

Fragmented Minds: SOMA and the Reconstruction of Identity

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Abstract: Contemporary technological developments challenge established notions of human identity (Sorgner 2022), such as gender, race, or personality (Drew 2023), creating new possibilities for understanding, beyond biological and social categories, what it means to be human (Braidotti 2013; Wilde 2024). This article examines how the video game *SOMA* (2015) serves as a critical examination of posthuman subjectivity in a transhuman setting. By analyzing the game's narrative structure and interactive mechanics, this article explores the tensions between the silicon-based transhumanist visions of enhancement (Sorgner 2021) and the posthumanist critiques of autonomous selfhood (Haraway 2016; Wilde 2024). The analysis focuses on the game's exploration of mind uploading scenarios in which human consciousness becomes detached from its original biological substrate and then reimplanted in more-than-human bodies. *SOMA*'s narrative reveals the fundamental contradictions in the mind uploading technology through its portrayal of digital entities trapped between human memories and mechanical realities. These entities inhabit robotic forms while retaining a complete belief in their human identity, creating a disturbing gap between the subjective experience and the objective existence. Through this exploration, *SOMA* questions whether, and at what cost, human identity can survive radical technological transformation as mind uploading.

The paper argues that, although *SOMA* does not introduce a new conceptual model of mind-uploading, its interactive format creates unique opportunities for exploring posthumanist concepts of distributed subjectivity. Players experience identity not as a stable property of one's individual consciousness but as an emergent effect of the ongoing interactions between human and machine. The study concludes that *SOMA* offers a compelling counter-narrative to techno-optimistic visions of human enhancement, revealing the irreducible complexity of embodied existence and the ethical implications of consciousness transfer technologies.

Keywords: posthumanism; identity; SOMA; consciousness; reconstruction of identity

Introduction

In an era where the boundaries between human and machine increasingly blur, questions of identity have become more pressing and complex than ever before (Braidotti 2013; Haraway 2006; Wilde 2024). The traditional conception of human identity (Drew 2023), rooted in fixed categories of gender, race, nationality, and embodied experience, faces unprecedented challenges from both technological advancement (Sorgner 2022) and posthumanist critique (Braidotti 2013; Haraway 2006, 2016). While technological advancement focuses primarily on the practical aspects of directly altering human capabilities and transcending biological limitations, posthumanist critique provides theoretical challenges by questioning the very conceptual foundations of identity categories. This critique argues that such fixed classifications as the human/animal divide, male/female binaries, and the natural/artificial distinction represent inadequate social constructions that fail to capture human complexity.

The video game *SOMA* (2015) serves as a compelling lens through which one can explore the aforementioned philosophical tensions. Set in an underwater research facility where the line between human consciousness and artificial intelligence has dissolved, the game confronts players with the fundamental questions (i.e., how we define selfhood and whether identity can survive technological replication) about personal identity and technological enhancement.

Through the experience of Simon Jarrett, a brain-damaged man whose consciousness is uploaded into a robotic body, *SOMA* presents the fundamental tensions between transhumanist and posthumanist perspectives on human-machine relations. The first envisions technology as a means of overcoming human limitations and achieving a form of immortality (Bostrom 2009b), whereas the latter contends that human-machine relations are constituted through complex, cooperative entanglements rather than unidirectional control, and that human identity remains materially embedded and relational, rendering it irreducible to disembodied extraction (Haraway 2016; Wilde 2024). Within gaming contexts, a posthuman perspective challenges anthropocentric assumptions of the player's dominance over avatars, instead proposing that players and digital entities coexist in a state of mutual entanglement in which both shape the interactive experience (Wilde 2024).

In *SOMA*, this dynamic is exemplified through the player's immersive role in defining Simon's reconstructed identity, as he discovers that he is not human but a digital consciousness uploaded into a mechanical body. His struggle to accept this condition underscores the limitations of techno-utopian visions of human enhancement articulated by Bostrom (2009a, 2009b), since the disjunction between his embodied form and the recognition that he is not the original Simon prevents him from attaining a sense of happiness.

The game's exploration of these themes occurs at a critical moment when theoretical debates about posthuman identity intersect with practical developments in genetic, morphological, pharmacological, and cyborg enhancements (Sorgner 2021, 2022), such as modifications or selections of genes, cosmetic surgeries, medications, deep brain stimulation and the utopian idea of literal immortality via the mind uploading process (2022). This latter concept envisions transferring an individual's personality onto a digital medium, where it could be copied, implanted into another body, or exist independently within cyberspace.

By examining how *SOMA* represents the reconstruction of the traditional conception of identity in a technologically mediated world, this study contributes to broader conversations about human agency, embodiment, and the ethical implications of emerging technologies that promise to fundamentally alter what it means to be human.

Identity as a societal concept

According to Chris Drew, identity could be defined as "the collection of attributes, beliefs, and experiences that shape how an individual perceives themselves and how they are perceived by others" (2023). These attributes encompass various factors, including gender, ethnicity, personality, religion, values, and hobbies. This multifaceted understanding of identity is significant because, as Moya emphasizes, "who we understand ourselves to be will have consequences for how we experience and understand the world" (2000, 8). In other words, our identity not only reflects who we are but actively shapes our interpretation of reality and our interactions within it.

Although attributes such as gender, ethnicity, personality, values, and religion constitute vital aspects of human identity, Haraway contends that they cannot serve as the foundation for any notion of the "essential" unity (2006, 122). In the case of gender, she insists that "female" does not represent a natural bond

among women – it is rather a historically contingent and contested category, produced through scientific discourses and social practices (122). Historically, social practices in experiencing “womanness” have varied between a slave woman in antebellum America and a middle-class housewife in Victorian England (Moya 2000, 3). Such categories, whose aim is to unite people under a specific label, ultimately lead to “endless splitting and searches for a new essential unity” (Haraway 2006, 123). In other words, this cycle occurs because gender categories (i.e. woman) are both politically necessary for solidarity and yet always unstable, since no single definition can encompass the diversity of women’s lived realities.

Beyond the specific aspects of identity that are challenging to define and unify people in society, even the general term “human” cannot be perceived as a perfect representation of all people. Braidotti (2013) and Irigaray (1985) have observed that the “abstract ideal of Man as a symbol of classical Humanity is very much a male of the species: it is a he. Moreover, he is white, European, handsome and able-bodied” (2013, 24; 1985). As a result, full access to rights was restricted to a specific figure: a white, cisgender, European man who “was now “master” of his own destiny” (Wilde 2024, 22-23). In contrast, numerous other groups of people have been denied recognition as fully human and “have been excluded even the most basic rights” (Wilde 2024, 22-24).

Due to its Eurocentric origins, the term “human” incorporates a “binary logic of identity and otherness” (Braidotti 2013, 15) where being the Other is perceived as something negative. Consequently, people perceived as Others are “sexualized, racialized, and naturalized [...] and reduced to the less than human status of disposable bodies. We are all humans, but some of us are just more mortal than others” (Braidotti 2013, 15). For Braidotti, “the human is a historical construct that became a social convention about ‘human nature’” (26).

To challenge the dualistic, falsely unitary, and patriarchal description of the world, Haraway proposes a broader term that provides affinity and rejects identity: cyborg. It is “a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction” (Haraway 2006, 117). In contrast to human, cyborg “does not seek unitary identity and so generate antagonistic dualisms without end” (146). What is also crucial for the next section, “cyborgs are constitutively full of multiscalar, multitemporal, multimaterial critters of both living and nonliving persuasions” (Haraway 2016, 104-105).

The origins of the term “human” are not the only problematic aspect. Another dilemma is whether we can perceive ourselves as human beings from both a

biological and technological perspective. The question arises: Are the binaries of nature-culture, human-animal, and organism-machine (Gray et al. 2021, 2) nowadays even applicable? Humans not only constitute part of the ecosystem and are composed of different species, such as bacteria, but they are also dependent on technological devices that serve as extensions of human capability (Gulie 2021; Haraway 2016; Mentor 2011; Wilde 2024).

Are we human or posthuman?

In the previous section, the primary focus was on considering identity as a societal concept, which dictates how individuals perceive and categorize themselves within a given society. Sociocultural traits are not the only factors that define human beings. From an anthropocentric perspective, there is a clear distinction between humans, animals, and machines (Braidotti 2013; Wilde 2024). However, Sorgner emphasizes that humanity has never been confined to the traditional concept of human, as the integration of technological elements into our existence has been occurring since the emergence of *Homo sapiens* (2022, 9). Similarly, Mann suggests that most individuals can already be regarded as cyborgs, given that the use of technological tools to augment and improve human life is nearly universal (2021, 29).

On the other hand, Gray et al. notice that “humans are part of nature, a large driver in the immensely larger world of ecological interconnectivity, but often imagine ourselves apart from it” (2021, 2). As a result of the impact of the concept of the liberal human subject, there is still a belief that “the human [is] an ‘autonomous’ being” (Wilde 2024, 3), whereas in fact, as the representatives of critical posthumanism claim:

We are entangled with our media and technologies, as well as with our environments and with human and nonhuman ‘others’. We are controlled by those “others” as much as we control them. (Wilde 2024, 3)

From a posthumanist as well as biological perspective, humans are not a separate entity, as they consist of other entities, such as bacteria that are inside their bodies. Gulie compares the human body to an island or even a whole continent, which is a “home to at least a hundred trillion separate living creatures

- all of them microscopic: mostly bacteria, but also archaea, yeasts, protozoa, and fungi (and viruses)" (2021, 114). This biological reality aligns with Haraway's theoretical framework regarding interspecies entanglements. She states that "including human people, critters are in each other's presence, or better, inside each other's tubes, folds, and crevices, insides and outsides, and not quite either" (2016, 98). What is more, "critters - human and not - become-with each other, compose and decompose each other, in every scale and register of time and stuff in sympoietic tangling" (2016, 97). Haraway defines the term "sympoietic" as "making-with" because "nothing makes itself; nothing is really autopoietic or self-organizing" (2016, 58). With respect to what constitutes a human, this concept is crucial, as without interdependence or intra-action with other creatures, neither humans nor critters can survive.

In the case of human interdependence with technology, Wilde (2024, 3-4) contends that human existence is inherently mediated by technology, ranging from elemental tools such as clothing and shelter to advanced biomedical devices and digital systems, including pacemakers, glucose monitors, and smartphones, which not only sustain life but also redistribute memory and identity beyond the body. Moreover, Mentor argues that we could even be called "mundane cyborgs" due to our increasing integration with technological devices that function as extensions of human capability. These everyday prosthetic technologies include mobile phones, laptops, remote controls, Bluetooth devices, televisions, and GPS navigation systems (2011, 54). Following that thought, Sorgner, quoted at the beginning of this section, notices that the process of mobilizing the computer systems is still in progress. For now, people use smartphones that are minimized versions of PCs; however, for a future prospect (autonomous cars, and all other aspects of a smart city), there will be a need to integrate computers more intimately into our bodies (Sorgner 2022, 31), for instance, in a form of a chip.

Based on the quoted fragments from both posthumanist and transhumanist thinkers, a subtle distinction emerges regarding the relationship between humans and technology. Sorgner, who represents what he calls "weak transhumanism," sees potential in enhancement techniques that could improve human life (2022, 129). However, it could be argued that in the general conception of transhumanism, technology is perceived as something that operates "from outside of the human, as an "other" [whereas] in a posthumanist view, our relationships with technologies are instead (part of) what defines us" (Wilde 2024, 31). This fundamental distinction in how technology is conceptualized reveals that despite their shared concerns

about human enhancement and technological integration, transhumanism and posthumanism offer markedly different philosophical frameworks.

Fundamental philosophical divergences between posthumanist and transhumanist approaches

Although posthumanist and transhumanist thinkers share overlapping ideas discussed earlier, these philosophical approaches present fundamentally contrasting views on humanity's future path and its relationship with technology. This core difference concerns humanity's main goals, its connection with the world, and what defines the posthuman practice.

To understand this divergence more clearly, it is essential to recognize that posthumanism's primary objective is not to seek the end of humanity but rather "the end of a certain conception of the human" (Hayles 1999, 286). As Wilde notices, "what compromises the 'human' is in fact made up of a multiplicity of component parts and selves" (2024, 31), such as technologies, animals, humans, and environments. Consequently, posthumanism "proposes an enlarged sense of inter-connection between self and others, including the non-human or 'earth' others, by removing the obstacle of self-centered individualism" (Braidotti 2013, 49-50) as was presented in the previous section. Besides redefining what it means to be human concerning their entanglements with environments, cultures, societies, natures, others, animals, machines, and tools (Wilde 2024, 27), posthumanists such as Haraway emphasize the importance of taking responsibility for the harm humans cause to the planet and finding ways to coexist with other beings in a way that prevent further damage (2016, 37).

Whereas according to the posthumanist movement, a posthuman is someone interconnected with other beings, transhumanism defines it as "a silicon-based entity on a hard drive, as well as a carbon-based entity who is a further-developed human being" (Sorgner 2022, 65). It is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the differences between transhumanism and posthumanism.

As it is noticeable, transhumanism "embraces the use of technologies to increase the likelihood that posthumans may emerge" (Sorgner 2021, 34). Carbon-based transhumanists mostly discuss four types of enhancements that are the most promising in this area – genetic (gene modification and selection), morphological (for instance cosmetic surgery), pharmacological (such as blood doping, pain killers, cognitive enhancers) and cyborg (RFID (radio-frequency identification) chips

implanted into different parts of human body, predictive maintenance) (Sorgner 2021, 35; 2022, 7-9). On the other hand, silicon-based transhumanism is more focused on “the technology of downloading the personality onto a hard disk so that it can be multiplied, integrated into a new organism, or could continue to live alone in cyberspace” (Sorgner 2021, 37). This process, which will be discussed in the next section, is called “mind uploading” or “whole brain emulation” (37).

Apart from different approaches regarding which types of technology should be prioritized, even the attitude toward human perfection is not uniformly defined among transhumanists. Sorgner enlists three types of such approaches: the Renaissance ideal (strong transhumanism), a common-sense account (a little weaker but also strong transhumanism), and radical pluralism (weak transhumanism) (2022, 129-135).

For this article, strong transhumanism holds particular significance as the variant most commonly associated with transhumanist philosophy in public discourse, exemplified by scholars such as Bostrom. According to this perspective, human enhancement constitutes a moral imperative rather than merely an available option. Additionally, strong transhumanist thinkers maintain that enhancement technologies inherently promote improved lives for all human beings (Sorgner 129-130). As Bostrom claims, “transhumanists view human nature as a work-in-progress, a half-baked beginning that we can learn to remold” (2009a, 619). The important step to further evolution is the eradication of “aging, starvation, unnecessary suffering, and cognitive shortcomings” (Bostrom 2005, 205).

In this aspect, there is a clear distinction between transhumanism and posthumanism – whereas in transhumanism “human [is] as the main benefactor in utilising and adapting the ‘other’, be that technology” (Wilde 2024, 28), posthumanism “views this as a complex and non-hierarchical entanglement between intra-acting, mutually dependent, entities” (28). Given the earlier mention of silicon-based transhumanism and its focus on mind uploading, a closer examination of this particular technological pathway reveals the full scope of transhumanist ambitions, especially since it is the main technology used in the video game *SOMA* that is analyzed in this article.

Mind-uploading

One of the core ideas of silicon-based transhumanism mentioned in the previous chapter is the process called “mind-uploading.” The theoretical framework for this concept has its roots in the 1950s (Potts 1996, 103).

The main goal of mind-uploading is to download “the personality onto a hard disk so that it can be multiplied, integrated into a new organism, or could continue to live alone in cyberspace” (Sorgner 2021, 37). When it comes to the advantages of that idea, Häggström enlists “long-distance travel as easy as the transfer of computer files” (2021, 4), endless possibilities to switch between robot bodies and virtual worlds instead of sticking to a biological body, and the ability to create multiple copies of ourselves (4).

However, the realization of this concept involves several obstacles. Sorgner identifies key points that must be fulfilled for mind uploading to be a realistic option. The primary challenge concerns the complete preservation of personal identity, which requires that no elements of human consciousness be lost when converting from a biological to a digital format (2022, 25). Since human personality exists within analog biological systems, the transformation to digital architecture presents inherent preservation difficulties.

Additionally, it is also worth noting that “we are not familiar with any silicon-based entity to which we can ascribe the quality of being alive, and computers are silicon-based entities” (Sorgner 2022, 26). The only exception that could be taken into account is computer viruses; however, they “do not consist of cells and they do not consume organic matter, that is, they do not possess a metabolism” (27). As a result, according to Sorgner, for now, mind uploading is not possible as these two factors cannot be fulfilled.

Besides the technical limitations, Häggström enlists other aspects of further realization of mind uploading, such as questions of personal identity – whether the copy would truly be the same person as the original or considerations about how society would be structured with both human beings and their uploads coexisting (2021). At some point, Häggström voices out the concern, which is a key concept of the video game analyzed in the next section, *SOMA*:

In a world where such a technology is widely established, it does not help to ask people who have undergone teleportation whether or not they are the same person as before they teleported, because no matter what the true answer is, they will all feel as if they are the same person as before, and respond accordingly. (2021, 11)

This paradox presents a fundamental epistemological problem wherein subjective experience cannot serve as reliable evidence for the persistence of identity through mind uploading.

SOMA as a realization of transhumanist ideas

SOMA is a survival horror video game created by Frictional Games in 2015. During the introductory part of the story, the player discovers the backstory of 27-year-old Simon Jarrett, who was involved in a car accident. As a result, he suffered brain damage and now has chronic bleeding within his skull. Due to the progressive weakening of neural structures, he has experienced recurrent bleeding episodes, putting his life at constant risk. In search of an alternative to the recommended cranial cavity drainage, he joins David Munshi's experiment whose aim is to conduct a brain scan that is supposed to help determine appropriate treatment for Simon.

After the brain scan, Simon wakes up in a deserted underwater base. With the help of various data buffers and the Omnitool, which enables him to explore the base further, he discovers what happened throughout these 100 years. As he explores, he finds there are no humans at the site. As the game progresses, it becomes clear that all of them had either been killed by WAU (the manifestation of a malfunctioning, station-wide AI), murdered by other people (as was the case with Catherine), or had committed suicide – except for one survivor, Sarah Lindwall, who asked Simon to end her life as she could no longer survive without life support. Apart from WAU, which is trying to kill him, Simon encounters machines that believe they are still human – they claim to be Carl Semken and Robin Bass.

In his conversation with Simon, Carl dismisses as absurd the very notion of questioning whether he is human or a robot. He even says that Simon should “get [his] eyes checked. I'm right here. I see both my hands, both my feet” (2015). This robot is trapped in thinking that he is still the true version of Carl Semken, which is more disturbing when, after that conversation, Simon finds Carl's biological body. The question arises whether Carl's identity was somehow transformed from his mortal body into a mechanical one, and whether it is Carl or his copy.

This pattern of the cognitive dissonance extends to other characters as well. Robin demonstrates the same inability to perceive his transformed state, remaining oblivious to the change in his material body. What is more, he believes that he is already at the ARK: “Oh, I was so worried something had gone wrong [...] I hope I get to meet her [Catherine] soon so I can apologize” (2015). At some point, he is confused about why there is no one around, as it was supposed to be around forty to fifty people sent by the ARK. However, Simon does not have

the heart to tell him the hard truth that he did not make it (2015); accordingly, as Carl, Robin is trapped in his own perception of the world. Such situations can be perceived as the realization of concerns about mind uploading, voiced, among others, by Sorgner. As he views it, it is not a possibility to achieve immortality in a literal sense; to be more precise, he claims that achieving immortality is a utopian concept (2022, 165). He identifies danger in literally interpreted utopias that function not as aspirational ideals but as concrete projects claiming feasible implementation within actual social or technological frameworks.

Fundamentalists can use them to try to install all types of totalitarian means to bring about the desired utopias, which, however, cannot be realized. In these cases, people and the present in general are sacrificed for an impossible future. (Sorgner 2022, 165)

As a player progresses through the story and listens to the recordings left by scientists, they may have a similar reflection. The ARK project was built on the desire to achieve literal immortality; however, most of the people involved in the project did not make it. Furthermore, the characters in *SOMA* do not understand that the mind-uploading process is similar to transferring files from a computer to a pen drive. When you put the file on a pen drive, the original one still remains on the computer; it is not transferred to the pen drive. The one on the pen drive is a copy, the same as the soul uploaded on the rocket launched into space (the ARK program).

ARK represents a project, governed by Pathos-II, that aims to save people as “brain scans and put them into an artificial world” (2015), which is supposed to be launched into space. As one of its supporters emphasizes in the interview that Simon watches, it is a platform that “is not necessarily restricted to our digital progeny, but a means of actual survival” (2015). The ARK is a game representation of mind-uploading, mentioned in the previous section, with its advantages and disadvantages described by Häggström. However, in *SOMA*, as Robin explains, for the process to be successful, there must be two versions of you – “one human, one living scan in the ARK. [...] If the human you dies before the scan is initiated, or closely after, you yourself would live on the ARK” (2015).

Catherine, a Pathos-II scientist, or to be more precise, one of the copies of the original Catherine that guides Simon through the stations, is the only NPC (Non-Player Character) in the game that is fully aware of the fact that she is not a

human now. As she sees it, “I feel about as human as before, but as if suspended in air” (2015) because she does not have a body, and her consciousness is moving from one device to another. She is the game realization of Bostrom’s dream of overcoming human limitations, including bodily constraints, through the possibility of mind uploading “to make backup copies of oneself [or] transmit oneself as information at the speed of light” (Bostrom 2009a, 621). He envisions two ways such copies could live: “in virtual reality or directly in physical reality by controlling a robot proxy” (621). Whereas Catherine’s copy lives in a virtual reality, Simon, the main character, is an example of living in physical reality by controlling a robot proxy.

However, Simon’s situation is more complicated than Catherine’s. Not only is he dissatisfied with the current possibility of achieving a good life through the technologically mediated extension of healthspan (Bostrom 2009b, 116) via the mind uploading as a realization of transhumanist ideas, but he also struggles to find his identity – who is he? Is he even human? Is he the 27-year-old Simon from Toronto? Furthermore, throughout the game, it becomes uncertain whether Simon is merely a puppet controlled by the gamer or if this experience represents something deeper – a posthuman interaction between human (gamer) and machine (*SOMA*) within a transhuman world.

Posthuman identity in a transhuman game setting

Throughout the game, the player embodies different forms of Simon. First, a 27-year-old human named Simon who lives in Toronto. After a brain scan – a hybrid of his consciousness, the body of one of Catherine’s colleagues, and a special robotic suit with a Cortex Chip, including the Data Reader and the Occu-Torch (2015). This concept aligns with Vita-More’s idea of the substrate-diverse body that “can be enhanced, modified, and replaced – part by part; however, the content within the brain – memory and nervous system data – must be intact and continuous to evidence personhood over time” (2021, 63). As Catherine explains to Simon at some point in the story, his artificial body has senses similar to those of a human, and his mind has just adapted to these new features, such as the absence of ears or a mouth, tricking itself into thinking it is the same person (2015). It can be said that Simon is a cyborg – his physical components are neither male nor female, he is neither fully human nor fully robot, but something beyond dualistic thinking (Haraway, 2006).

However, Simon struggles with accepting his robotic body. In his view, without a body, which is a part of human identity, there is no sense in any achievements or needs: “How could anything possibly matter, when you know you are a stupid robot in a stupid dead world” (2015). The crucial realization is that Simon’s biological life ended in 2015, after the brain scan, which means that the present Simon is not the same individual. He is “a copy of the original Simon’s consciousness, having inherited everything – from his personality to his sense of embodiment” (Heijmen and Vervoort 2024, 752). As a result, he is not confident about his existence and the purpose of life, a contradiction to Bostrom’s claims that enhancements provide a good life.

This entire journey of understanding his identity is not undertaken alone. Since *SOMA* has a first-person perspective, the distinction between the avatar (Simon) and the player becomes blurred. As players may experience deep immersion in a game, which includes “transportation, i.e., the feeling of media users being mentally drawn away from the actual physical environment into the world of a narrative” (Perego et al. 2014, 17), the gameplay becomes a shared journey where:

Any separate distinction of character is gone – the player is the character. You’re not role- playing a being, you are that being; you’re not assuming an identity, you are that identity [...] If you are killed in a fight, you don’t feel that your character has died, you feel that you have died. (Bartle 2004, 155)

Simon’s search for identity unfolds as a cooperative process between an avatar and a player, rather than as a discovery facilitated solely by the latter. Through Simon’s perspective, the player can help him unravel the mystery of who he truly is, or to be more precise, who they are. They have a freedom of choice of what to do with their copy at the Omicron station – kill it or leave it be. According to Wilde, the interaction between a gamer and an avatar could be interpreted as a posthuman activity since “there is no primary subject, and instead illuminating how feelings, and agency, emerge through a network of intra-acting forces, where actions occur through an entanglement of forces” (2024, 42). It could be argued that gameplay in *SOMA* is a representation of a posthuman activity in a transhuman in-game world.

Conclusions

According to anthropocentric thinking, identity is a concept essential to humanity. However, as indicated in this paper, the definition of humanity is flawed and exclusive – it originates from historical classifications that privileged certain groups over others, such as those established by patriarchy, colonialism, or capitalism. Aside from that, it provides an illusion of a clear distinction between humans, animals, and machines.

However, according to posthumanist (Braidotti, Haraway, Hayles, Wilde) and transhumanist scholars (Bostrom, Sorgner), the line between these entities is blurred. Humans coexist with other creatures, such as bacteria, in order to exist. Furthermore, they regularly use technological devices to enhance their physical abilities or to monitor physiological functions effectively. Also, the ongoing miniaturization of technological components has enabled their seamless integration with human physiology, thus challenging traditional boundaries between biological organisms and mechanical systems.

Whereas posthumanists are focused on the need to take responsibility for the human damage inflicted upon the planet and stress the entanglements between human and mutually dependent entities, transhumanists are more dedicated to crossing the boundaries of humanity to further its evolution. One of the ideas of achieving that goal is mind uploading, which would provide the opportunity to transfer consciousness between bodies and potentially create multiple copies of ourselves. However, beyond the technical challenges, this method raises profound philosophical questions: Would such a copy be recognized as the same person? How would we resolve situations where multiple copies claim to be the original consciousness?

The video game *SOMA* examines the issues in question. Its exploration of Simon's identity crisis highlights the core conflict between the promises of transhumanism and the insights of posthumanism. While transhumanist ideas suggest that mind uploading would allow for a seamless continuation of personal identity, Simon's experience shows the opposite: deep alienation, existential confusion (why was he created if he's just a copy of the original Simon), and a desperate effort to maintain a coherent sense of self in a radically changed embodied form. Catherine, unlike other characters, accepts her distributed nature – she is aware that she is just a copy and does not mind not having a physical, flesh-and-blood body.

Besides the dilemmas in the game's narrative about what it means to be human in a transhuman world, the gameplay itself may raise the question of whether this gaming activity per se is posthuman. As the player guides Simon's journey, they experience identity as an emergent property of human-machine assemblage rather than a fixed trait of autonomous subjects. They become part of Simon; without one side, the story's progress could not occur.

This analysis demonstrates that contemporary discussions of technological enhancement cannot proceed without a serious engagement with questions of embodiment and relationality. *SOMA*'s haunting portrayal of mind uploading serves as both a cautionary tale about techno-utopian overreach, as expressed by Sorgner, and an invitation to embrace more complex, materially grounded understandings of identity in an age of increasing human-machine convergence.

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Received: 2025-09-29; reviewed 2025-10-21; accepted 2025-11-13
doi.org/10.64867/pjes.25435981.25.112.2365
