

## “The Greatest Mother in the World”

### *Carework and the Discourse of Mothering in the Canadian Red Cross Society during the First World War*

*During the First World War, Canadians (primarily but not exclusively women) voluntarily gave their time and labour to the Canadian Red Cross Society in order to aid sick and wounded soldiers overseas. Red Cross activities such as fundraising, rolling bandages, knitting socks, writing letters for soldiers in hospital, tracing the missing and wounded, and sending parcels to Prisoners of War were described by those within the organization as acts of caring. In time, the Canadian Red Cross and its volunteers were also associated more specifically with mothering. The carework Canadians undertook through the Canadian Red Cross Society involved time-consuming labour, and portions of it had enormous economic value, but these aspects of Red Cross work were consistently downplayed at the time in favour of praise for the love, tenderness, and caring this work was said to express for sick and wounded Canadian citizen-soldiers. In this way the Canadian Red Cross Society and its volunteers were said to be serving as surrogate mothers for Canadian “boys” overseas. Constructing the carework of the Red Cross as an act of mothering gave the organization symbolic and moral power, drawing broad public support and large financial contributions for its work. As maternal feminists had done repeatedly since the late nineteenth century, some Canadian women used this mothering discourse associated with the Red Cross to translate their voluntary work into greater roles for themselves within the public sphere.*

In February 1918, artist A. E. Foringer produced a poster for the American Red Cross entitled “The Greatest Mother in the World.” Widely used at the time by most of the Allied Red Cross societies (and subsequently reused during the Second World War), the poster encapsulated much of what led ordinary citizens to support the work of the Red Cross in vast numbers during wartime. In Foringer’s image a Red Cross nurse tenderly cradles the

much smaller figure of a soldier on a stretcher, with a large red cross behind them. “The Greatest Mother in the World” draws on two potent images in Christian iconography: the Virgin and Child, and Mary cradling the dead body of Christ (Darracott and Loftus, 1972: 28). Significantly, both images are of a mother and her child.

During the First World War (1914-1918), Canadians conceived of their voluntary work for sick and wounded soldiers through the Canadian Red Cross Society in multiple ways. It was patriotic work. It was Christian work. It was caring work. It was also maternal work. The idea of mothering became one of the most dominant of the many discourses that informed the carework of the Canadian Red Cross Society throughout the First World War. Why was this particular discursive framework so popular? By framing their carework for sick and wounded citizen-soldiers in terms of mothering, Canadians bestowed that work with symbolic and moral power that boosted domestic support for the Red Cross, and simultaneously helped some Canadian women extend their work and influence into the male-dominated public sphere.

### **Canadian Red Cross carework, 1914-1918**

During the First World War the Canadian Red Cross Society (CRCS) became Canada’s largest and most important humanitarian organization, and its second-most popular war charity after the Canadian Patriotic Fund that helped soldiers’ wives and dependents. At home in Canada, Red Cross volunteers primarily raised funds and produced supplementary clothing, comforts and bandages. Overseas, more volunteers distributed these comforts and supplies to military hospitals and rest homes, traced missing and wounded soldiers, sent food parcels to Prisoners of War (POWs), used funds to provide ambulances and hospitals, and visited the sick and wounded in England and France. It was a massive transatlantic undertaking involving tens of millions of dollars worth of cash and goods, which relied almost exclusively on voluntary labour provided by a small number of elite leaders and hundreds of thousands of ordinary Canadians.

The CRCS drew the bulk of its support from white, middle-class Anglo-Protestant women who possessed the time and means to volunteer their labour, but Canadian Red Cross volunteers and donors encompassed both francophones and anglophones, the old and the young, men and women, the upper-, middle-, and working-classes, and members of every major ethnic and racial group in the country. The government stood to benefit from encouraging Canadians’ support for the CRCS and other war charities because, as Jeffrey Reznick (2004) points out, the resulting “culture of caregiving” helped sustain both manpower needs and civilian morale (3). Allowing voluntary aid organizations like the CRCS to provide supplementary medical aid meant more soldiers returning to the trenches, and civilians who felt good about their contribution to the war effort.

## **Mothering and the Canadian Red Cross Society**

From its earliest days the international Red Cross movement was intended by its Swiss founders as a humane, caring movement. During the First World War the discourse of mothering—used regularly by First Wave feminists since the late nineteenth century—expressed very neatly the caring mission of the Canadian Red Cross Society. When women flocked to the CRCS in 1914, they brought their maternalism with them. If, as Lady Aberdeen (1976) proclaimed in an 1894 speech to the new National Council of Women of Canada, every woman was “called upon to ‘mother’ in some way or another” (200), then the CRCS offered them multiple opportunities to do so. Journalist Mary Macleod Moore wrote in 1919 that Canadian women overseas who volunteered with the CRCS took “the place of the women at home who were too far away to pet their boys” and asserted that whether young, old, married, or single, these women were mothering: “The instinct which moves one to protect and soothe and comfort had full scope during the war; consciously or unconsciously women responded to it” (70). In this context, the use of the term “comforts” for the non-medical supplies provided by the CRCS to sick and wounded soldiers—among them invalid foods, maple sugar, special Christmas stockings, and socks—is telling. Like mothers comforting their sick children with a hug, a story, or a special blanket or doll, CRCS “comforts” (and the women Red Cross volunteers who often brought them) were intended to introduce something familiar, homelike, and personal into the austere and regulated existence of recuperating soldiers.

The Information Bureau established in 1915 by Montreal philanthropist Lady Julia Drummond and the POW Department it spawned were defined by the idea of personal care. Lady Drummond firmly believed that sick and wounded men “would have a desperate craving to be of particular interest to Somebody,” and wished to bridge the gap between soldiers and their distant loved ones (cited in Carr, c1930: 8-9). Mary Macleod Moore (1919) dubbed the Information Bureau the “Mothering Bureau,” because it stood in for wives and mothers on the other side of the Atlantic (70). As the war progressed the fate of Canadian Prisoners of War became another major concern of the CRCS, with CRCS publicity emphasizing the role Red Cross POW parcels played in keeping POWs alive. The Society’s POW work not only offered Canadian civilians an opportunity to provide direct care for Canadian soldiers, but also simultaneously reinforced the Society’s image as a nurturing, life-sustaining organization.

Motherhood is a social and fluid category, and as Nancy Scheper-Hughes has shown, women “have just as often used the moral claims of motherhood to launch campaigns to support war as they have to support peace” (Scheper-Hughes, 1998: 233). The CRCS’s association with mothering could therefore appeal to women with a wide range of motivations for volunteering. For instance, the same Canadian mothers whom Suzanne Evans (2007) describes being encouraged by wartime propaganda to cheerfully sacrifice their sons

on the battlefield (112) could dutifully send their sons to war and then work through the CRCS to help and comfort their boys and those of other mothers. Within the Canadian Red Cross Society, the languages of patriotism and caring coexisted for the duration of the war, with the balance shifting slightly from a greater emphasis on patriotism in the early stages of the war, to a greater emphasis on caring as casualties mounted and the brutality of the war became painfully evident.

Social expectations also influenced some Canadians' participation in Red Cross work during the war. In rural British Columbia, particularly in small communities, Gwen Szychter (1994) notes that women could feel pressure from their peers to do their share of war work, with newspaper acknowledgements of individual output helping women keep tabs on one another (8). Lucy Maud Montgomery's position as minister's wife led to her appointment as President of the Leaskdale, Ontario branch of the CRCS, a position she did not particularly want but felt it her duty to fill when asked to do so (1987: 174). Just as images of good motherhood "carry implicit counterimages... of bad mothers" (McMahon, 1995: 267), so too did images of women's work for the Red Cross and other war charities carry judgements on those who would not or could not meet social expectations.

For other Canadians, Red Cross carework was not merely something expected of them, but rather a source of increased social power. M. E. Lawrence (1919) of New Brunswick provincial branch wrote that during the relief effort following the Halifax Explosion, with the Red Cross brassard on one's arm, "one was more powerful than the king on his throne. Cars were commandeered, workers selected and medical supplies conserved," and the needs of hospitals large and small were supplied "through the unfailing agency of the Red Cross, back of which stood the generosity and sympathy of the people" (46-7). Through their association with "the Greatest Mother in the World," these Canadians were able to tap into the power and influence of a mighty, nation-wide organization much bigger than themselves.

Adelaide Plumptre (1917) claimed that in the early days of the war, "Red Cross work (in its widest significance) ... afforded almost the only outlet for [women's] desire to serve and save." Since women could not risk their lives in defense of their country, she wrote, "they turned the torrent of patriotism into the channels of lowly service" (198, 200). But although women volunteers comprised the bulk of Canadian Red Cross workers during the First World War, men, boys and girls, and a very small number of paid Red Cross employees also participated in the mothering work of the Red Cross—with mothering defined here as a relationship "in which one individual nurtures or cares for another" (Glenn, 1994 3). In some instances the discourse of mothering allowed men's voluntary carework under the banner of the Red Cross to be described in terms of caring, nurturing, and selflessness without feminizing the men themselves. For example, David Law

earned praise from Canadian Expeditionary Force officers and the CRCS itself for his "duty, strength, and tenderness" and "untiring devotion to the welfare of those who suffered" while he served as Assistant Commissioner in France (Quebec Division CRCS). Since the Red Cross as a whole was perceived as a mothering organization engaged in caring work for the sons of Canada, Law's tenderness and devotion as its representative was seen as natural and fitting.

### **Surrogate family and the collective responsibility to care**

Henriette Donner (1997) suggests that during the First World War the British Red Cross Society "provided a symbolic realm of moral virtue" and "employed an image of society as a moral community," which appealed strongly to British women and led to "a deeply affective relationship" between Red Cross volunteers and the organization (691). The same relationship existed between Canadians and the CRCS. This idea of Red Cross volunteers of all ages, genders, classes, and ethnic backgrounds as part of a moral community implied a collective responsibility to care for Canada's sick and wounded sons overseas not unlike the forms of community child-rearing found in many kin-ordered societies (Rosenberg, 1987: 186-7). Caring for the boys overseas was everyone's responsibility.

The CRCS Information Bureau's work tracking down the missing and caring for the wounded was among the most meaningful in which the Society engaged during the war, because (like food parcels for POWs) it helped families feel connected to their sick and wounded loved ones overseas. Letters of appreciation poured into the CRCS's Toronto and London headquarters from the families of soldiers in the Canadian Expeditionary Force, testifying to the relief and comfort brought by the Information Bureau and its volunteers. Jay Winter demonstrates how this branch of Red Cross work created a kinship bond between the fearful and mourning families at home, and the volunteers who tried to bring them consolation and comfort through information: Red Cross volunteers overseas became proxies for parents, wives, and siblings, acting on a perceived moral obligation to help and support in any way possible (Winter, 1995: 29-30). In this way the CRCS not only linked families to their soldiers, but itself became an extension of family. Information Bureau volunteer Iona Carr (c1930) wrote that in the Parcels Department, "Each boy, to whom a parcel went, was to all intents and purposes a 'son'," while a woman in Quebec wrote to the Information Bureau "I noe [sic] you have a mother's love and I will say good bye and god Bless your good work" ("Thanks to the Information Department," 1916: 35). This symbolic realm of community and moral virtue is also apparent in the frequency with which the terms "service" and "sacrifice" appeared in connection with the Red Cross and its work.

As Martha McMahan (1995) notes, motherhood provides women with a means of self-transformation: being a mother is distinctly different from being

a non-mother. Part of this moral transformation springs from the fact that “motherhood symbolizes connectedness” and offers “access to socially valued others” which is otherwise restricted (276). Generally these socially-valued others are children, and it is therefore significant that during the First World War Canadian soldiers were routinely referred to as “our boys.” As Jonathan Vance (1997) has argued, Canadian citizen-soldiers symbolically embodied the hopes and aspirations of their country (136), and the Red Cross, “Greatest Mother in the World,” offered Canadians access to these metaphorical children of the nation.

Most Canadians’ experience of the CRCS and of the war itself was profoundly local: their “hometown horizons” shaped the work they did and how they understood it (Rutherford, 2004). The provincial, national, imperial, and international tiers of the Red Cross as an organization magnified their efforts exponentially: through the CRCS’s international affiliation Canadians could even reach behind enemy lines, sending parcels to Canadian Prisoners of War in Germany. Few (if any) other organizations could boast the same reach. Yet little thought appears to have been given to the German women knitting for their own soldiers, or to the work or existence of the German Red Cross. The type of mothering represented by the Canadian Red Cross Society was national and imperial, but not inclusively international. No imagined community of Red Cross mothering spanned the two sides of opposing trenches on the Western Front.

### **Love and labour in CRCS carework**

Red Cross work, like mothering, was nearly always viewed as “flowing from ‘natural’ female attributes” and “involving strong emotional attachment and altruistic motives” (Glenn, 1994: 13), and certainly these elements were present. Bruce Scates (2002) terms the propensity of women from all classes to derive solace from wartime voluntary effort “emotional labour,” and suggests that unpaid war work played an important part in mediating women’s loss and bereavement during the war (39-40). A 1917 poem about women’s knitting by American Charles J. North, reprinted in the February 1918 issue of the *CRCS Bulletin*, expressed the emotion which many women invested in their voluntary labour:

We’re spinning Love, and Hope, and Faith,  
And we twist their subtle strands  
Into silver threads of Comfort,  
Knotted in by willing hands. [...]

We are weaving out the Courage,  
That our Homeland Love shall spread,  
As a mantle for the living,  
And a promise for the dead. (North, 1918: 6)

Similarly, Adelaide Plumptre wrote in 1917 that "the aim of the Red Cross is to provide an outlet for the love and gratitude of a people towards its protectors." Bandages and hand-knit socks in her view were "love-gifts" from the nation, a tangible demonstration of Canada's care for its sick and wounded (196). But as with all mothering and carework, there was actual labour involved as well (Glenn, 1994: 12).

The sewn and knitted items women made for sick and wounded soldiers, and the other items such as chewing gum, notepaper, and cigarettes purchased by the CRCS were collectively known as "comforts." These items were meant to comfort convalescing soldiers at a particularly vulnerable time, and the act of providing them (even from an ocean away) could bring comfort to women themselves. But no matter the emotional solace involved, producing and raising money for comforts required time and skill. Turning the heel on a Red Cross sock, for instance, required four needles, and no rough or protruding seams that might hurt soldiers' feet were allowed. Other clothing items were more complicated, and the work was standardized as much as possible through a system of printed instructions, inspections, and production quotas. Nova Scotia provincial branch went so far as to organize a central production system in the Red Cross workroom at the Halifax Technical College, where the work was carried on "as in a factory, each group doing a certain thing." The workroom had a regular schedule of production, with different items produced on different days (Nova Scotia Division CRCS: c1918: 10-11).

The labour involved in Red Cross work was not limited to needlework. Late in the war, the Society used its volunteers to produce bandages lined with sphagnum moss, a natural absorbent found in certain coastal areas of the country. Natalie Riegler (1989) estimates that roughly 500,000 women had to give four hours of voluntary labour per day in order to produce the 200,000 - 300,000 finished dressings being turned out each month by the end of the war, not including the volunteer moss collectors wading through the bogs (38). Beginning in the summer of 1916 other CRCS volunteers used professional equipment to produce jam and jelly (and eventually tomato soup, pickles, and canned chicken) specifically for shipment abroad as a special treat for sick and wounded soldiers (CRCS, 1918: 97-8). Although no doubt the women who volunteered with the CRCS Fruit Kitchen were cheered by the thought of these foods comforting and feeding Canadian and British boys overseas, the process of cleaning, cooking, and canning remained a labourious one. Nor was hard work on behalf of the CRCS limited to Canadian soil. Overseas, the position of Assistant Commissioner in France was particularly demanding. Wilfrid Bovey of the Canadian Expeditionary Force described the position as one of "constant work, unceasing travelling from one part of the line to another, from the corps to the base and back, in any kind of weather, always without regard for personal comfort, and often under fire" (Quebec Division CRCS, 1924).

## **Women, carework, and the public sphere**

Throughout the war the CRCS National Executive Committee and many provincial executive committees were heavily male-dominated, but women held dominion over branch- and auxiliary-level activity. Early twentieth-century societal norms and expectations of women's roles severely limited the work that Canadian women could do for the war effort; in large measure this work was limited to voluntary and charitable activities. The importance of women's labour and expertise to the success of the entire CRCS wartime programme led to important breakthroughs for women in the upper echelons of leadership and decision-making in the CRCS at a national level. For instance, merely one month into the war, prominent Toronto women pressed the CRCS Executive Committee, which governed the Society's day-to-day activities, to add female representatives to its numbers. After a brief period of deliberation the all-male committee voted to add Mrs. Adelaide Plumtre and Mrs. A.E. Gooderham as associate members of the Executive Committee (CRCNA September 10, 1914: 78). Mrs. Gooderham's leadership role in the national IODE helped ensure smooth relations between the IODE and the CRCS throughout the war, while Mrs. Plumtre became the first woman to achieve voting member status in the National Executive, serving as Superintendent of Supplies and Honorary Corresponding Secretary during the war.

In April 1918 Lady Julia Drummond's record of service similarly translated into a more prominent public role for herself within the Society: after more than three years leading the CRCS Information Bureau in England, Lady Drummond was named CRCS Assistant Commissioner in England, a position of great responsibility. She was the first and only woman to hold an overseas commissioner position in the CRCS during the First World War. The importance of women's provincial and local work for the CRCS during the war was also recognized through the addition of a number of women to the Society's governing bodies. By 1917 men still greatly outnumbered women on the CRCS Central Council, but six prominent society ladies had been appointed as general members and seven devoted wartime leaders at the provincial level were designated as representatives of their respective provinces (CRCS, 1918: 5-6). These women had successfully used their maternal work for the CRCS to create powerful, public, activist roles for themselves.

## **Valuing and undervaluing women's Red Cross carework**

Throughout the war CRCS officers at all levels as well as Canadians outside the organization paid tribute to women's efforts for the Red Cross. Glowing tributes to the Society's female volunteers appeared in every CRCS Annual Meeting or article about the Red Cross, and given the extraordinary amount of voluntary labour provided by Canadian women such lavish praise was well-deserved. Anti-feminists like Sir Andrew McPhail (1925) sang the praises of women's work for the CRCS because it "brought into the austere



life of the soldier a touch of the larger humanity, an element of the feminine," so that Canadian citizen-soldiers "knew they were not forsaken by their womenkind" (342). The fact that so much of women's work for the CRCS simply put a new patriotic and humanitarian spin on traditionally "feminine" activities such as sewing, making jam, holding concerts and teas, and raising subscriptions, made Red Cross carework inherently unthreatening to conservative Canadians like McPhail.

At the same time, other Canadians claimed that women's Red Cross work demonstrated their citizenship. One wounded Canadian soldier wrote to CRCS National Headquarters announcing his conversion from bitterly opposing female suffrage to strongly supporting it, "not as a reward or recognitions [sic] of their services and great sacrifices, but because I feel thoroughly convinced of their abilities" ("Letter from Buckinghamshire," 1916: 21). On the same note, an article about the CRCS in *The New Glasgow Enterprise* in December 1918 claimed that the CRCS's work in the war was second only to that of the soldiers themselves, and that the CRCS gave women "a new and higher status" because through the Red Cross "woman has placed herself beyond all question the equal of man; hers is no longer the weaker sex, but one that in a great emergency proves itself strong and true" ("The Canadian Red Cross," 1918: 12).

Although some pre-war suffragists continued to agitate for the vote, many others temporarily set aside the suffrage battle in order to throw their support behind the nation at war (Prentice, Cuthbert Brandt, Light, Mitchinson and Black, 1996: 231). Nellie McClung (1917), for instance, became an active worker with the Alberta provincial branch of the Canadian Red Cross. The mothering ideal which Veronica Strong-Boag (1972) identifies as central to McClung's feminism fit well with the caring, maternal model of the CRCS which prevailed in Canada during the war (viii). Like so many reform movements and women's organizations of the nineteenth century and hundreds of other wartime patriotic organizations, the CRCS offered women a means of extending the domestic sphere and blurring the distinction between private and public. The knitters took their needles out of their parlours and into theatres and streetcars, while jam-making moved from the farmhouse kitchen to a communal fruit department in Hamilton. In the process, some women were politicized, and many gained a sense of pride in their own contributions to the country's war effort.

Canadians praised women's work for the CRCS, while the work itself brought some women into positions of greater public responsibility and imbued others with a sense of their value as citizens and workers. Yet the same maternal discourse that had helped enable these developments subtly undermined them. Women's work for the CRCS provided most of the supplies and comforts used overseas, and their efforts helped fill CRCS coffers, but speakers and authors often overlooked these humble activities, producing praise that rang rather hollow. For example, the same December 1918

article in *The New Glasgow Enterprise* which began by extolling the virtues of the CRCS's army of female volunteers went on to describe at great length the work of the CRCS overseas, including the Society's Cliveden hospital, POW relief, and the Information Bureau ("The Canadian Red Cross," 1918). It failed to mention what the vast majority of ordinary Canadian women actually did for the CRCS, namely knitting, sewing, sorting moss, rolling bandages, making jam, adopting POWs, and fundraising. This may be because the author assumed readers already knew of these activities and would be more interested in the overseas work, but it is tempting to suspect that it has more to do with the unglamorous nature of CRCS work in Canada. Sock knitting, above all else, came to symbolize women's special contribution to the war effort: wet, cold conditions in the trenches of the Western Front and the serious nature of the ailment called Trench Foot made keeping one's feet warm and dry an issue of considerable concern (Morton, 1993: 139). Nevertheless, socks became a kind of joke in some quarters, as it seemed unlikely to some observers (in Britain in particular) that the millions of pairs sent overseas each year could possibly be useful (Ward, 2005: 274). Socks were not machine guns, after all.

Overall, the wider Canadian society valued the fact that women undertook caring work for sick and wounded soldiers, but did not value in equal measure the actual tasks in which women engaged. The passage of time has proven equally unkind. During the First World War itself, for instance, CRCS leaders recognized that "women's work making garments ... has cash value" (CRCNA, September 28, 1914: 85). Since then historical accounts of the war have downplayed the economic contribution women made to the war effort in this way. Beyond the financial significance of women's contributions, the importance of women's voluntary work to national morale and the care of sick, wounded, and imprisoned soldiers has also generally been overlooked or trivialized, cast in deep shadow by male-dominated aspects of Canada's war effort such as munitions production, recruitment efforts, political battles and military campaigns.

## **Conclusion**

A. E. Foringer's poster depicting the Red Cross as "The Greatest Mother in the World" marked the culmination of the association of Red Cross care-work with mothering during the First World War. He did not invent the link between mothering and the Red Cross, he merely reflected a connection already made by national Red Cross societies and ordinary people over the course of the war to that point. Foringer's image combined the themes of life, death, love, sacrifice, and salvation to link mothering, the Red Cross, Christianity, and the war in one powerful image. Although the image itself was American, it applied equally well to Canada, Australia, New Zealand, or Great Britain. As "The Greatest Mother in the World," the Red Cross literally took the place of women who could not personally care for their

sick, wounded, or captured loved ones across the ocean, and figuratively came to symbolize women's special contributions to the war effort. The discourse of mothering brought the Canadian Red Cross Society widespread public approbation and financial support. Women like Julia Drummond, Adelaide Plumptre, and the presidents of hundreds of local Red Cross branches and auxiliaries across Canada also used the Red Cross's maternal associations to legitimize a greater role for themselves in Canadian public life. The Great War proved to be the high water mark for the prevalence of maternalism in shaping the way the CRCS functioned and was talked about, but the discourse of mothering remained a prominent part of the CRCS over the course of the twentieth century.

Unfortunately, the discourse of mothering could be limiting, as well as empowering. Like the work of actual mothers, the carework of Red Cross volunteers was romanticized as life-giving and self-sacrificing at the same time that it was trivialized and undervalued (Rosenberg, 1987: 188; Rowbotham, 1993: 206). The discourse of mothering exalted the carework of the Canadian Red Cross Society as a love-gift to the nation while it simultaneously obscured the real labour and economic value involved in that work, occasionally laughed at its results, and sentenced the economically valuable and emotionally meaningful voluntary labour of hundreds of thousands of Canadians to a mere footnote in the historical record.

The wartime carework of the Canadian Red Cross Society and its volunteers exemplifies on a grand scale many of the themes and challenges identified by scholars and practitioners of carework and of mothering. The act of caring can provide emotional fulfilment, a sense of connection, and a feeling of contributing to the well-being of valued others, and careworkers are often celebrated as selfless, nurturing, and inherently good. But carework and careworkers are much more complex than that. As scholars like Alice Kessler-Harris (1981) remind us, "Women have always worked" (10)—and not just women, but careworkers of all ages, genders, and ethnic backgrounds. Carework is as much labour as it is love, and may be undertaken for a range of motives (including self-interested and financial ones), while popular images of "good" careworkers carry implicit statements and assumptions about those who fail to meet expectations. Carework has economic value and contributes to the functioning of society, but too often its association with women, emotion, and unglamorous, often tedious labour leads it to be overlooked, undervalued, and ignored. As an instance of very public carework undertaken on a national scale, the work of the Canadian Red Cross Society during the First World War serves to remind us that historically there has been (as there continues to be) much more to carework than meets the eye.

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