



Mayo Center for Humanities in Medicine Insight XIV
Transforming Medical Care

Florence Nightingale: Woman at War

Written and performed by Agnete G. Haaland

The 1995 Irving S. Cooper Visiting Professorship at Mayo Foundation

Lo! in that house of misery
A lady with a lamp I see
Pass through the glimmering gloom
And flit from room to room.

Lo! in that house of misery

A lady with a lamp I see

Pass through the glimmering gloom

And flit from room to room.

And slow, as in a dream of bliss,

The speechless sufferer turns to kiss

Her shadow, as it falls

Upon the darkening walls.

Santa Filomena

by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

And slow,
The speechless sufferer
Upon
As if a door
Opened and
The light shone and was spent.
In England's annals, through the long
The light shone and was spent.

Florence Nightingale and William Worrall Mayo: Pioneering Partners in Medical Care

In dramatizing Florence Nightingale's contributions to the nursing profession and the practice of medicine, we honor all Mayo nurses, past and present.

When we consider her accomplishments in relation to Mayo, several intriguing connections come to mind, with life spans and ethnic heritage providing common ground. Englishwoman Florence Nightingale was born in 1820 and died in 1910. Englishman William Worrall Mayo was born in 1819 and died in 1911.

These nineteenth-century pioneers in medical care were kindred in nature, sharing

many personal attributes and ideals. They were filled with energy and willingness to travel great distances, assuming significant personal risk to satisfy their scientific curiosity and assert their social and political leadership. Their own illnesses provided power-

ful motivations in seeking places and methods of healing for themselves and for others.

Although Miss Nightingale is usually portrayed as a founder of nursing and hospital administration, her influence was even

broader. She established procedures which are the foundation of all modern medical care and pioneered applications and graphical representations of statistics that set the stage for administrative evaluation and improvement.



Florence Nightingale brought order and compassion to the chaos of British hospitals during the Crimean War.



An inspired, intensely religious humanitarian, Florence Nightingale violated expectations for women in her privileged social class, committing herself to a career and life outside of marriage. She educated herself in care of the sick by traveling to hospitals throughout Europe. In 1854, she volunteered to lead a corps of 38 nurses to the battlefields of the Crimean War.

During the war, she used her political connections and private funds to establish sanitary conditions and promote understanding of their benefit. Her administrative rigor and political acumen were matched by her caring presence. Night after night, she walked alone among the sick and wounded soldiers. The depth of her commitment is portrayed in the image that comes to us still, through Longfellow's poetry:

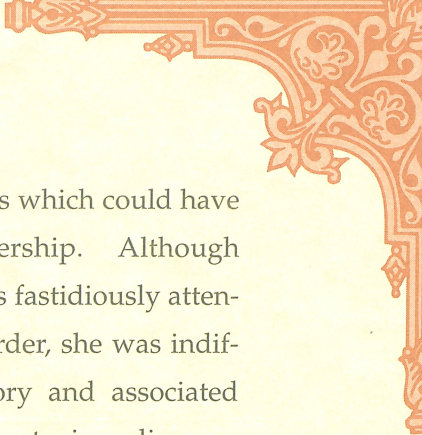
*"I had three paths among
which to choose. I might have
been a literary woman, or a
married woman or a hospital
Sister."* 

*Lo! in that house of misery
A Lady with a lamp I see*

Florence Nightingale knew from her meticulous record keeping that death rates could be reduced by improving sanitation in military hospitals and barracks. Six months after she arrived at Scutari, the death rate had dropped from 42.7 percent to 2.2 percent. Perhaps her greatest challenge was to establish recognition of this accomplishment in the face

of sustained resistance to her discovery by medical and military men in positions of authority. When she returned to England in 1856, she had surmounted that challenge and achieved worldwide recognition.

Her accomplishments on the battlefield inspired her to continue improvements in nursing. In 1860, she established a train-



ing institute for nurses at Saint Thomas Hospital. She was convinced that nurses should be educated in hospitals devoted to their training and committed to providing them with a morally disciplined community.

Believing that nursing should be a profession, a total way of life, Miss Nightingale expedited its transformation in England. She lived to witness the British census reclassification of nurses from the occupational heading “domestics” in 1861 to “medicine” in 1901.

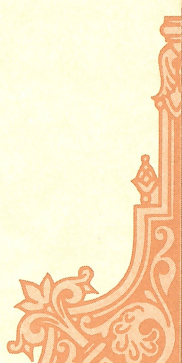
Dr. William Worrall Mayo, who emigrated to the United States in 1845, also expedited and witnessed transformations in the practice of medicine. He and Miss Nightingale were alike in their capacity to trailblaze

in spite of preconceptions which could have undermined their leadership. Although Florence Nightingale was fastidiously attentive to cleanliness and order, she was indifferent to the germ theory and associated possibilities for treating contagious diseases.

Her contradictory attitudes in medical science had their parallel in Dr. Mayo’s conflicting attitudes toward women. He challenged the right of women to vote,

because he had clearly defined convictions about social roles and the need to preserve them. Yet he was an ardent and persevering supporter of professional women whom he knew personally or by established reputation. As organizer for the annual lecture series of the

*“The tears come into my eyes
as I think how, amidst scenes of
loathsome disease and death,
there arose above it all the
innate dignity, gentleness and
chivalry of the men ... shining
in the midst of what must be
considered the lowest sinks of
human misery.”* 



Rochester Library Association, he brought Anna E. Dickinson to town in January 1868. She was highly regarded nationally as one of the most articulate and persuasive representatives of strong-minded women. In 1871, he championed the cause of Rochester physician Dr. Harriet Preston at the time when the Minnesota State Medical Association refused to accept her as a member.

As his practice grew, Dr. Mayo recognized the importance of nurses in his work. The Rochester, Minn., tornado of August 1883 led him to request nursing assistance from the teaching Sisters of St. Francis. Responding with flexibility and innovation, they quickly became leaders in

their newfound calling by establishing the first general hospital in southeastern Minnesota in 1889.

Several years after Saint Marys Hospital was constructed, there was a growing misconception that the Mayos had initiated

the idea for its development. In a letter to the general public, published in the *Post and Record* on June 3, 1904, Dr. Mayo credited the Sisters of St. Francis for the idea and funding of the hospital.

He portrayed himself as an agent implementing their plans. Dr. Mayo's insistence on profes-

sional affirmation and recognition for nurses remains an example for all of us. When we ponder his efforts to give full credit to the



Dr. William Worrall Mayo worked with the Sisters of St. Francis to establish Saint Marys Hospital in 1889.

Sisters of St. Francis in light of Florence Nightingale's commitment and labors to improve medical care, we can find historical illumination of contemporary, dynamic partnerships in healthcare.

Through Agnete Haaland's and Geir Lysne's artistic interpretation of Florence Nightingale, we now invite you to consider how individual creativity and produc-

tive partnerships of today grow out of struggles and triumphs of the past, abroad and at home.

"I have toiled my way into the confidence of the Medical Men. I have, by incessant vigilance, day and night, introduced something like system into the disorderly operations of these (nurses). And the plan may be said to have succeeded in some measure, as it stands." 

John C. Wiltsie, M.D.
Chair, Humanities in
Medicine Committee

Carolyn Stickney
Beck, Ph.D.
Coordinator, Mayo
Center for
Humanities in
Medicine

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With appreciation

The Irving S. Cooper Visiting Professorship at Mayo has been made possible by a generous commitment from Mrs. Sissel H. Cooper and the Cooper Institute for Advanced Studies in Medicine and the Humanities, Naples, Fla. Mayo expresses appreciation to Mrs. Cooper and the directors of the Cooper Institute for their support of this program, which recognizes Dr. Cooper's professional skills and humanitarian values.

Dr. Cooper (1922-1985) was an internationally recognized and innovative neurosurgeon who pioneered procedures for involuntary movement disorders. He originated

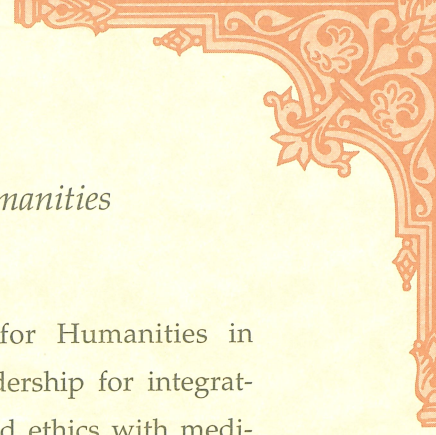
techniques in cryogenic surgery and developed a brain pacemaker for selected cases of epilepsy and cerebral palsy.

Dr. Cooper earned the B.A. and M.D. degrees from George Washington University and the Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota. He interned at the U.S. Naval Hospital, Saint Albans, N.Y., and was a fellow in neurosurgery at Mayo.

He also held two professorships at the New York University School of Medicine and directed the Institute of Neuroscience at Saint Barnabas Hospital, New York City. In addition, he was the director of the Center for Physiologic Neurosurgery, Westchester County Medical Center, Valhalla, N.Y.



Mayo alumnus Dr. Irving S. Cooper was a pioneering neurosurgeon, recognized for his technical skills and humanitarian values in caring for patients.



Dr. Cooper was a member of numerous national and international medical societies, including the Harvey Cushing Neurosurgical Society, the Neurosurgical Society of America, the Academy of Neurology, and the neurosurgical societies of Argentina, Scandinavia, Czechoslovakia, Egypt and Pan America.

He was a diplomate of both the American Board of Neurologic Surgery and the American Board of Neurology and Psychiatry.

Among his many honors were achievement awards from George Washington University and the University of Minnesota, and the gold medal of the Worshipful Society of Apothecaries, London's oldest guild. He also was the author of several books.

Dr. Cooper's commitment to medical excellence and humanitarian care is the basis of the Irving S. Cooper Visiting Professorship at Mayo.

Mayo Center for Humanities in Medicine

Mayo Center for Humanities in Medicine provides leadership for integrating the arts, history and ethics with medicine and the biomedical sciences to encourage a broader understanding of people in health and illness. The Center creates channels of coordination and communication for existing humanistic initiatives, as well as didactic experiences through lectures, arts forums, dramatic performances, historical interpretations, reports and publications. The Center cultivates a lively sense of the past in relation to the present and future among all members of the Mayo family, in order to perpetuate Mayo history as a vital contemporary resource for insuring commitment to the integrity and quality so clearly represented by our founders. The Center's goal is to foster compassion, sensitivity and insight in patient-caregiver relationships





and to support professional collegiality. This goal is grounded in Mayo Foundation's commitment to respect for the individual, cultural diversity and the collective benefit, based on the ideal that the needs of the patient come first.

About the play

Agnete G. Haaland, a highly regarded Norwegian actress, wrote this one-woman play based upon the letters and diaries of Florence Nightingale. Ms. Haaland is accompanied by Geir Lysne, saxophone. The monologue focuses on Florence Nightingale's many battles — against her own illnesses and self-doubts, against her family, against the strictures of her privileged social class, against military and medical bureaucrats, and most of all, against illness and death on the battlefield.

Since opening in 1990, "Florence Nightingale: Woman at War" has been performed throughout Europe, South America and the United States. Among its many

venues have been Oxford University and the Florence Nightingale Museum in London.

About the Insight Series

The Insight Series began at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn., in 1981. Through drama, monologues and short stories, the Insight Series has helped Mayo audiences explore such issues as alcoholism, eating disorders, cancer and aging.

The Insight Series has been recognized by medical publications, *The New York Times* and "On the Road with Charles Kuralt." Jason Robards, Helen Hayes and Kathy Bates are among those who have brought their talents to the Mayo audience.

Today, the Insight Series is produced by Mayo Center for Humanities in Medicine. "Florence Nightingale: Woman at War" is the first Insight presentation to be produced at each Mayo group practice:

Rochester, Minn., May 7, 1995

Jacksonville, Fla., May 9, 1995

Scottsdale, Ariz., May 12, 1995



On England's annals, through the loom
Hereafter of her speech and song,
That light its rays shall cast
From portals of the past.

A Lady with a Lamp shall stand
In the great history of the land,
A noble type of good,
Heroic womanhood.

Not even shall be wanting here
The palm, the lily, and the spear,
The symbols that of yore
Saint Filomena bore.



Production Managers: James S. Martin (Rochester, Minn.) Eric K. Velgos
(Scottsdale, Ariz.) Daniel J. Hubert (Jacksonville, Fla.)

Playbill: Matthew D. Dacy

This program is funded by Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research.
Mayo expresses appreciation to friends and benefactors who help support programs
in the humanities.



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