

*Without the Veil Between* Pre-Publication review by Steve Lindahl, [stevelindahl.com](http://stevelindahl.com)

DM Denton's historical novel, *Without the Veil Between / Anne Brontë: A fine and Subtle Spirit*, is the story of the Brontë family from the point of view of Charlotte and Emily's younger sister. The title comes from a line in one of Anne's poems, *In Memory of a Happy Day in February*. The last stanza of the poem is quoted in the afterword of Denton's novel.

As was the case with many nineteenth century families, the Brontës suffered loss. Anne was born in 1820. Her mother died in 1821 and two of her sisters, Maria and Elizabeth, died in 1825. This left the father, Patrick Brontë, an Anglican priest, to raise the three sisters and one son alone. Denton's emphasis on the thoughts and desires of the youngest Brontë sister brings color and life to the pages of her novel. She expresses Anne's concerns in lavish prose that matches the 19<sup>th</sup> century Brontë style. *Without the Veil Between* isn't simply a biographical novel; it is a journey back into the day to day lives of one of history's most famous literary families.

Anne's brother, Branwell, was a primary focus of her thoughts due to his troubled lifestyle. He often returned home after his habits left him no alternative.

“Branwell also had the refuge of home for career disasters, but nowhere but drink and opium for those of the heart.”

Early in the novel, Anne desired a relationship with William Weightman, an assistant to her father and a good friend of Branwell's. Her feelings for the young curate were a mixture of her own interest and respect for the effect William had on her troubled brother.

“Branwell had even confided to her that 'Willie' was the best friend he'd ever had – with a wink that caused Anne to wonder if William had admitted something, too. She knew she shouldn't think so. Nevertheless, before she closed her eyes on that day she would be tempted to hold and look at one of her most treasured possessions: a Valentine...”

Of course, the role writing played in Anne and her sisters lives is the most interesting of their concerns.

“Writing and talking about their writing inspired them, and defined them, at least to each other.”

It was, as it is for most writers, a means of escape and a way of dealing with life's frustrations.

“Anne found writing a most natural and constant way to seek relief. Her reason became another's, a

naively optimistic, determined, almost invisible young woman named Agnes, who composed musings out of sorrows or anxieties to acknowledge in a resilient way all those powerful feelings that could never be wholly crushed and for which solace from any living creature shouldn't be sought or expected. Anne hoped Agnes' story would mark her own passage from a woman of mere occupation to one of true vocation.”

The works of Charlotte and Emily, *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*, are the two Brontë novels most well known today, but Anne's novels *Agnes Grey* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* are still taught in schools around the world. *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* was successful enough during Anne's life to earn a second edition.

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