

Book Reviews

Notes on Nursing: What It Is and What It Is Not

By Florence Nightingale

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Reviewed by **Barbara Hayes**

Professor Emeritus, School of Nursing, Midwifery and Nutrition, James Cook University, Townsville QLD



[Notes on Nursing](#)
Florence Nightinga...



The old truism that 'One cannot judge a book by its cover' is true in the case of this particular treasure trove. Without a doubt, the cover of the book is very handsome in simulated deep brown letter with gold lettering accompanied by gilt tipped pages. However, appropriately in a Nursing History issue of *Contemporary Nurse*, this older publication, which previously received little attention in this country, has now resurfaced.

Strategically, Barbara Stevens Barnum, on behalf of the publishers Lippincott, has not advertised the elegance of the offerings inside the book. Instead, in a relatively rare move, Barnum has published not only a reissue of the deservedly famous *Notes on Nursing* by Miss Nightingale, but has also invited twelve other leaders in nursing (mainly nursing theorists) in the 1990s to contribute a brief essay. The shape of these twelve contributions comprises the theorists/leaders thoughts both about the development of their own theories and visions for nursing, and the interface of these contemporary thoughts with those of Nightingale.

In addition, Constance B Schuler, Associate Dean of Academic Affairs at Wagner College, Staten Island, New York, gives a comprehensive, seventeen- page biography of Nightingale. The biography was included to refresh the memory of any of us who have forgotten the details of this founder of modern nursing, lauded at her death by the following accolade: 'Few lives have been more useful or more inspiring than hers' (*New York Times* 15 August 1910) - just one among many accolades from 1910 until 2008.

This book has a potentially wide audience as the two attractions - Nightingale and Nursing Theory - are of enduring interest to Australian nursing. Celebration of International Nurses' and Midwives' Day (now merged in many centres) around 12 May - Nightingale's birthday - keeps the Nightingale heritage accessible. Further, the attraction, indeed the hunger, of many professional nurses to understand nursing theorists and their theories is evidenced by the ongoing popularity of Ann Marriner's succession of editions of nursing theorists and their work. Jennie Greenwood's Australian collection of nursing theory and its application is also well past its first edition.

Even without overt references to historical benchmarks, nursing theory is inevitably intertwined with the history of the profession and the discipline. For example, during the HIV/AIDS epidemic when the hospices were established (mainly in the San Francisco and New York County Health Services) a serendipitous finding emerged. Nightingale imperatives for patient care - cleanliness, fresh air, nutritious food, an orderly environment, and calm attendants were demonstrated, in and of themselves, to stimulate the immune system.

Not only does this book have a potentially wide audience but it also fits nicely into the niche between the expositions collections (such as those edited by Marriner and Greenwood) and the necessarily truncated accounts of nursing theory and nursing theorists in the introductory chapters of all major nursing textbooks, both for undergraduate and postgraduate students. Lippincott's elegant presentation renders this book ideal as an achievement or incentive prize for students and graduate, as gifts to colleagues and students and, finally, to grace your own bookshelf.

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