writer* offers detailed explanations as to the patterns and practices of the child writer during the long nineteenth century. As well as erraticism, the child's desire to imitate material they have read is often a reason why children's voices are seen to lack authenticity. Alexander and McMaster advocate that this regressive interpretation misunderstands the juvenilias' intrinsic value. Alexander quotes Robert Browning:

> He saw imitation as vital to the development of genius: 'Genius almost invariably begins to develop itself by imitation. It has, in the short–sightedness of infancy, faith in the world: and its object is to compete with, or prove superior to, the word's already–recognised idols, at their own performances and by their own methods'.[6]

Although this quotation opens up various avenues of discussion, it primarily captures the fast-paced methods of the child writer, whose writings boast an air of authority, yet are unstable in their structures, content and allegiances. Charlotte and Branwell's juvenilia fleetingly touch upon different events, opinions and histories: in short, what captures the siblings' immediate attention and imagination. Much of the juvenilia discards information that was a focal point only a story ago or changes the narrative to construct an alternative chain of events, even completely changing the identity of a character. This, which Browning terms, 'short-sightedness', exudes negative connotations as to the unreliability of the child narrator, yet, Browning's comments on the 'development of genius' celebrate the skill of the child in recognising and rewriting the adult world around them. At a fundamental level, the fluid and uninhibited nature of juvenilia make it fun and playful. In fact, Sara Lodge suggests that the Brontë juvenilia goes further with play, mimicking 'the rhetorical play of contemporary magazine culture: it is an arena of repartee, slang, drunkenness, political one-upmanship, challenge and reply that fully enjoys the freedoms accorded to

men in the outside world'.[7] Lodge suggests that the siblings' immersion in the magazine culture around them allowed them to pause and reflect on the more sinister aspects of war. Charlotte and Branwell's war world is a meta-meta space of play and reflection, where fact and fiction are fused together to form a responsive alternative history through which we can interpret the attitudes and feelings generated within the post-Napoleonic moment.

In a broad sense, the siblings' inclusion of societal attitudes within their writings could fall under sociological criticism. Michael Rossi defines this approach as looking 'at how a literary work, as a product of a society, has been shaped by these forces [accepted attitudes and values] and how it, in turn, supports them'.[8] There is a problem with this, however, in the sense that the Brontë juvenilia deliberately evades this mainstream rhetoric of social response by existing as a separate, private space of experimentation. It is one-sided: their juvenilia are founded on societal attitudes, yet it overtly contributes nothing back to society itself. Instead, rather than brand this complex mode of reading the juvenilia within one broad critical framework, this book has also been influenced by the work of Laurie Langbauer, whose research addresses reading social history through juvenilia. Although Langbaur mainly relates her argument to the Romantics' youthful writings, she argues that prolepsis enabled child writers to imagine rhetorical events as if they have already happened. This, in itself, gives rise to an alternative, creative way of imagining the past, and the potentials of that past. As Langbaur states: 'Recovering juvenility matters, first of all, because it recasts history'.[9] Langbaur goes on to say that this act of prefiguring and reworking produces 'incisive meta-critical reflections: their supposed prematurity required that they actively engage with questions of identity and meaning-making and ruthlessly interrogate preconceptions of causality and development'.[10] It is, then, the status of the writer as a youth that allows for an alternative critical model of history to arise, where history runs parallel with the development and growth of the self and is reconfigured as both imitation and creative play. In the case of Charlotte and Branwell, the foundations of their saga are built on real-life war and conflict, yet it is their reinvention of reality through both imitation and interrogation of others' opinions that formulates an alternative method of reading the past. Their fantasy world exists as a dimension in which history and fantasy collide, creating a new record of past that is not just concerned with factual events, but the emotions and commentary generated by these events.

The Brontës' experimentation with the literary adult world allowed them to deconstruct, critique and rework content to suit their own saga. It is through this play and adaptation of the adult world that the child writer refreshingly highlights and interrogates contemporary adult opinion. The Brontës' openness to exploring and expressing different opinions of the period allows for a mosaic of perspectives regarding war to come through and creates a multi-layered, sophisticated case study of the period. As well as giving a general overview of contemporary public opinions that were in vogue—exhibited through various modes of literature, especially the periodical press—this book primarily captures the Brontës' own authorial voice and paints an alternative military history comprised of fact and fiction, but confidently rests in a hazy twilight zone of subjectivity and creativity.

Growing Up in the Shadow of War

The Brontës' parents, Maria and Patrick Brontë, lived through the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. Maria, born in 1783 in Penzance to a merchant father, saw first-hand the impact the Napoleonic Wars had on Britain, which disrupted trade and fishing and brought great hardship to the commercial trade centre in Cornwall and beyond. Likewise, Patrick lived through the anxiety and threat generated by the wars. Whilst studying for a curacy at the University of Cambridge, he joined the volunteer corps, which had 154 members by February 1804. Patrick joined in the wake of fresh fears of French invasion, as Napoleon's Grand Army was ready to march across the English Channel. As well as participating in a drill once a day and parading, Patrick was taught how to handle and use arms. After the end of his degree and preliminary curacy appointments in Essex and Shropshire, he was stationed in Yorkshire, where he would remain as a parish curate for the rest of his life. His first position was in Dewsbury where, as David Harrison remarks, 'He visited distant cottages, held services in working-class areas, and showed sincerity and compassion for their [the working class] plight during the hard times of the cloth industry during the disruptions caused to trade by the Napoleonic Wars'.[11] Later, whilst stationed in Hartford—his fourth appointment—Patrick was fully aware of the attack on Rawfolds Mill by the Luddites, the impact of which remained with him for many years. When both Brontë parents married in 1812, they united their experiences of war. Both had personally witnessed how the Napoleonic Wars impacted their local communities, and both understood how international warfare could damage and shape the fabric of British society.

The Brontë children were born into this climate: a nation affected and scarred by war. The eldest surviving child, Charlotte, was born in 1816, a year after the decisive battle of Waterloo. This meant that, unlike their parents, the children did not carry any immediate memories of large-scale war. Instead, the siblings were faced with growing up in a post-war climate. Although the landed gentry felt some immediate post-war economic benefits in the years following Waterloo, a majority of the population faced economic hardship and an unstable social climate. Although the war was over, the civil, often violent, conflict in Britain raged on. The Brontë children saw the problematic effects generated by the introduction of the Corn Laws in 1815, which provoked a reactionary campaign from radicals who regularly met and distributed pamphlets and petitions. Henry Weisser goes as far to say that the rise of philosophic radicals in the 1820s—headed by Jeremy Bentham and James Mill—even created an age of accepted radicalism, which saw a number of reforms pushed through Parliament.[12]

As well as experiencing an economic, political and social climate in flux, the Brontë children were born into an age where the literary trade flourished through rapid expansion. Although the popularity and wide distribution of periodicals meant that the British population received regular updates of the radical post-war changes that blighted local communities, it also meant that the previous wars could be memorialised and relived through conversational articles, opinion pieces and storytelling.

Despite living through the war's hardship, Patrick enjoyed keeping up-to-date with this eclectic mix of war material. As a staunch Tory and Catholic sympathiser, he related to and hero-worshipped the Duke of Wellington. The Brontë family owned various commemorative goods that celebrated Wellington's military career including portraits, biographies, busts and a medallion case that states that he was the 'most noble and exalted hero in the annals of history'. Patrick subscribed to *The United Service Journal* and borrowed other magazines, such as the Brontë family's favourite periodical, *Blackwood's*, which promoted Wellington's military achievements and perpetuated the rhetoric of heroism, despite his waning popularity as a politician in the years following Waterloo. Patrick's infatuation with Wellington was passed on to his children, especially Charlotte. She also remained a loyal supporter of Wellington throughout her life.

Patrick and Charlotte's hero worship of Wellington is just one example of how the media was central in shaping the opinions and imaginations of the parsonage's occupants. It is these opinion pieces, reviews and biographies that take centre stage in this book. Although newspapers such as *The Leeds*

Intelligencer, *Leeds Mercury* and *John Bull* are important sources of contemporary commentary, especially in documenting the unstable post-war climate in and around Haworth, periodicals such as *Blackwood's*, *The New British Novelist* and *The United Service Journal* combined both current events with the arts. Each offered the siblings access to a shared national conscious that was obsessed with reading and writing about war. Within each issue the Brontë family read features, memoirs and discussions relating to wartime accounts and figureheads, providing a mosaic of plot and character ideas they could adopt and recreate.

In addition to the mass media that swept through the parsonage, the family also had access to their own home library. The parsonage held a variety of books that would have been available to the Brontë children from a young age. These include numerous titles with military content, such as *The Works of Virgil* (1824)—with an annotated copy of the *Aeneid*—John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1797), The Bible,[13] annuals such as *Friendship's Offering* (1829), Lord Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1827), and Walter Scott's poetry and prose, such as *Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805). Beyond the parsonage, the family managed to acquire and read many other classics that contained military content, including Romantic poetry, the plays of William Shakespeare and Ben Jonson, *Arabian Nights* (1706), James Ridley's *Tales of the Genii* (1764) and the full nine-volume set of Scott's *Life of Napoleon* (1827).

Speculation as to where the Brontës accessed their reading material is still contested. Evidence of their extensive literary intake is evident throughout the collected siblings' juvenilia and later works, however, it is difficult to track down their reading or borrowing base. Bob Duckett has conducted the most extensive research as to where the Brontës borrowed their books. First, it is likely that they visited and read books at Ponden Hall. Duckett has recorded details of the Ponden Hall Catalogue of Books, auctioned in Keighley in 1899, which goes some way to uncovering what books the Brontë family were exposed to.[14] This collection includes biographies of eminent men, such as Leiut Sarratt's *Life of Buonaparte* (1804), historical military memoirs that are of interest yet unrelated to memoirs discussed in this study—such as William Thomson and Robert Beatson's *Military Memoirs Relating to Campaigns, Battles and Stratagems of War Ancient and Modern* (1803) and *Naval and Military Memoirs of Great Britain, from 1727 to 1783* (1804)—national magazines, such as copies of *The Oxford Review* (1807), and various books relating to geography, grammar, and songs and hymns.

Aside from this private collection, the siblings' father joined Keighley Mechanics' Institute in 1833, giving him access to their well-stocked library. This does not, however, account for the siblings' early reading as their father's membership coincided with the existence of an already fully formed saga. In fact, during the Brontës' younger years, Haworth had no library. There were numerous circulating libraries around the Yorkshire area, however, Charlotte maintained that she did not have access to one. Nevertheless, by studying the subscription and circulating library lists, such as Misses M & S Laycock's in Sheffield and Widdops' Circulating Library in Manchester, it is clear what kind of materials the reading public had access to, which included numerous traditional titles and themed content found within this study. As Duckett attests, Haworth, despite its primitive stereotype, was a cultural centre: 'the Brontës lived amongst educated and creative people many of whom may have loaned books and discussed literature […] Joseph Hardacre […] John Nicolson, "the Airedale poet", Abraham Wildman, John Milligan, Isaac Constantine, John Jowett, J. Oldridge, John Kitson, James Mitchell and the ubiquitous Revd. Theodore Drury'.[15] This is in addition to the Revd. Jonas Driver who lent *Blackwood's* and *John Bull* to the family until his death in 1831. Despite the Brontës' limited access to resources, the type of reading conducted by Haworth's creative types would have contributed to the general literate atmosphere of the community, which the siblings may have contributed to or been inspired by. Regardless of sources, it is clear that the siblings' knowledge of war was well rounded and varied, gathered from national and international literature with the encouragement of their father. By the time both Charlotte and Branwell wrote their first war story, they were already important consumers in the post-war literary landscape.

Soldiers in Haworth

> Here lies a true soldier who all must applaud
> Much hardship he suffered at home and abroad
> But the hardest engagement he ever was in
> Was the Battle of Self and the Conquest of Sin.[16]

A constant reminder of the Napoleonic Wars dominated the skyline of Haworth. The summit of Stoodley Pike housed a monument, erected in 1815, to commemorate the dead of Waterloo. Although housing in our present day has interrupted the view from Haworth and other villages in

the valley, it was a visible and poignant part of the landscape as the Brontë children were growing up: a constant reminder of the consequences of conflict and a symbol that the previous wars were very much alive in local memory.

There is no evidence that the Brontë siblings interacted with soldiers whilst growing up in Haworth. In fact, the family did not have any direct ties with the military with the exception of William, the Revd. Patrick Brontë's brother, who took arms in the 1798 rebellion in Ballynahinch, Ireland. Nevertheless, it is highly likely that the Brontës would have known of Haworth's military connections as their father, as curate, would have been familiar with the parish and its people. Despite the siblings growing up in an era before the national census listed individuals and their occupations—rather than household—there are clues as to the military residents of Haworth. There is no information that is relevant in the 1841 census, however, in 1851 the Chelsea Pensioners, Joseph Fletcher, aged 79, and John Farrar, aged 62, are living in and listed as being born in Haworth. Interestingly, the census also reveals an army pensioner, John Crabtree, aged 75, living as a lodger in Haworth. The Revd. Patrick Brontë's letters show that this pensioner and Patrick had disagreements about money.[17] Although these records are clearly past the period of focus for this book and there can be no evidence that these ex-military men were living in Haworth whilst the siblings were growing up, the entries demonstrate that returning soldiers made Haworth their home after Napoleonic Wars and continued to make it their home long after.

Other sources give clues as to Haworth's military residents. In the parish's baptismal registers in 1813 and 1816, respectively, a William Firth is listed as a 'Militia Man' and John Appleyard as a 'Militia Sergeant' under 'father's occupation'.[18] Similarly, the headstones in Haworth churchyard reveal their graves' military occupants. Although most are not applicable to the timeframe of this book, like the epitaph that opens this section, one reads:

> IN Memory of John Bland late Sergeant in the 1st Dragoon Guards. Served in the Army 30 Years. He died Octr 3rd 1821 Aged 68 Years.
>
> ALSO Sarah his Wife. She died July 12th 1847, Aged 96 Years.
>
> ALSO Michael Bland late in the 1st Dragoon Guards Served 20 Years. He died Novr 16th 1811. Aged 53 Years.
>
> Farewell vain World thou shop of toil and pain With our Redeemer now we hope to reign.

> Welcome sweet death thou entrance into bliss A place of rest O what a change is this
>
> ALSO of JOHN CLAYTON, late of Bradford, grandson of the above named JOHN BLAND, who died July 4th 1886 in the 86th Year of his Age.[19]

Although John Bland died before the Brontë siblings were little more than babies, his family remained long-standing residents of Haworth. Again, although it is unclear whether the Brontë family engaged with them on a personal level, with John's 30 year's service there could well have been stories shared verbally through the pulpit or in everyday conversation.

Lastly, the Diary of John Kitson, a working-class labourer, acts as an unusual source in regard to the soldier residents of Haworth. Although the timeframe, again, falls outside the focus of this book, the opening lines reveal a poignant connection between Kitson and the military: 'I John Kitson was born September 1781 at Bell hile [*sic*] a little below Haworth of poor parents in yorshire [*sic*] and my father went to be a soldier when I was but a child so as I could not tell on him going but he left my mother with three lads'.[20] Kitson continues this remarkable diary until his death, where he talks of his inability to work or eat due to poor health. Although the diary does not go into further detail about his father, it provides emotive imagery of war disrupting the local landscape as soldiers leave their homes and families behind. In the post-war climate, with many surviving soldiers returning to their families with war-induced physical and mental injuries, the Brontë children would likely have seen these same heads of family, but altered, return to their local landscape, or perhaps seen bereaved families in times of hardship. Although these local sources do not provide much substance for this book, they evidence that soldiers were part of Haworth's social fabric in the post-Waterloo era and, alongside the siblings' military reading, their presence and legacy may have provided mood music for the siblings' imaginative understandings of war and the everyday soldier.

The Major Wars and Conflicts in Glass Town and Angria

The siblings' juvenilia may have originated from childhood play, but play soon grew into an imaginative empire. This section provides a useful introduction to the wars and conflicts that consistently rage through the

Glass Town and Angrian saga. The following summaries are primarily constructed from Branwell's writings, which concern themselves with the linear chronology of Glass Town and Angria's history. Whereas Branwell typically constructed sweeping battle scenes, Charlotte's war writings responded to how these battles impacted their shared characters' personalities and identities. Her stories play a major role in highlighting the societal impact of war on their kingdom, especially during the Angrian post-civil war years (1837–1839). Therefore, in different ways, both siblings establish themselves as authoritative war writers.

The main wars in the saga are as follows:

The Twelves War (1829–1830)
Rogue's Insurrection of Glass Town (1830–1832)
The Wars of Encroachment and Aggression (1833–1834)
The Angrian and Glass Town Civil Wars (1835–1837)
Post–War Angria (1837–1839)

The Glass Town and Angrian saga was born out of war gaming. Their early pre-Glass Town manuscript titled *History of the Rebellion in my Fellows* (1828) showcases the logistical talents of an eleven and twelve-year-old, imagining and reenacting a large-scale battle with their toy soldiers, headed by the Duke of Wellington and Napoleon Bonaparte. This type of militant play laid the foundations for the first series of wars, written in the following year (1829) that brought Glass Town and its history to life. The saga begins with **the Twelves War**, with the Twelves sailing to and colonising the West Coast of Africa. The Twelves consist of notable military names, such as the Duke of York and the Duke of Wellington, who act as the chiefs of this adventurous band. After sailing from England to the African coast, they engage in a battle against the Dutch on Ascension Island, before sailing to the coast and successfully establishing a colony. After a short period of peace, war erupts between the colonisers and the Ashanti. The war culminates with the Battle of Rosendale Hill, which is often elevated to the status of myth in future Glass Town narratives. The battle results in the death of the king of the Twelves, the Duke of York, which then leads to Wellington's subsequent coronation.[21] Before he takes his crown, however, Wellington travels back to Europe to fight in the Napoleonic Wars, refusing to take up this position until he has vanquished Napoleon. He succeeds, returning to Africa as both hero and sovereign.