

"Enter a Robot: What Shakespeare can teach us about AI" (Prof. Dr. Stefan Laqué, FU Berlin)

The early modern period may not have had silicon chips and football-playing androids, but, as I want to argue in this paper, it was debating the very same questions about the interstices and transitions between humans and machines that govern our engagements with AI today. Looking at Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, I will be arguing that the ghost is not the only uncanny apparition of questionable humanity on the battlements at Elsinore, but that Horatio is another and arguably a no less challenging uncanny character with whom the Danish prince is confronted. While the ghost is situated between the full humanity of a living human being and the inanimate materiality of a corpse, Horatio seems to be situated between the full humanity of a being "passion's slave" and the mechanical functioning of a recording device. The play, then, stages Horatio as an experiment in artificial intelligence avant la lettre by only giving us "a part of him" as he cryptically introduces himself the very moment we first see him in act 1. This paper will be considering how his reduced / partial / artificial humanity is explored as the play exposes Horatio's inadequacies.