Comparing and contrasting OneShot and SOMA

1. Disbelief about the player's state

In both games, the player characters experience some kind of "disbelief" about their state. In SOMA, Simon refuses to believe that he is a robot. At the start of the "actual" game (waking up in Pathos II), the personality construct that Simon was existing under just assumed he retained his old arms. When he made it to the communication center, and experienced being crushed by a massive amount of water bought upon by a failed glass-dome roof, he had a "realization" that he could breathe. A few seconds later, his arms flicker in digital noise before revealing their true construction -- a diving suit. At two more points throughout the game, the player can choose to have Simon look at himself in a mirror. When Simon gazes upon his reflection in the mirror, he sees his true form: a diving suit with a personality-simulating device stuck in the helmet, haphazardly connected to the dead body in the suit with some nanotechnology gel. In the case of OneShot, Niko repeadely states throughout the game that they are not a cat. When the player arrives to the ground portion of the Refuge, a robot (called Kelvin) can be talked to. Kelvin will remark that Niko is a cat, and should probably just sit and sleep with him, amongst the warmth that he emits. There are a few other cases where this occurs, at least one on every map. Several characters will assume that Niko is some kind of cat, or even be disappointed that a cat has been assigned to save their compartmentalized universe. Despite opposition from themselves and other characters, both Simon and Niko go on to fulfill their quests.

2. Robot sentience and sapience

By far, the most telling comparasion between the two games is the regard to sapient machines. In SOMA, there are several notable instances of sapient robots (the most notable being Catherine), or robot-like creatures. Yes, SOMA has "robots" that can't directly move around -- Catherine is another good example of this. Throughout the game, she is at the mercy of Simon to carry her around. There are also plenty of other robots in the game that are sapient but trapped in unfortunate circumstances. Towards the start of the game, the player has to re-energize some equipment, but ends up electrocuting a sapient robot. If you talk to the robot, it will find it strange that you (the player) do not see it as a human, despite many attempts to convince you otherwise. It should also be noted that "robot sentience" is applied to many things in SOMA that do not really map well to the human analogue. For instance, about halfway through the game, it is revealed that a boat has somehow gained sentience. Of course, all of these "haphazard creations of life" are bought about by the WAU, the villain of the game. The WAU decided to, upon detecting the impact of the asteroid, preserve human experience at all costs. This, of course, meant applying humanity's existence to poorly-constructed and poorly-suited machines. This does not really parallel well in OneShot, but some things can be compared. The most obvious comparasion is that of Silver and Dr. Kip. Silver, being a machine clone of Kip, "gained too much free will" and left Kip to go inhabit the Barrens. Of course, to have sentience, you must also not have sentience. Both games feature a variety of creatures, both human and machine, that are not sentient. In OneShot, it is the concept of the non-tamed robots that fills this requirement. OneShot uses the adjective "tamed" to describe if a robot is sentient or not. In the game, it is mentioned that human personality principles must be impressed upon a robot for it to be "tamed." In SOMA, the analogue of untamed robots would be the variety of grotesque creations produced by the WAU. They do not feature sapience at all, and, in fact, are unintelligent biological creatures.

3. Harsh endings

Both games feature notorious "good and bad" endings. SOMA actually features two endings that both concurrently occur. In the first ending that plays out, Simon finds himself trapped in Pathos II forever, as he did indeed place a copy of his personality onto the sattelite that him and Catherine launched. He makes this realization that he is permanently trapped, and ends up actually overwhelming the PDA that was running Catherine's personality construct, trapping him for an "extremely long time" and alone. The second ending plays after, and it features both Simon and Catherine having made it onto the ARK (the sattelite that they launched, loaded with computing equipment that can simulate human personalities and experiences for centuries to come), and they are both very happy with their state. The two manage to find the rest of the Pathos II people in the simulation, and they can now carry on their lives in a reality that was indistinguishable from the one from which they came. In OneShot, there are also 2 endings, with similar effects. I am not going to discuss the Solstice ending, as it isn't as pertinent to this. The first option for the ending involves Niko destroying the simulated universe's sun, which would result in being ejected from the simulation. Of course, when this happens, the World Machine (in the same way that the WAU would) aborts the simulation. If the player chooses to restore the sun to its pedestal, Niko will become trapped in the simulation. Obviously, it might be unwise to remain trapped in a simulation forever, but in true SOMA style, you can do just that. It can be inferred that the two endings of OneShot are mutally exclusive, unlike SOMA. In SOMA, both endings occur. In OneShot, only one occurs under the gaze of the player. Of course, this does not rule out a "retroactive destruction" of the simulated universe, where Niko later goes to destroy the now-intact sun in order to be ejected from the simulation.

4. Ethics of human replication

By far, SOMA discusses this more than OneShot. At the start of the game, the player is replicated. This is first done when Simon goes to the doctor's office, and has his brain scanned. The neurograph that was taken was used as a "template" for build-your-own-AI systems of the future, so it is presumed that Simon's consciousness was embedded into a whole variety of systems. When the asteroid struck Earth, ending civilization above the water, the WAU discovered these neurographs (along with 2 others), and implanted them into a personality simulation device. That device was then embedded into a diving suit, whose former occupant had experienced an unfortunate "explosion" of her head. About halfway through the game, Simon clones himself again. Simon must actually go and physically "kill" his earlier self, as he's still sitting in a chair. However, not much can really be done here. He must merely wait while the battery dies. One can only imagine what sort of boredom the former copy had to endure. In OneShot, it is heavily implied that the World Machine (not unlike SOMA's Warden Unit) is responsible for duplicating consciousnesses of some external beings, and re-mapping their bodies to be that of robots, human/feline hybrids, or human/bird hybrids. Since all of the races featured in OneShot exist only in the compartmentalized universe, it can be presumed that they are duplicates. Niko found their way into the simulation somehow, but it is not fully explored to the extent that it was in SOMA. Of course, within the confines of the simulated universe, personality replication is clearly happening (see the aforementioned situation with Silver).