

science fiction

THE VESTIGIAL HEART

A NOVEL of the ROBOT AGE

CARME TORRAS translated by Josephine Swarbrick

Imagine a future in which many human emotions are extinct, and “emotional masseuses” try to help people recover those lost sensations. Individuals rely on personal-assistant robots to navigate daily life. Students are taught not to think but to employ search programs. Companies protect their intellectual property by erasing the memory of their employees. And then imagine what it would feel like to be a sweet, smart thirteen-year-old girl from the twenty-first century who wakes from a cryogenically induced sleep into this strange world. This is the compelling story told by Carme Torras in this prize-winning science fiction novel.

Torras, a research roboticist, weaves provocative ethical issues into her story. What kind of robots do we want when robot companions become as common as personal computers are now? Is it the responsibility of researchers to design robots that make the human mind evolve in a certain way? An appendix provides readers with a list of ethics questions raised by the book.

Carme Torras is Research Professor at the Institut de Robòtica i Informàtica Industrial (CSIC-UPC) in Barcelona and editor of *IEEE Transactions on Robotics*. A member of the Catalan Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy, she is the author of four novels.

“Richard Brautigan rejoiced that in future we’ll all be watched over by machines of loving grace—but 100 years ahead 13-year-old Celia wakes from cryogenic suspension into a world where our robot guardian angels may be cradling us toward extinction. It’s wonderful that this award-garlanded Catalan novel, full of insights, is now more widely available in English.” —**Ian Watson**, author of the screen story for Spielberg’s *A.I. Artificial Intelligence*

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