

2017 Vol 17 Issue No. 1 — Social Robots: Human-Machine Configurations

> EDITORIAL

Human-machine relationships are being transformed by robots increasingly performing social roles such as teachers, carers and companions. This arrival of social robots is challenging understandings of human-machine relationships and generating diverse aesthetic, ethical and political debates. Matters of interest include asymmetries in human-robot relationships, the co-constitution of humans and robots, the place of robot labour, the significance of machine embodiment, and accounts of human-robot communication, among other topics. Commonly, the ways in which social and cultural norms shape social robotics do not receive enough critical scrutiny.

This special issue of *Transformations* examines the ways in which human-machine relationships are configured in social robotics. It recognises that contemporary robotics produces and circulates cultural values, and considers how social robots continue and diverge from other expressive and communicative practices. In so doing it tests the scope and limits of the category of social robotics.

As part of this issue we are delighted to launch the '[Robots for Last Days](#)' website developed by Marc Böhlen and Tero Karppi at the State University of New York at Buffalo. 'Robots for Last Days' is a resource for anyone interested in exploring the discourse on robotic systems designed to accompany people in the last days of their lives. This living database allows you to compare descriptions and perceptions of robots that care or kill from different disciplinary perspectives. From Engineering to Art and News, this resource offers insights into the ongoing discussion of robots and death.

