

S1m0ne

Simulacrum and Simulation Incarnated in The Perfection of Humanoid Virtuality

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In my paper, I aim to discuss the question of the virtual body in *S1m0ne* (2002). The focus will be on how the ever-present, yet, non-existent body of S1m0ne is represented and how her non-material being constitutes the central locus of the people's lives in the film while creating and forming the virtual reality of their existence. The central point of my analysis will be that S1m0ne's lack of corporeal body is not a reality for the people in the film who are not capable of realizing and accepting it, thus, S1m0ne incorporates the human beings around her into her virtual reality without their being aware of it.

In my discussion, I will treat the question of simulacra and simulation as a starting point, and I will connect it to debates about the virtual body, which will be combined by further considerations such as post-humanity, the double, Plato's ideas about *Ideas*, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and the story of Pygmalion and Galatea. I would like to begin my discussion with French theorist Jean Baudrillard's elaboration of simulacra and simulation as starting (and closing) points of reference in the interpretation of *S1m0ne*, since S1m0ne is the perfection of simulation, a simulacrum at its best through her immaterial humanoid virtual body. She is simulacrum and simulation 'incarnated' through her virtual existence made up by 1s and 0s, the constituents of the binary numeral system. S1m0ne is a computer program, a simulation whose virtual body is so perfectly designed that everybody believes her to be 'real'. She is so perfect that she seems to be even more real and alive than a 'real' human being. In the film, millions are deceived by her illusion.

S1m0ne is absolutely the manifestation of the hyperreal, 'the real without origin or reality' (Baudrillard 1999, p.1). S1m0ne is without origin or reality since she is SIMULATION ONE, a prototype, in the era of simulation when the signs of the real substitute the real (Baudrillard 1999, p.2). The first time she appears on screen (not in the flesh) in public she is described and praised as follows:

She was magnificent. She was absolutely unreal. Breathtaking./ She is not of this Earth. You should be very proud.[...]/She is a miracle, Dad, where did you find her? (Niccol 2002)

Taransky answers that he found her (S1m0ne) in his computer — which is the truth.

‘To simulate is to feign to have what one doesn’t have’ (Baudrillard 1999, p.3). This implies an absence, in addition, ‘... simulation threatens the difference between the “true” and the “false,” the “real” and the “imaginary”’ (Baudrillard 1999, p.3). Viktor Taransky, the protagonist of the story, is a film director who by his self-supposed integrity and vision intends to create ART, to recreate the truth and the real by using S1m0ne as the supposedly perfect instrument. He even states that ‘She considers herself an instrument’ (Niccol 2002). Taransky feigns to have something he does not have, via the use of SIMULATION ONE, i.e.: S1m0ne. His simulation is so perfect that the absence it conceals cannot be revealed, not even by facts, reason, logic or the (presumed) workings of the reality principle because the perfection of this simulation had annihilated the difference between true and false, real and imaginary ‘for real’. When he is celebrating his success in creating S1m0ne and the appraisal of his work (firstly referring to his film but also to S1m0ne) he declares:

S1m0ne is a star that is digitized. You know what this means? We have stepped into a new dimension. Our ability to manufacture a fraud now exceeds our ability to detect it. (Niccol 2002)

To this S1m0ne ‘answers’ that she is the death of the real (Niccol 2002).

S1m0ne is not only the death of the real but the death of cinema and the live actor, as well.¹ According to Lisa Purse (2007), digital imaging sparked great (renewed) debates about the ontology of photographic image and cinema. Purse suggests — in accordance with Baudrillard’s arguments about the simulacra — that the images produced by these digital visual technologies do not have real-life referents any more. Purse asserts that the death of the ‘truth value’ of these images together with the death of the cinema arrived thus pushing the spectator into a constant state of perceptual crisis. As Purse puts it:

¹ The makers of the film wanted to use a computer generated actress, however, the severe protestations of the Screen Actor’s Guild prevented this and Rachel Roberts was cast as S1m0ne under the cover name of Anna Green during production. (www.imdb.com, The Internet Movie Database <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0258153/trivia> (4 May 2008)).

Breathlessly predicted amongst these responses was the death of the ‘truth value’ of mechanically photographed images, the death of cinema (again), and the ‘death’ of the live actor, replaced by computer-generated ‘synthespians’. Digital visual technologies generate images that do not rely on an indexical connection to an external, real-world referent. With the distinction between mechanically photographed reality and highly photorealistic digital images no longer consistently discernible, the spectator might be doomed to a perpetual state of perceptual crisis, whether contemplating still or moving photographs. (2007, p.5)

Vivian Sobchack, in *Carnal Thoughts, Embodiment and Moving Image Culture*, states in a similar vein that the lived body is in crisis and the disembodying effects of the electronic representation cause hysterical and hyperbolic responses. Sobchack claims that in this material and technological crisis of the flesh there is a fight to ‘save’ the living body against its simulation or erasure. She warns that we must not forget that technology also grew out of the human condition of embodiment and that the body must not be reduced only to images or bits of information. She also warns us against the refiguration of the body through digitalization and disembodiment because through this humans will be reduced to being ghosts in electronic existence (Sobchack 2004, p.161-162). This is what can be seen and experienced in connection with *S1m0ne* since the debates around Niccol’s film and, within it, Taransky’s film concerning *S1m0ne* as body, as existence, as presence are all centered about the crisis of the flesh. *S1m0ne* as a simulated, digitalized, electronic (dis)embodiment is fiercely contested in and outside of the film and her being a technological ghost instead of a real person’s lived body is unacceptable to people. She is really the death of the flesh and the death of the real with her virtual body that threatens the boundaries and the perception of the living body.

Baudrillard claims that images have always had a murderous power; they have always been the murderers of the real and of their own model. According to Baudrillard, this is opposed to the dialectical power of representations, which are the intelligible and visible mediations of the *Real* — which, for Baudrillard, stems from the principle of equivalence between what is represented (real) and the representation (sign) itself. He also adds that a sign could always refer to a meaning and there have always been the promise and guarantee that the sign could be exchanged for the meaning (it refers to) (Baudrillard 1999, p.5-6). *S1m0ne*, however, does not have a point of reference, she does not refer to a meaning and there is not a guarantee that her image could be

exchanged for a meaning. As an image, S1m0ne really has a murderous power by all means.

S1m0ne cannot refer to anything because there is nothing real behind her image, her virtual body is:

a gigantic simulacrum — not unreal, but a simulacrum, that is to say never exchanged for the real, but exchanged for itself, in an uninterrupted circuit without reference or circumference. (Baudrillard 1999, p.6)

If S1m0ne was a real person, behind her image and persona there would be points of references and her image would connect to meaning(s), however, since she is not a representation in the 'classical sense' but a representation of virtual reality in the form of her virtual body without relation to the real, her image is thus a simulacrum. The reporters' investigation is a perfect example since they go to all extremes just to find the meaning behind the image, to find the real body and the real woman behind that image. Yet, even if they do not find anything they are not willing to realize that what they are chasing is a phantom, a simulacrum, a virtual existence without connections to the real in which they try to locate her.

They shout at Taransky:

You can't hide her forever./S1m0ne only appears when I want her to appear./Sounds like a prisoner. What, are holding her a hostage?/You are the hostage, I mean, you look kinda captive to me. (Niccol 2002)

Later on, when the reporters are talking with each other, they say:

Whatever it is, it's dark./Dark?/Yeah, very. [...] Nobody ever gets a photograph./What about the satellite photo?/Nothing./Nothing from space? (Niccol 2002)

They put a twenty-four-hour trail on Taransky, they enter the Presidential Suite of the hotel where S1m0ne supposedly stayed, they go to the Hollywood A-list party where she is presumably present but no pictures or interviews are made. Yet, these people cannot even conceive the possibility that she might be nonexistent, not even after no fingerprints and DNA have been found in her supposed hotel room (only Taransky's are found) and so on. Taransky claims that S1m0ne is a recluse and she isolates herself to remain pure, which purity enables her to create true

art, and he adds that she appears only through (this) art (Niccol 2002) without the ‘soil’ of (the) real and human contact. Even the motto written on her touring bus is ‘Splendid Isolation’, however, Max Sayer declares that ‘No one is that perfect, that pure’ (Niccol 2002). In spite of this, he is not able to realize that S1m0ne is nonexistent and that he is only chasing a virtual body in the real.

Such is simulation, insofar as it is opposed to representation. Representation stems from the principle of the equivalence of the sign and of the real [...]. Simulation, on the contrary, stems from the utopia of the principle of equivalence, *from the radical negation of the sign as value*, from the sign as the reversion and death sentence of every reference. Whereas representation attempts to absorb simulation by interpreting it as a false representation, simulation envelops the whole edifice of representation itself as a simulacrum. (Baudrillard 1999, p.6)

This is S1m0ne, she is the negation of sign as value, she is the death sentence of reference, she as simulation stems from the utopia, and she is a utopia — a virtual perfection of human existence — of the principle of equivalence, she is representation itself as a simulacrum. She really manifests the fourth phase of the image (pure simulacrum) instead of what is believed about her (image and screen presence) being in the first phase (reflection of a profound reality):

...the successive phases of the image:
 it is the reflection of a profound reality;
 it masks and denatures a profound reality;
 it masks the *absence* of a profound reality;
 it has no relation to any reality whatsoever: it is its own pure simulacrum. (Baudrillard 1999, p.6)

Baudrillard defines three orders of simulacra from which the third is the one that is applicable to S1m0ne: ‘...simulacra of simulation, founded on information, the model, the cybernetic game — total operability, hyperreality, aim of total control’ (Baudrillard 1999, p.121). S1m0ne’s virtual existence is the manifestation of all these.

In *S1m0ne*, the question of control is also central. The threat and fear that technology might take over humanity are present. This theme has frequently been discussed since the beginning of the mechanical age until the digital age. Elaine Graham discusses Heidegger’s ideas about technology and paraphrases him by stating that the chief danger of technology ‘lies in its engulfing

of the human spirit and its capacity to distort human intentions and actions' (2003, p.32). This is actually realized in *S1m0ne* since Taransky decides to use S1m0ne for his own aims and posits himself as a creator, believing himself to be God. Technology really engulfs his human spirit and distorts his intentions and actions; he is playing God until he realizes slowly that it is not he, primarily, who is in control, but S1m0ne. First, he is enjoying being 'the maker' and adulates himself with fake modesty as follows:

Perfect, S1m0ne, perfect. Oh, God! I'm so relaxed around you. I'm so myself./You did create me./I just brought someone else's dream to life./Mr Taransky, we both know I was nothing without you. I was computer code. I was 1s and 0s, I was nothing./Well, it's true. (Niccol 2002)

He then tries to justify himself by claiming that he is somebody who has the integrity and vision to see through and beyond the flesh, the real actors. He postulates himself as somebody who can see if the acting is genuine, and asserts that it does not matter if the actor is real or not. He states that it is not possible to know what is real any more since most actors these days have digital work done to them. His last declaration is that the only real truth is the work (Niccol 2002). Thus, we encounter the case of Frankenstein and that of Pygmalion here. S1m0ne is a creation, she is Frankenstein's creature, she is Pygmalion's lover. She is the product of the human mind and creativity and the product of one of the greatest human weaknesses: 'playing God'.

In human mythologies, literatures, visual works of art and histories, there are several examples when man/men aspire to conquer the spheres of gods. Viktor Taransky clearly exemplifies this in a post-human era. He is Victor Frankenstein in a postmodern, post-human, digital age with a desire to create and to control his creation. However similarly to his predecessor, Taransky is not capable of understanding what he is doing. Similarly to Frankenstein, he also has to face that his creation starts to live its/his/her 'life' and he as a creator cannot intervene and direct everything. This, eventually, ends in a clash between creator and creation because 'the product', the creation does not 'want' the same as the creator, and in fact, it/he/she does not turn out to be 'that thing' which it/he/she was intended to become. The *idée* and its manifestation are not the same and this disturbs the maker. Taransky, just like Frankenstein, intends to put an end to the imperfect, 'mutant' end result. This is how the fight for life (meaning autonomy as well as existence) starts and works between the creator and the creation, between

Taransky and S1m0ne in a similar fashion to Frankenstein and his Creature (Shelley 1971).

This happens to S1m0ne and Hank Aleno (the original inventor of S1m0ne's program) first, and then to S1m0ne and Taransky as well. It is said in the film close to the beginning that 'With Hank they were once inseparable. Now, only in spirit' and later S1m0ne claims that 'Viktor and I are inseparable' (Niccol 2002). It is wonderful to create this amazing and captivating simulation who is perfect but when the circumstances alter the parameters and when things start to flow out of the hands of the 'previous director(s)', the whole situation becomes menacing and the creation starts to 'live its own life and turns against its creator(s)'. It actually happens in a way that Taransky who as a film director uses S1m0ne's 'body semblance' to his own ends — manipulates her, her image, her (virtual) body and via this vision manipulates people and directs everything — does all this to the point when he himself is lost in this labyrinth of manipulation and becomes manipulated by his own workings. He carries his intervening and manipulation to the extreme that he makes S1m0ne a director of a 'supposedly' terrible film but, by that time, it is too late and S1m0ne is adored either way, bad or good, and 'her film' is applauded. Taransky also makes an attempt to deteriorate her image by showing her drunk and smoking, having a bad hairstyle and make-up, being badly dressed, talking about eating dolphins as being excellent, saying that there should be gun-use training in schools, and so on (Niccol 2002). However all this is in vain since S1m0ne, by this time, has become the director and takes the navigation out of Taransky's hands, and she wins all of the battles between herself and Taransky. The television reporters of the above-mentioned interview say as an example of this that they have always known that S1m0ne was not like other celebrities and that she definitely speaks her mind (Niccol 2002).

S1m0ne, just like Frankenstein's creature, starts to 'live' her own life and 'avenges' her creator. She actually destroys her original maker, Hank Aleno, by 'killing him' as he gets cancer as a result of making her and dies. However, right before his death he attempts to convince Viktor Taransky about carrying on this 'mission', to take care of S1m0ne and make her his instrument for expressing ideas, thoughts, visions and to achieve a higher goal, to produce pure art. S1m0ne seems to be perfect for it, the only problem is that she becomes the master, rising from her instrument status, and turns the original master into an instrument. Step by step, Taransky becomes himself 'a la S1m0ne' and the initial relaxation becomes a nightmare. His ex-wife, Elaine, sees this and tries to warn him that he is too entrapped by S1m0ne and that she controls

him by saying:

Experience, Viktor, that's what happened to me. I've seen this a hundred times: these young stars — destroying the very people who discovered them. I'm worried about you, Viktor, that's all. This woman, she controls your destiny./She has not controlled my destiny./There is something about her I don't trust. (Niccol 2002)

Later on, Elaine tells Taransky face to face that it is not him who made S1m0ne but the other way round (Niccol 2002).

The virtual body, the virtual existence wins over the real body and real existence. S1m0ne as a Black Widow (spider) ensnares Taransky into her nice and pleasant (cob)web and does not let him go. He becomes entangled in the virtual electronic web of this virtual creature. She slowly engulfs his life, and flesh and bone existence until he is even willing to give up his own life to put an end to all this, but there is no escape. He tries to 'kill' her by destroying the computer program and deleting her files, but by that time she is considered to be 'too human' by everybody that he cannot get away with it. It is all in vain to try to tell the truth and explain the whole process and work: Viktor (who should be the victorious one considering his name) is charged with murder (the murder of a human being) and is waiting for the death penalty. First, he makes enormous effort to evade it, but finally, seeing that his situation has become a Catch-22, he is even willing to admit the murder and get executed to end the torture. However S1m0ne is more revengeful and cunning and just when Taransky's agony would stop, she appears again smiling (reading her own obituary) and the show must go on. Taransky is 'free' to go back to his life 'in prison' (muttering that S1m0ne is indestructible). Elaine says smiling that he is not sentenced to death, to which he answers, 'Only to life' (Niccol 2002).

By being integrated into ideology everybody is an ideological creation, which determines how we see (Althusser 2001, p.294-304; Žižek 2001, p.312-325). Through the workings of ideology, we presume and believe that what we see is exactly what it appears to be — in accordance with our ideological belief system. Beliefs shared by many people have greater impact. It is easier to deceive many people than one person, because it is less effort. As Taransky claims, 'It's easier to make a hundred thousand believe than just one' (Niccol 2002). That is why he organizes an enormous concert where S1m0ne's appearance can be arranged most perfectly because this way she seems to be present but it is harder to say whether she is really there or not.

When Max Sayer forces Taransky to show him S1m0ne he decides to make this concert for a hundred thousand people (and the many more who see it on television) as the dialogue shows: 'I want to see her./You want to see her. All right. You got a deal. You gonna see her' (Niccol 2002). While preparing the concert Taransky says to S1m0ne that 'Tonight, they are gonna see you with their own eyes' (Niccol 2002). At the end of the concert, S1m0ne shouts to the people: 'Never stop believing!' (Niccol 2002). And they do not stop believing since they see her and so they believe her not realizing that seeing her does not guarantee that she is actually there.

The film is centered on the omnipresence of the actually non-existent body of S1m0ne. Everybody admires her, everybody wants her, and it is impossible to prove that she is non-corporeal because the people (in the film) are not willing to believe it. S1m0ne is 'the real' people are striving for. It is mentioned in the film several times by various characters that she is 'the real woman' that she is the liveliest person they have ever met (when they, in fact, never encounter her). Even Elaine's boyfriend states, excited by watching S1m0ne on television, that 'WOW, she is all woman' (Niccol 2002). She is present everywhere all the time in representation. In fact, this is what happens, she evades existence through representations. The reason for perceiving S1m0ne as an existing human being can be that people experience the body already as a representation and, besieged by physics and biology, they presume that what they see exists behind it because the 'representation of the body' is a phenomenon of the psyche (Merleau-Ponty 2004, p.108).

S1m0ne has a virtual body, an appearance created by high computer and hologram technology matched with a personality of an acted, invented identity which is 'lent by her master'. In fact, it is a specific union of a 'female cyber body' and a 'flesh and bone male soul'. Taransky 'gets lost' in S1m0ne and they become one, a mingled entity, a split self. They become inseparable as S1m0ne also declares this in the (remote) television talk show as the mouthpiece of Taransky. When there is a live action, the projection and broadcasting of her image happens in a way that she copies everything he does and the voice of Taransky is transformed into hers. During the film, it happens several times that Taransky and S1m0ne are talking at the same time (saying the same word by word) also expressing via this their identical entity, two 'selves' in one identity. The following conversation is from the film when Taransky tries to explain his ex-wife the truth about S1m0ne.

There is no S1m0ne. I am S1m0ne./You are S1m0ne?/I've done the impossible. I've

recreated the infinite nuances of a human being, a human soul. I've taken nothing and made it something. I've breathed life into a machine. I made a miracle. I swear, Elaine, as God is my judge, I swear I made S1m0ne. I made her./You made S1m0ne? Viktor, she made you. (Niccol 2002)

This citation clearly reveals the intermingling of the two identities in one self or the two selves in one identity. In addition, it also sheds light on the disturbance about who is making who. After this point in the film, Taransky decides to destroy S1m0ne because he has to admit S1m0ne took over. He declares war on her by saying 'You made me but I made you first' (Niccol 2002). It seems as if it was a battle with his alter-ego.²

In the concert scene where Taransky presents S1m0ne to the world 'in the flesh', still sustaining their unity, he needs to use hologram technology. According to Baudrillard,

The hologram, perfect image and end of the imaginary. Or rather, it is no longer an image at all — the real medium is the laser, concentrated light, quintessentialized, which is no longer a visible or reflexive light, but an abstract light of simulation. Laser/scalpel. A luminous surgery whose function here is that of the double [...]
(Baudrillard 1999, p.106-107)

This introduces the idea that S1m0ne is Taransky's double. Baudrillard states that '[f]rom a classical (even cybernetic) perspective, technology is an extension of the body' (1999, p.111). S1m0ne is really the technological extension of Viktor Taransky's body and personality.

As time goes on, it seems as if the 'S1m0ne–Taransky ego' starts to get disoriented and the 'S1m0ne id' begins to take over the 'Taransky superego' as if the unconscious invaded the conscious.³ It is as if the evil other, the alter-ego, the double wanted to emerge. It rises from beneath and threatens the self. As Taransky complains about this at Hank Aleno's grave, S1m0ne's first 'vector' and victim (as if she was a virus):

She killed you, Hank; now, she is killing me. She's a serial killer. I don't know how to stop her. I mean, she has taken a life of her own (Niccol 2002).

² Viktor and S1m0ne are also said to be modeled on Ray Kurzweil and his female alter-ego, Ramona. (www.imdb.com, The Internet Movie Database <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0258153/trivia> (18 September 2005)).

³ The *id* is the most rudimentary part of the psychic apparatus, which always obeys the dictates of the pleasure principle. It is associated with passions, instincts, unruliness and lack of control. The *ego* adheres to the reality principle. It is associated with reason and common sense. The *superego* is the ego ideal to which the ego aspires to become, the ideal that it should be but never can be. The superego retains the character of the father (Silverman 1984, p.132-135). See the Freudian terms discussed above: Silverman 1984, p.132-149.

While theorizing the double Otto Rank discussed the issue of the shadow-image and the mirror-image. Both of these images play an important role in the formation of the ego, and later in its preservation. The ego is connected to its image, to its mirror image, its ideal; if this double dies, disappears, then the ego will die as well (Rank 1971, p.62-63). Rank also asserts that the double might even appear as the messenger of death (1971, p.86). The duality of the double as the combination of both love (Eros) and death (Thanatos) is always present. The double constitutes life and death in itself. This idea can be connected to the image of the *femme fatale* likewise who combines in herself Eros and Thanatos, as well. When S1m0ne becomes threatening and murderous, she actually adopts this dual image of Eros and Thanatos molded in one. She becomes a lethal woman: desirable and admired while being deathly; or at least, the simulation and simulacrum of a *femme fatale*.

S1m0ne is an artwork. She is an artistically created simulacrum that has no relation to the real. It has always been a matter of debate whether art reflects reality. Plato argues that the world consists of two spheres: the sphere of ideas and the sphere where people live, which is the copy of the previous one. In the latter world nothing is perfect, nothing carries the pure essence of things; everything is only an imperfect copy, the imitation of 'the real'. Plato, while discussing the arts, arrives at the conclusion that they are double imitations, and thus they are the farthest from the truth. With this double imitation, art deceives people and it is the least capable of grasping the essence of things (Plato 1992, p.12-18). Considering all these things, S1m0ne is not 'only' the imitation of a 'real woman' who is already an imitation of the idea of the 'real woman', but she is also the artistic creation of all this. Thus, in a sense, she is not 'only' a double imitation and 'distortion' but a triple one even topping all this with her acting as an actress eventually losing all referentiality in an incessant simulation and as 'a simulacrum [...] in an uninterrupted circuit without reference or circumference' (Baudrillard 1999, p.6).

S1m0ne as an artwork also alludes to another literary work: the story of Pygmalion and Galatea. There is a moment in the film when Lainey, Taransky's daughter, is reading Ovid's poem (the story of Pygmalion and Galatea from *Metamorphoses*) on the internet. The citation below clearly depicts the very experience between Taransky and S1m0ne, because as if having a Pygmalion complex, Taransky is creating the perfect woman for himself although not with the

purpose to gain a companion and love but to make the perfect actress who can realize everything *he* wants in his films.

[...] But while he
was single, with consummated skill, he carved
a statue out of snow-white ivory,
and gave to it exquisite beauty, which
no woman of the world has ever equaled:
she was so beautiful, he fell in love
with his creation. It appeared in truth
a perfect virgin with the grace of life,
but in the expression of such modesty
all motion was restrained — and so his art
concealed his art. Pygmalion gazed, inflamed
with love and admiration for the form,
in semblance of a woman, he had carved.

He lifts up both his hands to feel the work,
and wonders if it can be ivory,
because it seems to him more truly flesh. (Niccol 2002)

After the great success of S1m0ne's debut, Taransky is standing in front of her admiring her beauty and his own grandeur saying that she is so beautiful, too beautiful, and he 'fixes' that by placing a little spot on her face. He also admits (later) that he fell in love with his work, and (even) later when he is asked about his love life, Taransky says to Lainey that he is married to his work (Niccol 2002).

The reason behind Taransky's decision to create S1m0ne or (or rather to continue her creation) is that he still would like to produce 'real' and pure art. In the film, it is phrased several times that S1m0ne is pure and perfect and she lives solely for art. According to Myra Seaman, in the techno-posthuman world:

the human becomes the assemblage of parts, conceived of in terms of a machine that can be fully understood, operated, repaired and redesigned. (2007, p.260)

S1m0ne's perfection and purity lies in the fact that she is an assemblage of different body parts and acting abilities of numerous real actresses, she is really a techno-posthuman being. She is a computer program, a digital design that can be operated, repaired and redesigned as a machine or a program can be. As a post-human-age Pygmalion, Taransky creates S1m0ne through mixing

several actresses and molds her constantly. For example, once he states: ‘Too much Meryl Streep. A little less Streep, more Bacall’ (Niccol 2002) and S1m0ne is reconstituted. The first critiques that appear about S1m0ne in the newspapers are the following: ‘S1m0ne has the voice of the young Jane Fonda, the body of Sophia Loren, the grace of, well, Grace Kelly, [...] and the face of Audrey Hepburn combined with an angel’ (Niccol 2002). Taransky comments: ‘Almost right’ (Niccol 2002). Later on, when Taransky is fascinated by Nicola’s acting, he is thinking aloud about incorporating a little part of Nicola into S1m0ne: not a wrinkle, just a line like a dimple. Nicola asks quite surprised whether he intends to alter S1m0ne cosmetically to make her (S1m0ne) look more like her (Nicola) (Niccol 2002).

Vivian Sobchack argues that within the digital world of (re)production we get a system of simulations where referentiality becomes intertextual and metaphysical by creating a metaworld where aesthetic and ethical issues are linked to the *representation-in-itself* (2004, p.154).

Digital and schematic, abstracted from materially *reproducing* the empirical objectivity of nature [...], the electronic constructs a metaworld where aesthetic value and ethical investment tend to be located in *representation-in-itself*. That is, the electronic semiotically — and significantly — constitutes a system of *simulation*, a system that constitutes copies that seem lacking an original ground. And, when there is a thinned or absent connection phenomenologically perceived between signification and its original or ‘real’ referent, [...] referentiality becomes not only *intertextual* but also metaphysical. (Sobchack 2004, p.154)

S1m0ne is really an intertextual, metaphysical representation-in-itself, a meta-existence via her virtual body consisting of parts of various flesh and bone actresses. S1m0ne is an intertextual collage of the real actresses’ works and attributes. She is absolutely metaphysical in her ‘simulatedness and combinedness’ of all these pieces of information.

Kluszczyński declares that:

Art is about to reach the end of the road taken at the beginning of this century which means that it is losing its materiality or physicality. [...] For a long time now we have been living in a post-biologic era. (1998, p.38)

In *S1m0ne*, this is exactly what we encounter. Taransky tries to create the perfect and purest art through the adaptation of immateriality. Within the realm of the film, he realizes the perfection of art through digital media and the use of the post-biologic, virtual body of S1m0ne. As he tries to

explain Elaine:

S1m0ne isn't a real person. I invented her./Every actor is an invention, Viktor. [...] /She is pixels, computer code molded by me from a mathematical equation I inherited from a madman. (Niccol 2002)

Kluszczyński indirectly discusses this above-cited part from the film in his argumentation about today's multimedia art:

There is a very interesting movement in multimedia art nowadays, with artists [...] working on artificial creatures, artificial life and intelligence. Virtual performances and, primarily, communication with those virtual beings seem to be one of the most fascinating aspects of experimental multimedia art today. (Kluszczyński 1998, p. 40)

In the world of *S1m0ne*, this is realized on the screens within the film and on our screens, as well. S1m0ne is the product of experimental multimedia art: she is an artificial creature, life and intelligence providing virtual performances.

The only person who is capable of realizing that S1m0ne is nonexistent, and who does admit that she was deceived is Lainey. This is crucial in the story because without her Taransky would get executed. First, Elaine claims that: 'I almost forgave him for killing her but to deny her existence? I can never forgive that' (Niccol 2002). When Elaine is saying that there is no evidence that S1m0ne is not real, Lainey questions whether there is any evidence that she is (Niccol 2002). She makes Elaine see the truth too by saying that she has never seen S1m0ne up close, she has never touched her or been in her physical presence; and she did not meet S1m0ne in the flesh. Lainey, by 'restoring back to life' S1m0ne, does the same service to her father.

Their interconnected destiny is also reflected in Taransky's farewell words to S1m0ne (before 'her death'):

Here I was trying to convince the whole world that you existed but what I was really trying to do was convincing them that I exist. It's not that you are not a human, it's that I am. (Niccol 2002)

Here, Taransky admits that without S1m0ne he would be nothing and that it is his humanness that creates the problems, not her non-humanness. Plus, this quotation raises the idea of S1m0ne as Taransky's double again:

[...] to change the game of the double from a subtle exchange of death with the Other into the eternity of the Same. (Baudrillard 1999, p.95)

They are one and the same not to be separated as it is verbalized by Taransky when it turns out that he can live only if S1m0ne lives and the show must go on: 'It's not a death sentence./ No, it's life' (Niccol 2002). Their being inseparable seems to be an advantage first but it turns out to be an immense disadvantage in the end. S1m0ne also utters in the (remote) 'live' television interview that 'Viktor and I are inseparable' (Niccol 2002). S1m0ne's virtual body is animated by Taransky's material body, her personality and soul are those of Taransky's within the virtual reality of their existence where they are imprisoned for life. They go on as they did before, enclosed in their duality/sameness by S1m0ne remaining a phantasm:

the imaginary power and wealth of the double [...] rests on its immateriality, on the fact that it is and remains a phantasm. (Baudrillard 1999, p.95)

In my paper, I intended to argue that in the film entitled *S1m0ne* we encounter a phenomenon in the form of S1m0ne that is the perfect simulacrum, a virtual realization of human existence. S1m0ne's virtual body is the perfect simulation and imitation of a human body deceiving everybody in the film. She is a post-human collage of real humans, a simulacrum *per se* without referent(s), an intertextual and metaphysical simulation. She is Frankenstein's Creature and Pygmalion's Galatea in the digital age. She is Viktor Taransky's double, alter-ego and other self. S1m0ne is simulacrum and simulation 'incarnated' in the perfection of humanoid virtuality.

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