Rethinking Care: Disability and Care in Dinah Mulock Craik’s The Little Lame Prince and his Travelling Cloak

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The nineteenth-century author Dinah Mulock Craik (1826-1887) was, according to Henry James, obsessed with disability and it is certainly true that the disabled character features prominently in her writing. Despite a recent turn towards studying Craik’s representations of disability her engagement with the topic of care is yet to receive substantial criticism. In this paper I examine Craik’s representation of care in her 1875 children’s stories, The Little Lame Prince and his Travelling Cloak in order to examine the way in which Craik situates her characters within interdependent relationships, thus challenging the cultural myth of independence, and in doing so provides her disabled characters with the support and care they need to achieve agency. Whilst care is fundamental to our daily lives and social interactions, it remains a complex and problematic term haunted by the spectres of institutionalisation, paternalistic charities and the gendered notion that care is ‘women’s work’. This paper seeks to re-read narratives of care in order to challenge these ideas about care.

In 1866 Henry James wrote, when reviewing one of her novels, that the author Dinah Maria Mulock Craik had a ‘lively predilection for cripples and invalids’ adding, rather sarcastically, that he supposed it only right that the ‘… sickly half of humanity should have its chronicler.’ However, beyond her many and varied representations of the disabled body, Craik’s work is also consciously and explicitly engaging with the topic of care. Recently there has been a small but significant flurry of work examining the life and writing of Craik. Scholars have sought to examine her representation of disability, race, and gender as well as her engagement with many of the social issues faced by nineteenth-century women such as the right to work and the married women’s property act. However, despite this renewed interest in the author her narratives of care are scarcely noted. Issues such as who cares for individuals with impairments, how is this care given, and what caring strategies are implemented in order to foster autonomy in her disabled characters are frequently found in Craik’s writing. In this article I examine one of Craik’s short stories for children, The Little Lame Prince and his Travelling Cloak (1875), through the lens of feminist care ethics, in order to explore how Craik can be seen to be grappling with many of the issues we continue to discuss in relation to care today.

Arguably much of the work on Craik can be seen to stem from the development of critical disability studies within the humanities, with Victorian literature proving to be a particularly fruitful source of representations of disability. Early scholars such as Elaine Showalter and Sally Mitchel noted the popularity of the disabled

character as a trope in Craik’s work, commenting on the way it functioned, metaphorically, to represent the position of nineteenth century women confined to the domestic sphere, disabled, as it were, by the gendered binaries of the public and private realms. More recently scholars have moved to examine disability in Craik’s work as a metaphor for the dangers, and potential rewards, of miscegenation. Such readings reinforce David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder’s theory of narrative prosthesis, which argues that disability is frequently used as a literary device which functions “as a crutch upon which literary narratives lean for their representational power, disruptive potentiality, and analytical insight.” In addition to this Mitchell and Snyder also point out the importance of avoiding the over simplistic view and ‘self-congratulatory belief’ that we are currently living in a more progressive and enlightened era in relation to our engagement with disability. As Martha Stoddart Holmes points out the diversity that exists in representations of disability in Victorian Literature reveals a far more nuanced engagement with disability, as a social identity, than might at first be imagined. Holmes’s work on interdependency and disability in Craik’s 1850 novel Olive has been particularly useful in relation to this paper as it opens up the way to examine Craik’s work through the lens of an ethic of care. In her engagement with the work of the feminist ethicist Eva Feder Kittay, Holmes problematizes the popular nineteenth-century narrative of self-help and independence and posits a narrative centred on a more inclusive and interdependent community of care. This is evident not only in Craik’s novels but also in her children’s literature.

Whilst Craik wrote predominantly for an adult readership her literary career was effectively bookended by writing for children. Much of her earliest published work was written for a young audience and conforms to the moralistic and didactic style of children’s literature popular with many late eighteenth and early-nineteenth century writers. Michael the Miner (1846) and How to Win Love; or, Rhoda’s Lesson (1847) for example both follow the narrative formula that encouraged children to learn the moral lessons society and culture deem appropriate in order to help their transition from childhood to adulthood. Later, after the adoption of her daughter Dorothy in 1869, Craik returns to the genre but this time infuses the didactic and moral tale with elements of the fantasy story. Like many children’s stories Craik’s tales for young readers contain deeper meanings than those rendered obvious by a first reading and The Little Lame Prince is no exception. In chapter five Craik specifically draws her reader’s attention to the allegorical nature of this story when she challenges her young readers to unravel the deeper story within this ‘ordinary fairy tale’. At the start of the chapter Craik writes,

If any reader, big or little, should wonder whether there is a meaning in this story deeper than that of an ordinary fairy tale, I will own that there is. But I have hidden it so carefully that the smaller people, and many larger folk, will never find it out, and in the meantime the book may be read [...] for what interest it has, or what amusement it may bring (35).

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6 Mitchell and Synder, 2000, xiv.


8 Holmes, 2007, 29.

9 Dinah Mulock Craik, The Little Lame Prince, Lexington, USA, Bibliobazaar, 2012, p. 35. All subsequent references, in this article, will be to this edition and indicated in the text.
It is my contention that The Little Lame Prince engages not only with a discussion of disability, and society’s treatment of those with a physical impairment, as Iain Davidson, Gary Woodill, and Elizabeth Bredberg suggest, but also an examination of care, the relational act of which, whilst somewhat problematic for some, is nevertheless fundamental to our daily lives.10

Joan Tronto and Berenice Fisher provide a useful, and I would argue, inclusive definition of care stating that:

On the most general level, [...] caring [can] be viewed as a species activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our ‘world’ so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, ourselves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex life-sustaining web.11

Tronto and Fisher’s definition is particularly helpful as it enables us to view care beyond traditional human-to-human interactions and relationships. Care of the planet, care as it occurs within non-human species, and the modification and adaptation of our environment to accommodate human bodily variation can all be extrapolated from this definition. However, regardless of the possibilities contained within this definition of care, for many working within feminist and disability studies ‘care’ carries with it a legacy of oppression, which renders the term problematic. The legacy of institutional care, medicalization and paternalism continues to haunt discussions surrounding care resulting in many disability activists viewing the term as a socially and politically loaded one, a byword for dependency, which ultimately is seen to be dis-empowering.12 As Julie Stephens notes, in her work on feminism, memory, and care, there is a strong and pervasive cultural anxiety surrounding issues such as nurturing, dependency, and caregiving in our society.13 The strong desire to break the link between disability and dependence, and thereby present a picture of independence and autonomy in those living with disability, further problematizes the idea of care and dependency. And whilst the feminist care ethicist Sarah Ruddick regards the capacity to care as a gender neutral human strength which should be taken out of the domestic sphere and integrated into public policy making,14 others see it as reinforcing gendered stereotypes that result in care being viewed as ‘women’s work’, associated with motherhood, and therefore underpaid and undervalued.15 As Kathleen Lynch and Maureen Lyons state the marginalisation of care arises, in part, from a general ambivalence in society about caring and care work and from the way in which this type of work is predominantly viewed from a ‘feminine’ ethic of care, which defines care as a moral obligation for women, rather than a ‘feminist’ ethic of care which considers care to be a universal and integral aspect of society and an ongoing human need.16

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However, as Carol Gilligan points out there is a world of difference between care as it is presented within a ‘feminine’ ethic, characterised by self-sacrifice and selflessness and a ‘feminist’ ethic of care which focuses on the networks, connections, and interdependent relationships that are fundamental to human life.\(^\text{17}\) Rethinking the human condition to focus on ‘interdependence’ rather than ‘independence’ as Eva Feder Kittay and Joan Tronto suggest may help shift the attention from the individual onto the nexus of caring relationships.  \(^\text{18}\) Similarly, acknowledging the reciprocal and ongoing nature of care by recognising the way in which care takes place across and throughout our life span as we move between the roles of cared-for and care-giver may help shift the focus from the mythic cultural construction of the independent modern subject towards an acknowledgment of the vulnerability of all human beings. \(^\text{19}\) If we rethink our able-bodied privilege and consider ourselves as ‘temporarily able-bodied’, a term coined by the disability movement we will begin to understand the vulnerability of the human body and come to recognise that we will, at some point in our lives, likely experience a physical, mental or sensory impairment which is likely to require a degree of care and support.\(^\text{20}\)

Yet, despite the recent turn within feminist, disability, and cultural studies towards a critical engagement and examination of relationality and interdependency, the focus on independence and the individual remains strong within nineteenth-century literary analysis. In a recent paper entitled ‘Reinventing the Nineteenth-Century Novel’ Professor Isobel Armstrong called upon scholars of the Victorian Novel to move beyond this focus on the individual and the Bildungsroman to examine the role of the displaced and disposed in the novel. \(^\text{21}\) Craik’s work allows us to do this through her engagement with disability, dependency and the care of vulnerable individuals in the nineteenth-century. To date Holmes is the only scholar to examine interdependency in Craik’s work, applying Kittay’s philosophy of care to a reading of Olive. \(^\text{22}\) My examination of care in The Little Lame Prince builds on this foundation and seeks to weave together the strands of feminist care ethics and literary analysis in order to examine Craik’s engagement with care, nurture capital, and the movement of care from the private to the public sphere.

One of Craik’s most enduring and popular texts The Little Lame Prince and His Travelling Cloak has captured the hearts of readers and endured well into the twentieth century. Not only has the book been re-published throughout the twentieth-century, with the latest iteration appearing in 1990, but the story has also been adapted into a play. \(^\text{23}\) The story takes place in a fantasy world, one which is similar yet at the same time different to that in which the children reading the story would live. Benevolent kings, beautiful queens, malicious uncles, and kindly fairy godmothers feature in the text. Magical cloaks transport our hero across the country, golden spectacles magnify the natural world, and a pair of silver ears allows the prince to hear conversations from afar. The plot itself is a relatively simple and somewhat familiar one, a young prince, the rightful heir to the throne, is locked away in a tower whilst his malevolent uncle tells the kingdom he is dead and rules in his place. Where Craik’s narrative differs is through the disability of her protagonist and the way in which this disability is central to the story.

23 In 2000 Jonathon Ward adapted the story into a play, which was performed as part of the family series at the Henry Street Settlement/Abrons Arts Centre in New York.
Mitchell and Snyder have argued that disability is predominantly used as a stock feature of characterisation or as an opportunistic metaphorical device. They extend their argument by adding that whilst disability ‘marks a protagonist’s difference and is the impetus to narrate a story’ the narrative that unfolds frequently fails to engage with the complex nature of disabled identities, with disability as a social experience. Whilst analysing Craik’s representation of disability as a metaphorical device was popular in earlier scholarly work, as Showalter and Mitchell’s readings reveal, it is also possible to read, in Craik’s texts, an engagement with disability which goes beyond the metaphorical to examine the social experience of living with a disabled body. In *A Little Lame Prince* Craik engages not only with the social stigmatization and isolation associated with disability but also the relationships of care within which the disabled character finds himself situated. That Craik chooses, as the name for her protagonist, ‘Dolor’ a word which means physical pain and which was used in medicine to refer to one of the five cardinal symptoms of inflammation, as well as mental anguish, is significant as it reveals an understanding of pain that extends beyond the metaphorical and into the realm of lived experience, grounding her character in the embodied experience of disability. For Mitchell and Snyder, the exceptionality of the disabled character’s body divorces them from ‘a shared social identity’ – disability is positioned as alien and the character stands out as a result of their physical difference rather than being united through their similarity with others into a shared social group. Whilst Craik’s protagonist is isolated and divorced from society he is also positioned within a social network of individuals who are linked by their otherness, and the mental suffering to which his name alludes.

On the day of his christening the story’s protagonist, Prince Dolor, is dropped by a nurse more interested in her own appearance than the prince’s wellbeing and, as a direct consequence of the accident, acquires a permanent physical impairment which limits the use of his legs. Following a series of events, a plot crisis, and a traditional resolution, the prince reclaims his throne and all live happily ever after. The story can, on the surface, be read as a classic Bildungsroman; a novel of education, self-help, and overcoming. Yet throughout the story there are also a number of issues relating to care, or a lack of care. The prince’s mother dies on the day of his christening, and his father, so absorbed in his own grief, fails to notice his son’s physical impairment for two years. When the king subsequently dies the prince becomes a ward of his uncle, the Prince Regent, who usurps his throne and imprisons him in a tower, telling the kingdom that the young prince is dead. The only people, beyond the uncle, who know the truth about Prince Dolor are an old woman, a criminal ‘under sentence of death’ who is released from jail in order to look after the prince, and who is ‘allowed to live as long as the child lived –no longer’ (23) and the ‘deaf-mute’ specifically chosen to deliver food and supplies to the tower’s inmates each month as he can ‘neither tell nor repeat anything’ to anyone (23). These three individuals, each of them outcasts from society, are thrown together into a community of ‘otherness’, or as Holmes might term them, a ‘disabled family’ united through their experience of a disability identity and the constraints that accompany such an identity. The man is not only bothered by his sensory impairment but also his racial difference, for he is described as being as big and as black as the great horse he rides across the desolate plain towards the tower. The woman, with her ‘sad, fierce look […] a criminal under sentence of death’ has her death sentence commuted to

25 Mitchell and Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis*, 10
26 Mitchell and Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis*, 55.
life imprisonment in the tower with the young prince. We are not told of her crime but left to imagine the severity of the offense given the sentence to which she has been dealt. And the final member of this triad, the prince himself, with his ‘small, shrivelled legs’, cast out of his kingdom because of his physical difference and his uncle’s greed. These three outcasts, and in particular the old woman and the prince, form an interdependent community, each depending on the other for their wellbeing and survival. And whilst these relationships are not without their problems being, as they are, grounded in inequality, otherness, and exclusion, they do enable us to examine non-biological relationships of care, for once in the tower the prince is cared for primarily by the old woman acting as his nurse and teacher. However, as this is also a fairy story, Craik also creates a generous and nurturing fairy godmother and it is to these caring ‘maternal’ figures that I now turn.

The concept of mothering and maternal care is an important theme throughout much of Craik’s work. In *How to Win Love; or Rhoda’s Lesson*, Craik highlights the importance of a mother’s love in raising young women by contrasting the behaviour of two young girls, the titular character Rhoda and her step sister, Annie. Whilst Craik does not describe the physical characteristics of either girl, preferring her young readers to engage their imagination in order to “picture them as you will, or take the face of some dear sister of favourite playmate for your ideal of Rhoda or Annie”, she does describe their personalities. Whilst Rhoda is described as a “motherless child, being at times foolishly indulged, at others treated with carelessness and occasional harshness” who “grew up much like a wild plant”, Annie, a slight and delicate child loved by all who know her, grew up with the love and guidance of a kind and patient mother. Whilst the ‘motherless child’ Rhoda grew up to care little for anyone or anything, Annie’s ‘kind and patient mother’ had taught her the importance of care. The association of the maternal to an ethics of care has long been discussed by feminist theorists. The way in which the mother-child relationship, for example, is often upheld as the exemplar for caring relationships is problematic and alienating for those who have no experience of the safe and nurturing environment this relationship is supposed to generate. However, the nineteenth-century novel, well recognised for the frequency with which the biological mother is absent, opens up the opportunity to examine ‘maternal care’ as it is delivered by non-biological ‘mothers’ or women assuming what could be described as a ‘mothering’ role. The requirements, or demands, which constitute maternal work, I borrow from Ruddick and include the preservation and growth of the child through preservative love, nurturance, and training. It is also important to note that whilst, as Ruddick states, mothering is an activity that men can do as well as women, historical and cultural experience has led women to be more successful within the role. This is clearly the case in *The Little Lame Prince*, for contained within this narrative are three nurses who care for the young prince at varying times and it is worth pausing for a moment to unpack the gendered and class aspects of the representation of these nurses.

Each of the nurses engaged in the prince’s care are female thus reinforcing the social construction of care as a role traditionally performed by women. However, in addition to this gendered aspect class also plays an important role. Of the three nurses there is the ‘young lady’ nurse who drops the prince at his christening and causes the injury that results in his disability, the ‘faithful country nurse’ who remembers these events and is subsequently punished for reporting the accident by being dismissed and exiled from the kingdom, and the released convict who accompanies the prince to live in

29 Craik, *Rhoda’s Lesson*, p. 10
30 Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking: Towards a Politics of Peace*, 17
31 Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking: Towards a Politics of Peace*, 41
Hopeless Tower. Of these three women only the young lady nurse, who is a cousin of the uncle, and therefore of a higher social class, is not penalised. The class differences between these women and the treatment of the two lower class women reflects the low status of care in society which frequently results in the exploitation of domestic care workers.\(^{32}\) In the case of this text one care worker is punished for reporting the accident whilst another, a convicted criminal, is conditionally released from jail in order to look after the prince. Conditions are placed on the context within which she must work, her life depends on the prince staying alive and under no circumstances is she to tell the prince who he really is. Not only does this context impact on how the care is experienced by the Prince, he notes for example on one occasion how he wants for very little except love, but it also influences the emotional responses of the nurse to the Prince. Whilst there is nothing in the narrative to suggest that the Prince is ill-treated by the nurse, in fact the nurse takes on the duty of teaching Prince Dolor to read and write even though she has not been ordered to do so, but the fact that towards the end of the story the reader learns that she has ‘ceased to hate him, and in a sort of way, almost loved him’ (53) suggests that these feelings were not always there.

This also highlights one of the contentious issues in relation to feminist discussions surrounding care and that is the autonomy of the carer and the freedom, or lack thereof, with which they enter into the relationship of care. Much of the focus on care and caring relationships, especially from the perspective of the disability movement, focuses on the person with a disability and how they achieve independence and autonomy in their daily lives.\(^{33}\) These are important discussions to have in order to ensure that disabled people are in control of their care and are not viewed as a ‘burden’ on others. However, in focusing the attention on the autonomy of the disabled person it is important that the autonomy of the carer is not ignored. As Sheila Mullett points out, care cannot be freely given if one is economically, socially, or psychologically forced into the caring relationship.\(^{34}\) The conditions placed on the nurse’s employment problematizes the relationship, and oppress her as much as, if not more than, her previous imprisonment. Her position as the Prince’s carer is difficult to reconcile at first. Placing the care of a vulnerable child in the hands of a criminal would be unheard of today, yet looking after the prince appears to redeem the old woman who over time learns to feel affection for the prince.

After about thirteen years together in the tower’ the old nurse and the prince develop an affection for each other – although it is not the loving relationship that exists between the prince and his god mother. The nurse no longer hates the prince, and the prince develops a sense of pity and compassion for the old woman who can never leave the tower. This mutual respect leads the old woman to tell the prince who he really is, despite the fact that she has been strictly forbidden to do so. In informing the prince of his actual identity the nurse not only recognises the prince’s basic human need to understand his own personal history and identity but assumes the responsibility for responding to this need by sharing what she knows. In doing so she fulfils one of the necessary requirements of care Tronto views as essential, identifying a need and reaching out to another to take action to address the need.

In contrast, whilst the nurse attends primarily to the prince’s physical needs, food, basic education, hygiene etc, the fairy godmother attends to his emotional growth and development. Abraham Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, whilst not without certain inherent problems for people with disabilities such as the lack of services to provide


\(^{33}\) Watson et al., “(Inter)Dependence, Needs and Care: The Potential for Disability and Feminist Theorists to Develop an Emancipatory Model”, p. 335

fundamental basic care, to which Paul Jacobs points, does provide a useful tool through which we can see the different outcomes achieved by the care provided by the nurse and the godmother. By using the five categories Maslow describes as being necessary for growth and development in humans – physiological needs, security, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualisation - we can see that whilst the nurse provides for the prince’s basic physiological needs the godmother provides the care necessary to support Prince Dolor on his way to self-actualisation as she gives him the love he felt was lacking and helps build his sense of esteem, and emotional intelligence. One of the pivotal incidents in which the godmother helps Prince Dolor on his journey towards self-actualisation is when she tells him about his physical difference and does so, the reader is told, out of love. Having told the young prince that he will never be able to walk or run like other boys she proceeds to tell him that his ‘life will be different from most people’s lives; but it may be a very happy life’ (32). This sentiment of difference is repeated later in the text when the prince, looking at a bunch of leaves, notes the infinite variety which exists in life and contemplates on how ‘the plan of the world is infinite similarity and yet infinite variety’ (46). In allowing the narrative to take this path I argue that Craik moves her engagement with disability beyond the metaphorical to reveal the lived reality of bodily difference in society. In doing so Craik highlights the life long experience of disability, which differs from many children’s writers who implement the ‘kill or cure’ narrative. Craik’s understanding of the way in which disability continues throughout the lifespan is reflected in a number of her works as well as in her personal life where a number of her friends and family members, including her husband, lived with various disabilities.

Having explained to the prince the extent of his physical difference the godmother provides him with a magical travelling cloak, which functions as a mobility aid and enables the prince to go out into the public sphere. The golden spectacles and silver ears, which the godmother gives the prince on one of his travels similarly function as prosthetic devices to aid his sight and hearing. Jane Stemp suggests that Craik’s use of prosthetic devices in this story has not been paralleled in children’s literature to date and is suggestive of Craik’s understanding of the fullness of life that can still be achieved when one has a disability. Given that her husband had a prosthetic leg and her godson, the poet Philip Marston, was blind Craik’s personal experience of the extent to which physical and sensory impairments could impact on an individual’s life and the benefit of prosthetic aids may be seen in this narrative. The care the godmother gives the prince therefore assists him to achieve independence and freedom by providing the various accessibility aids which will enable his enjoyment of life. That the prince is not magically cured of his physical impairment and goes on to live a full and productive life well into adulthood is unusual for nineteenth-century literature especially that for children which frequently employed what could be described as the kill or cure or ‘school of pain’ narratives of disability. Originating in Susan Coolidge's 1872 text What Katy did, the school of pain employed disability as a way of teaching children, especially young girls, tolerance, acceptance, and perseverance. This narrative use of disability is noted by Louis Keith in numerous stories for children written in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century including Heidi (1880), The Secret Garden (1910), and Pollyanna (1913). Similarly this treatment of disability is also noted by Deborah Kent in her essay ‘In Search of a Heroine’ in which Kent discusses how, as a child with a visual impairment, she sought out heroines in literature whom she could relate to, heroines

who created ‘independent lives enriched by deeply rewarding work and friendship [and who] without resentment, ... live[d] beyond the confines of convention, and gain[ed] the worlds acceptance and respect.’

Kent may have struggled to find these heroes but Craik certainly created a number of characters who, whilst living with a disability, were able to actively engage in the world around them and lead independent and rewarding lives. By having her protagonist in *The Little Lame Prince* live a full life, Craik not only demonstrates an awareness of human bodily variation but also the permanent and lifelong aspects of disability ignored by other children’s writers.

Fuelled with the knowledge that he is a king, the prince becomes determined to get to work and asks his magical cloak to take him to see what he needs to see. The cloak shows him the inequalities that exist in his kingdom, and at this stage the story takes a political turn as scenes of small, dirty children picking pockets to survive, little children playing in the gutters all day, people living in squalor and poverty whilst others live behind the walls of grand houses are depicted. In a direct address to her reader Craik describes the scenes of revolution,

> When you children are grown men and women – or before – you will hear and read in books about what are called revolutions – earnestly I trust that neither I nor you may ever see one. But they happen, and may happen again, in other countries beside Nomansland, when wicked kings have helped to make their people wicked too, or out of unrighteous nations have sprung rulers equally bad; or, without either of these causes, when a restless country has fancied any change better than no change at all [...] the horrible evil that went on this night under Prince Dolor’s very eyes – soldiers shooting down people by hundreds in the streets, scaffolds erected, and heads dropping off – houses burned, and women and children murdered – this is more than I can understand. (61)

And it was also more than the young prince could bear. Having learned about the inequalities within his kingdom, seen his people rioting, and witnessed the military attempts to quell the revolution, he asks his godmother (currently disguised as a talking magpie) ‘can’t the world be made a little more level?’ and declares that he would like to try to do something to achieve equality among his people, the very people he should ‘care for’ (66). This questioning, when considered in light of Tronto and Fisher’s definition of care, can be seen to not only challenge the social inequalities of the people but also the physical inaccessibility of a world which does not accommodate bodies that function like the prince’s. Unable to comprehend the overwhelming cacophony of sights and sounds assailing his senses the prince returns to the tower only to find the nurse has gone. For five days the prince must learn to care for himself – to dress himself, to sweep the hearth, and prepare a fire. On the sixth day the nurse returns with members of the royal court, ‘nobody remembered his lameness – or, if they did, they passed it over as a matter of no consequence’ (67), instead they presented him with a crown and hailed him as Prince and King, and took him back to Nomansland as its rightful heir.

At this point in the narrative care moves from the private sphere of the tower to the public sphere as a result of the nurturing capital the prince has acquired from both his nurse and godmother. As King our hero demonstrates an important outcome of care work which results in the capacity to nurture and care for others, described by Lynch and Walsh as ‘Nurturing Capital’ whereby the care invested in the king when he was a child results in an increased capacity to care for others.

> Wordsworth’s phrase, 'the child is father to the man', a phrase Craik uses later in her 1886 novel, *King Arthur: Not a

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Love Story, reflects the way in which the adult life of the Prince is shaped by his childhood experiences. Rather than performing a version of hyper-masculinity by perpetuating the violence of the rioters or the militaristic control of the soldiers, he fosters peace through an ethic of care, which sees him demonstrate compassion. Using Ruddick's four ideals that govern nonviolent peacemaking – renunciation, resistance, reconciliation, and peacekeeping – we can see that the Prince seeks to instil an ethic of care in his style of governance.

He pardons his convict nurse, outlaws the death penalty, 'all capital criminals were to be sent to perpetual imprisonment in Hopeless Tower, and the plain around it, where they could do no harm to anybody, and might in time do a little good, as the woman [his nurse] had done' (73), reconciles with his uncles family, and finds the country nurse who years ago had been exiled for revelling the cause of his impairment. In doing so he effectively demonstrates the skills of a non-violent peacekeeper, 'renouncing violent strategies and weapons' and transferring care from the private to the public sphere thus challenging the dichotomy that exists between, what Ruddick terms, as 'private care and public defence'.

With this strategy in mind, it is worth noting that The Little Lame Prince and his Travelling Cloak was not the first time Craik had explored the idea of the peaceful, non-militaristic ruler having approached the subject in her 1870 poem 'The Noble Coward'. Published in the religious periodical Good Words the poem takes the form of a speech, delivered by a king to his people, and is ostensibly about a man and his relationship with God. However, throughout the poem Craik reinforces the idea that leaders are responsible for fostering peace among their people as opposed to leading them into war. The poem opens with the prologue, 'If I were a ruler, I would never make war', and throughout Craik contrasts the imagery of war and battle with those of peace and sheathed swords. Such imagery strengthens the idea that Craik's writing can be seen to anticipate modern-day feminist ethics of care.

Throughout Craik's body of work, as Henry James alluded to, the reader encounters a number of disabled male characters. Frequently these figures are read metaphorically as woman, crippled and thwarted by the limitations placed on them by society. Certainly this imagery is evident in The Little Lame Prince as his confinement in the tower mirrors that of other infamous women such as the Lady of Shallot and Rapunzel. However, whilst I do not disagree entirely with the way in which scholars have linked the reoccurring figure of the invalid male, confined within the domestic sphere, to the frustrated desires of Victorian women prevented from entering the public realm, nor do I find it entirely helpful in unravelling this trope. When read in conjunction with Craik's other work, especially her non-fiction writing, the invalid male takes on a more nuanced appearance, one which raises questions about gender, identity, and care in society. For example, reading The Little Lame Prince in conjunction with Craik's collection of essays A Woman's thoughts on Women results in Lily Phili pose identifying the way in which Craik sees feminine qualities as being vital to support progress in the public sphere. When Phili pose states that 'sentimentalists', such as Craik "believed that the qualities women embodied – sensitivity, compassion, and empathy – belonged in the heart of the public sphere" and that these qualities provided "a model of

41 Ruddick, Maternal Thinking: Towards a Politics of Peace, 161.
42 Ruddick, Maternal Thinking: Towards a Politics of Peace, 161.
43 Ruddick, Maternal Thinking: Towards a Politics of Peace, 244.
ideal social behaviour that [...] could save Victorian England from the endless cycle of urban decay and moral degeneration”⁴⁶ she echoes, whilst not specifically mentioning, the arguments of Sara Ruddick, who seeks to transpose a feminist ethic of care onto society and policy making for the benefit of all society.

In The Little Lame Prince and his Travelling Cloak Craik engages not only with the disabled body and society’s relationship with it, but also the fundamental topic of care. By reading this text through the lens of feminist care ethics I have demonstrated how Craik’s dialogues, surrounding care and disability, foreshadowed the work of modern-day ethicists such as Sara Ruddick to discuss the way in which care can transcend the domestic boundaries so as to be employed within the public sphere. In doing so I suggest that the use of feminist care ethics, as a framework through which to analyse novels, will not only open up nineteenth-century narratives but will also expand our understanding of disability and care, as they are represented, in nineteenth-century texts, women’s writing, and Craik’s work in particular.