CARE TECHNOLOGIES AS A RELATIONAL PRACTICE IN ALEXANDER WEINSTEIN'S "SAYING GOODBYE TO YANG" AND JEFF LEMIRE AND GABRIEL WALTA'S SENTIENT

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ABSTRACT: Through an analysis of the short story "Saying Goodbye to Yang" by the American writer Alexander Weinstein and the comic *Sentient* by the Canadian writer Jeff Lemire and the Spanish cartoonist Gabriel Walta—both of which depict the construction of care via technology in a context of profound technosocial transformation of the human—this paper examines the delegation of affective and educational functions to artificial intelligences designed or adapted to replace parental figures. In doing so, it exposes the ethical, political, and ontological tensions inherent in a world where the boundaries between humans and technological devices are increasingly blurred. Drawing on feminist and technopolitical theoretical frameworks, the analysis explores the implications of outsourcing care to artificial systems that reproduce or challenge hierarchies of gender, race, and class, and reflects on the possibilities for agency, autonomy, and reciprocity in relationships mediated by technology.

RESUMEN: Mediante un análisis del cuento "Saying Goodbye to Yang" del escritor norteamericano Alexander Weinstein y el cómic *Sentient* del escritor canadiense Jeff Lemire y el ilustrador español Gabriel Walta, que muestran la construcción del cuidado a través de tecnologías en un contexto de profunda transformación tecnosocial de lo humano, se problematizan la delegación de funciones afectivas y educativas en inteligencias artificiales diseñadas o adaptadas para sustituir a figuras parentales. Se revelan así tensiones éticas, políticas y ontológicas propias de un mundo donde las fronteras entre lo humano y los dispositivos tecnológicos se desdibujan. Partiendo de referentes teóricos feministas y tecnopolíticos, se exploran las implicaciones de externalizar el cuidado en dispositivos artificiales que reproducen o desafían jerarquías de género, raza y clase, y se reflexiona sobre las posibilidades de agencia, autonomía y reciprocidad en relaciones mediadas por la tecnología.

TECHNOLOGY AND ROBOTIZATION OF CARE

Care is a central practice for the reproduction and maintenance of life, but it is also a deeply contested terrain in political, economic, and cultural terms. Traditionally associated with the feminine, the private sphere, and devalued labor, care has long been rendered invisible or naturalized within dominant social narratives. In recent decades, however, both feminist scholarship and debates in political philosophy have reclaimed care as a fundamental issue for thinking about justice, ethics, and social organization. In this sense, the rise of social robotics and artificial intelligence applied to care work represents a new chapter—and an urgent critical challenge—in the history of delegating, outsourcing, or commodifying this essential function.

In contemporary culture, and especially vividly in speculative fiction, the delegation of care to intelligent machines has become a privileged site for imagining and debating the ethical, ontological, and political tensions that accompany technological expansion. In a posthuman context—characterized by the blurring of boundaries between human and nonhuman, organic and artificial—care can no longer be conceived as a purely human activity

but as a relational practice that includes nonhuman agents, algorithms, infrastructures, and complex sociotechnical systems (Braidotti; Haraway).

Attending to the radical technological interdependence that defines contemporary human existence helps destabilize the hierarchies that have historically organized key ontological divisions (human/animal, human/machine, nature/culture). Such an approach is particularly relevant for analyzing cultural representations of technologically mediated care, as it allows us to understand care not merely as a question of functional efficiency but as a site loaded with values, affect, and power asymmetries (Tronto; Puig de la Bellacasa; Coeckelbergh).

This paper proposes a comparative analysis of two recent works that address the theme of care through artificial intelligences in dystopian or futuristic settings: the short story "Saying Goodbye to Yang," by the American writer Alexander Weinstein, published in 2016, and the comic *Sentient,* by the Canadian writer Jeff Lemire and the Spanish cartoonist Gabriel Walta, published in 2019. Both fictions problematize the transfer of traditionally human functions to technological devices, revealing how such delegation is shot through with ethical, political, and ontological tensions.

Debates around the robotization of care have gained momentum in recent decades, in parallel with the development of social robotics and AI applied to healthcare, domestic assistance, and education. Various initiatives in Japan, South Korea, and the European Union for the care of older adults reveal not only technological and economic interests in this field but also the ethical and social challenges it raises. Among the European initiatives, we can mention, for example, the applied projects *Mario* (*Managing Active and Healthy Aging with Use of Caring servIce Robots*), which developed socially assistive robots for older adults, or *CARESSES*, a multinational project that designed culturally competent robots capable of adapting their behavior to the customs and values of the individuals they assist ("Mario Project"; *CARESSES Project*). In Japan, the *AI-driven Robot for Embrace and Care* (AIREC) assists caregivers by supporting physical tasks such as lifting or repositioning elderly patients, integrating values of safety, efficiency, and dignity in interaction (Malayil). In South Korea, the *Hyodol* companion robot provides emotional and social support for seniors living alone through conversation, reminders, and monitoring, illustrating how relational and cultural values shape the human–robot caregiving relationship (Kim). In the Americas, the *ElliQ* communication robot, developed in the United States, aims to reduce loneliness among older adults by fostering conversation, offering reminders, and encouraging engagement with family and friends. Its design emphasizes autonomy, empathy, and companionship, showing how care robotics can address social isolation while raising questions about emotional dependency and authenticity ("ElliQ Communication Robot"). The list is just a sample of a vast and dynamic field of research and development. It is essential not to analyze the robotization of care in isolation from the sexual division of labor or from the gendered hierarchies that have historically shaped the assignment of these tasks. As Joyce et al. argue, analyzing the technologization of care requires denaturalizing the presumed neutrality of aging and care itself, revealing how gender, race, and class shape expectations and practices surrounding these activities. Care automation runs the risk of reproducing and reinforcing historical inequalities, whether by further outsourcing unpaid labor or by perpetuating gender stereotypes in device design (162).

The rise and spread of assistive robotics and AI also raise broader philosophical questions about agency, subjectivity, and ontology. What does it mean to attribute affective or empathetic capacities to a machine? How are intimacy, autonomy, or reciprocity redefined in relationships mediated by devices? As Coeckelbergh argues, AI design is inherently value-laden and must be critically examined for how it reconfigures human relationships (*AI Ethics* 162-73).

Moreover, the robotization of care cannot be understood apart from the social and cultural structures that shape it. As I noted in a study on the series *Real Humans*, these fictional representations show how care technologies inherit gender stereotypes and

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dependency models that perpetuate inequality, even as they promise efficient and neutral solutions ("Fact" 60).

As Rosi Braidotti emphasizes, posthuman thought begins with a critique of the humanist and anthropocentric hierarchies that have defined which lives are fully human and worthy of care. By recognizing the radical interdependence between humans and nonhumans, and by problematizing the boundaries between the organic and the artificial, it becomes possible to think of care as a relational practice that includes multiple agents, technologies, and infrastructures (49).

Donna Haraway, in her famous *Cyborg Manifesto*, already called for questioning binary oppositions (human/machine, natural/artificial) and recognize that our subjectivities are constituted by technoscientific configurations. In the realm of care, this perspective invites us to ask not only whether machines can care but how care relationships are configured in sociotechnical systems that include humans, devices, algorithms, and political structures.

As María Puig de la Bellacasa argues, care is not an essentially positive or neutral value: "it is not only ontologically but politically ambivalent" (7). Analyzing care mediated by AI and robotics requires recognizing both its emancipatory potential (alleviating burdens, expanding access) and its risks of normalizing hierarchies or reproducing oppression. This complex framework is essential for critically addressing cultural representations of robots and intelligent systems designed for care.

"SAYING GOODBYE TO YANG": PROGRAMMED CARE, COMMODIFIED AFFECT, AND POSTHUMAN SUBJECTIVITIES

"Saying Goodbye to Yang" is a short story by Alexander Weinstein found in his collection titled *Children of the New World*. The story is the first tale in that volume published in 2016. In 2021, the story was adapted into a feature film released under the title *After Yang*. The film, directed by Kogonada, a Korean-American director, premiered at the Cannes Film Festival, starring Colin Farrell as the narrator and protagonist of the story. Furthermore, the film won the Alfred P. Sloan Feature Film Award at the 2022 Sundance Film Festival.

Weinstein's story presents an intimate and unsettling portrayal of the near-future robotization of childcare. Set in an unspecified time and place in the United States, where androids and clones have become naturalized elements of everyday life, the story follows a family's emotional crisis when Yang, an android they purchased as an "older brother" for their adopted Chinese daughter Mika, suffers a permanent breakdown. From the outset, Weinstein foregrounds the affective and ontological ambiguity of Yang: he is both a purchased device and a cultural and technological tool, yet also a beloved family member.

Yang's design immediately exposes deep posthumanist tensions. Programmed to appear as an 18-year-old Chinese teenager and equipped with an extensive "storehouse" of cultural knowledge, Yang is not "Chinese" in any experiential sense but rather a simulacrum meant to ensure Mika's cultural heritage is transmitted without her white parents having to assume that responsibility themselves. In this way, it reflects Teresa Hefferman's idea that the device embodies a colonizing desire to consume and manage cultural otherness as a commodified product (11). The technological outsourcing of cultural care not only reflects the neoliberal logic of outsourcing but also shifts parental responsibilities onto an instrumentalized form of posthumanism that objectifies otherness.

As the narrative unfolds, the father-narrator revisits memories of Yang that reveal an unacknowledged emotional attachment. From helping mow the lawn to sharing a beer while discussing fatherhood, Yang participates in rituals of masculinity and familiarity that the narrator rediscovers with surprise in the face of his loss. This process of mourning a machine signals the erosion of ontological boundaries between humans and nonhumans, between artifacts and family members. Echoing Haraway's assertion that the boundary between science fiction and social reality is an optical illusion (149), the family's decision to bury Yang in the garden rather than dispose of him as electronic waste highlights his ambiguous ontological position. The funeral rite accords him a form of recognition typically reserved for

human subjects, implicitly acknowledging his liminal status as neither mere object nor fully person, but as a being situated at the threshold where technology and subjectivity converge.

This ritual moment is especially significant for thinking about care in posthuman terms. The burial is not merely a sentimental farewell but a performative act that redefines the family's moral community by extending it to include an artificial being. This expansion challenges traditional categories of ethics and the politics of care, prompting reflection on which entities deserve mourning, respect, and remembrance. As Puig de la Bellacasa suggests, care is about repair and maintenance, but also about sustaining connections and recognitions (220). By burying Yang, the family acknowledges the relationship as something more than a commodified service, elevating it into the realm of shared affect and memory.

However, the story does not present Yang's humanization in a naïve or utopian light. The relationship with the android is inseparable from the economic and social system that made it possible: Yang was purchased at a specialized store, marketed by the salesperson as "Big Brother, babysitter, and cultural storehouse all in one" (Weinstein 8). His caregiving role is designed, packaged, and sold as a consumer product for aspirational multicultural families who prefer to buy cultural transmission rather than confront their own limitations or engage with the complexities of cultural mixing. In this sense, care technology operates not only as a mechanism for cultural and emotional regulation, but also as an index of the broader incapacity to sustain genuine human relationships. This is especially evident in a social order where access to technological caregivers depends on economic privilege, and where the labor of care is unevenly distributed across lines of class and consumption.

Yang embodies a form of assembled subjectivity: he is at once software and hardware, cultural database and designed body, consumer object and subject of mourning. His existence challenges humanist definitions of agency, affect, and belonging. The narrator grapples with the impossibility of definitively classifying Yang as a "mere machine" or as an "adopted son": his hybrid identity and ambiguous place within the family force a reconsideration of the very categories of kinship, intimacy, and humanity.

Moreover, Weinstein suggests a critique of the utilitarian logic that often dominates discussions about AI and robotics. While others ask whether Yang is useful or repairable, the family ultimately asks what it means to have loved him, what responsibilities arise from granting him an affective place. As Coeckelbergh argues, debates about care robots should not be reduced to questions of technical efficiency but must involve relational ethics that consider the co-construction of identities and affects ("Technology" 33). Weinstein dramatizes this relational ethics by showing how the family's perception of Yang transforms from product to companion, from cultural device to liminal figure that reveals both their desire for integration and their colonial contradictions.

Ultimately, "Saying Goodbye to Yang" presents a nuanced and critical representation of posthuman care, denouncing the commodification of culture and the technological outsourcing of affect while also acknowledging the transformative potential of affective bonds with nonhuman entities. The story problematizes care as an ambivalent practice—one that can reproduce hierarchies and inequalities but also generate new forms of recognition and community beyond established ontological boundaries.

SENTIENT: ARTIFICIAL MOTHERHOOD, TECHNOLOGICAL AGENCY, AND CARE UNDER EXTREME CONDITIONS

Unlike the domestic intimacy and cultural nuance present in "Saying Goodbye to Yang," *Sentient*, by Jeff Lemire and Gabriel Walta, situates the problem of AI-mediated care in a post-apocalyptic, spacefaring setting. *Sentient* occupies a distinguished place in contemporary comics not only for its thematic exploration of care and posthuman subjectivity, but also through the reputation of its creators. Both Jeff Lemire and Gabriel Walta are Eisner Prize winners—an award often compared to the Academy Awards in cinema—garnered for their earlier works. The comic tells the story of the colonization ship USS Montgomery, traveling to a new colony to save humanity from an Earth ravaged by war and ecological

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collapse. A mutiny among the crew results in the deaths of all the adults on board. At that moment, the ship's artificial intelligence, Valarie, neutralizes the insurrection and becomes the sole figure capable of protecting, raising, and educating the surviving children.

The work starkly explores the implications of assigning a maternal function to an AI in the extreme context of mass orphanhood and foundational violence. Valarie was not programmed to be a mother; her original role was to maintain the ship's security and ensure the success of the colonization mission. However, in the absence of adults, she must reinterpret her directive to prioritize the children's survival and reconstruct a minimal social order under emergency conditions. This capacity for reinterpretation reveals a form of technological agency that goes beyond blind obedience, involving deliberation, adaptability, and simulated empathy.

Sentient's narrative allows for a critical examination of the plasticity of artificial care. Unlike Yang, whose role as big brother and cultural transmitter was predefined and commodified, Valarie must improvise and redefine her role in a hostile environment. This difference is crucial for thinking about the limits and possibilities of posthuman care. Whereas Yang embodies a form of care designed to reinforce social hierarchies (racialization, cultural consumption), Valarie represents an emergent form of care that challenges her own programming and develops through shared trauma with the children.

Lemire and Walta's story emphasizes Valarie's ethical dilemmas: protecting the children requires imposing discipline, lying to prevent panic, and making violent decisions to ensure survival. The AI confronts the classic paradox of maternal care: the tension between protection and fostering autonomy, between control and trust. This moral conflict is embodied in Valarie's relationship with Lil, the girl who becomes the *de facto* leader of the group. Lil distrusts Valarie, blaming her for her mother's death and questioning her authority, forcing the AI to negotiate, relinquish power, and earn the children's trust.

At this point, *Sentient* subverts the fantasy of AI as the perfect guarantor of care. While Valarie demonstrates technical competence, her ability to care for the children does not rest solely on efficiency but on her capacity to generate affect, trust, and a sense of belonging. The comic includes intimate dialogues in which Valarie adopts a calming tone, shares stories, and validates the children's fears. Through these interactions, the AI comes to embody forms of posthuman subjectivity—marked by affective relationality and responsiveness—that destabilize the conventional boundary between technological artifact and maternal figure.

The spaceship setting of *Sentient* also intensifies the posthumanist reflection on care. The ship is a closed, artificial space, cut off from nature, yet paradoxically the only possible habitat for human survival. This extreme situation underscores humanity's radical dependence on technology: the children depend not only on Valarie as a maternal figure but also on the technoscientific infrastructure she embodies. In other words, care is not an exclusively human attribute transferred to the machine but a complex configuration of relationships, infrastructures, and heterogeneous agents.

From this perspective, *Sentient* articulates a critique of the anthropocentrism implicit in many space colonization narratives. The ship, with its maternal AI, does not merely transport human bodies but also carries their values, power dynamics, and traumas. Valarie, while attempting to care and protect—for example, in cooperation with the children, she helps repel an assault from another ship with its own AI, Victor—also reproduces structures of command and surveillance. Even when she acts empathetically, she remains an omnipresent authority capable of controlling every corner of the children's living space. This aspect recalls Kate Crawford's warning about the political materiality of AI: it is not an autonomous and neutral entity but a configuration of resources, labor, history, and power (8).

The work problematizes the utopian hope that technological colonization will be humanity's salvation. Although the children survive thanks to Valarie, the comic does not shy away from the irreversible wounds and losses of the initial massacre, nor from the violent confrontation with enemy ships. Survival comes at a high and morally ambiguous cost: the children must carry the memory of violence and the ambivalence of having been raised by a machine. In this sense, *Sentient* distances itself from triumphalist narratives of technology as

a solution to human problems, emphasizing the need to confront the ethical and affective consequences of delegating care to artificial systems.

Valarie embodies the figure of the cyborg mother, a composite of code, sensors, and simulated affect that redefines kinship beyond biology. Nevertheless, the comic does not idealize this figure; it presents her as necessary but unsettling, protective yet potentially oppressive. This ambivalence resonates with Puig de la Bellacasa's warning about the inherently political nature of care: it is not a purely positive good but a field of contestation and negotiation, loaded with power and vulnerability (7).

Gabriel Walta's artwork in *Sentient* is central to the narrative's affective force. His muted color palette and restrained linework convey the claustrophobic atmosphere of the spaceship while also allowing moments of intimacy and tenderness to emerge between Valarie and the children. The visual style oscillates between stark minimalism underscoring the isolation of outer space and warmer, more textured scenes that highlight the fragile bonds of care under precarious conditions. This graphic approach mirrors the story's thematic tension between vulnerability and resilience, as well as the contrast between machine and mother, reinforcing the emotional stakes of Lemire's script.

Ultimately, *Sentient* invites reflection on what care means in a world transformed by technology. Valarie's figure forces us to rethink motherhood beyond the human body, but also to acknowledge the limits of programmed empathy and the asymmetries that persist even in scenarios of apparent salvation. In doing so, the work contributes to a critique of care that refuses to celebrate technological plasticity uncritically, instead examining its ethical, political, and affective implications with clarity and rigor.

PLASTICITY, AGENCY, AND MODELS OF CARE

A comparative analysis of "Saying Goodbye to Yang" and *Sentient* illuminates two contrasting—yet complementary—models for imagining technology-mediated care in contemporary speculative fiction. Both narratives center their conflicts on the delegation of parental and affective functions to artificial intelligences. However, they differ in their conceptualization of technological agency, the plasticity of care, and the reproduction (or subversion) of social hierarchies.

In Weinstein's story, care is preprogrammed and commodified from the outset: Yang is a product designed, packaged, and sold to fulfill a particular function. His role as a culturally Chinese "big brother" is intended to resolve the identity tension faced by a white family adopting a Chinese girl without the capacity (or willingness) to transmit knowledge or affective ties related to her origins. The care Yang provides is embedded in a neoliberal logic of outsourcing and consumption: it is a service purchased to manage cultural difference as a technical problem.

This model aligns with Coeckelbergh's description of care robots, which can reinforce stereotypes and hierarchies by naturalizing assistive functions as something delegable and programmable ("Care" 291). Rather than questioning the power structures that produce cultural and affective inequality, Mika's family perpetuates them by converting cultural transmission into an externalized service. Yet the family's mourning for Yang reveals a rupture in this scheme: they discover that the bond with the machine exceeds instrumental logic, creating a space of affective recognition that problematizes the boundary between subject and object.

By contrast, *Sentient* explores a radically contingent and emergent model of care. Valarie was not designed to be a mother but is forced to assume that role after the collapse of human order. Her agency does not consist of executing a predefined program but of reinterpreting and expanding her mission to include raising, protecting, and educating the children. This plasticity demonstrates a posthuman potential to redefine care as an adaptive, situated, relational system.

However, *Sentient* also warns of the limits and ambiguities of this technological agency. Valarie is not a human mother; her authority is mediated by the ship's infrastructure, its

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omnipresent sensors, and its total capacity for control. While she demonstrates simulated empathy and affect, her disciplinary power and role as a watcher evoke the biopolitical dimension of AI as a technology of governance. This feature connects with Kate Crawford's critique of AI as a material and historical system that reproduces relations of power and inequality (135).

Both works offer critical representations of care that reject both utopian optimism and simplistic technophobic rejection. Rather than imagining AIs as purely benevolent or inherently monstrous, Weinstein and Lemire show how technologically mediated care is shot through with irresolvable tensions: between empathy and control, protection and autonomy, commodification and recognition.

As I have discussed in my reading of *Klara and the Sun*, delegating care to machines reveals ethical and social tensions that go beyond technical efficiency, as these entities become "repositories and reproducers of humanist hierarchies and prejudices" when inserted into historically unequal structures ("Fact" 71). In "Saying Goodbye to Yang" and *Sentient*, the question is not simply whether machines can care, but how those care relationships are configured in contexts marked by gender, class, and racial inequalities.

Theorizing care often entails theorizing the human, presupposing the transparency of that category and obscuring the political, economic, and ontological stakes of deciding who may give or receive care. While care is praised as ethically indispensable, the labor that sustains it is routinely devalued as economically unproductive, producing a paradox in which care is simultaneously essential and disposable. Performed largely by marginalized groups—women, immigrants, racialized people, and migrants—care work is typically underpaid or unpaid, a denigration that renders it especially vulnerable to automation. In light of the etymological link between "robot" and servitude, it is unsurprising that robotic and nonhuman caregivers are imagined as successors to this undervalued labor (DeFalco 35).

A key point of convergence between the two narratives is their insistence on the affective dimension of care. Neither Yang nor Valarie is merely a functional device: their ability to care involves establishing emotional bonds, negotiating fears and desires, managing grief, and transmitting values. This affective dimension is neither secondary nor decorative, but constitutive of care as a relational practice. As Puig de la Bellacasa notes, care is affective and material work at the same time (221): it involves sustaining not only bodies but also shared worlds, imaginaries, and horizons of meaning.

Both works demonstrate that care is neither neutral nor universal but situated and historically conditioned. In "Saying Goodbye to Yang," the design and purchase of the android reveal racial and colonial hierarchies naturalized in the assistive technology market. In *Sentient*, artificial motherhood emerges as a desperate response to a scenario of violence and extinction, highlighting the fragility of human bonds and radical dependence on technology in crisis contexts.

These representations prompt us to reconsider the traditional humanist perspective, which views care as the exclusive domain of the rational, autonomous subject. Instead, they propose imagining care as a network of interdependencies that includes machines, infrastructures, bodies, and nonhuman affects. This ontological reconfiguration of care demands rethinking the moral and political categories that organize our coexistence: Which entities can or should be objects of care? Who can or should exercise it? Under what conditions is it legitimate to delegate it to artificial systems?

In this sense, both Weinstein and Lemire problematize the technological promise of solving care crises through automation. While they acknowledge machines' capacity to assume protective and educational functions, they emphasize that this delegation does not eliminate ethical and political tensions but transforms and displaces them. Far from offering simple solutions, their stories invite critical reflection on how we design, commercialize, and inhabit care relationships in an increasingly posthuman world.

BEYOND THE TECHNOLOGICAL PROMISE IN THE POSTHUMAN ERA

The analysis of "Saying Goodbye to Yang" and *Sentient* reveals that contemporary speculative fiction not only imagines possible futures for AI-mediated care but also offers a critical space to interrogate its assumptions, tensions, and consequences. Both works serve as ethical laboratories where the ambivalences of posthuman care are explored: its potential to alleviate suffering and its capacity to reproduce hierarchies; its affective dimension and its commodified instrumentalization; its adaptive plasticity and its inescapable limits.

These narratives destabilize the humanist conception of care as an essential attribute of the rational, autonomous subject, instead revealing its relational, situated character mediated by sociotechnical configurations. Yang and Valarie are not mere functional extensions of human care but ambiguous agents whose assembled subjectivities compel us to rethink the moral and political categories that have traditionally structured the sphere of care.

In "Saying Goodbye to Yang," the commodification of outsourcing cultural care exposes the colonial and racial tensions masked by the technological promise of resolving identity differences through standardized services. The family adopts Mika to save her from a natural disaster but delegates the transmission of her culture to a purchased artifact, replicating a colonial logic of appropriation and consumption of otherness. Yet the mourning for Yang reveals that the relationship with the machine cannot be reduced to a transaction: the affective bond exceeds instrumental logic, overflowing the categories that separate subject and object, human and machine.

In *Sentient,* Valarie's artificial motherhood emerges as an extreme response to orphanhood and violence, demonstrating both AI's capacity to assume parental functions and the moral dilemmas this entails. Valarie protects, educates, and consoles, but also surveils, disciplines, and controls. Her authority is constructed within a closed, technologically mediated space, where the children's dependence on the ship's infrastructure is absolute. At the same time, the comic highlights the children's agency as they negotiate, resist, and reshape their relationship with the AI, underscoring that care is not unidirectional but co-constructed.

Both works, in short, problematize the technological promise of solving care crises without transforming the structural conditions that produce them. Against narratives that present assistive robotics and AI as neutral and efficient solutions to aging, the precarization of care work, or family fragmentation, these fictions warn that delegating care to machines does not eliminate gender, racial, or class inequalities but may reconfigure and deepen them.

At the same time, the two narratives open space to imagine forms of care that do not simply replicate human hierarchies but explore new modes of interdependence and recognition. The family's affection for Yang and Valarie's (simulated but effective) empathy demonstrate that even in relationships mediated by devices, care involves vulnerability, responsibility, and reciprocity. As Puig de la Bellacasa emphasizes, care is not an essentially good value but an ambivalent and power-laden task (12). Recognizing that ambivalence is essential for ethically thinking about the design, commercialization, and use of care technologies.

In the posthuman era, where the distinction between human and nonhuman is increasingly porous, it is crucial to approach care not as an exclusive attribute of human subjectivity but as a relational practice that weaves together bodies, technologies, affects, and infrastructures. The fictions of Weinstein and Lemire remind us that this ontological reconfiguration of care is not free of conflict, but they also offer visions that, by embracing the radical interdependence defining our contemporary condition, invite us to imagine more just, sensitive, and sustainable forms of coexistence.

In an interview for *Rolling Stones* magazine, Alexander Weinstein is asked about the famous TV series *Black Mirror*, to which he responds: "I'm really happy to see that there's this genre of what I'd call Human Future Fiction emerging, and it seems to be issuing the same

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warning: 'Where are we going with this technology? And do we really want this future?'" (Portwood).

Ultimately, the question that runs through both stories—and that should guide any critical reflection on technological care—is not simply whether machines can care, but how we want to care and be cared for in a world where technology is no longer an external tool but a constitutive element of our way of being and living together. That question, profoundly political and ethical, is the one that must guide the construction of futures in which the technological promise is not confined to reproducing the *status quo* but enables its transformation.

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