

COSMOPOLITANISM AND THE ARTS
An Exploratory Inquiry Towards a Disrupted Self and Other in *Augustijn*

Master's Thesis

submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of Arts (M.A.)

awarded by the Philosophical Faculty of
Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg i. Br. (Germany)
and the
Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales SEDE ARGENTINA

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from Dresden

Summer Semester 2019

Social Sciences

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“It is as though subjective life in the form of consciousness consisted in being itself, losing itself and finding itself again so as to *possess itself* by showing itself, proposing itself as a theme, exposing itself in truth.”

(Levinas 1981, 99; emphasis given)

“Identity and difference need not be opposed. Identity need not be the result of expelling or excluding difference. Rather, identity constantly renegotiated through interpretation and elaboration of the performative aspect of signification will yield new forms of relationships, both with one’s Self and with others.” (Oliver 2001, 219)

Table of Contents

1.	Introduction	1
2.	Cosmopolitanism	3
2.1	Critical and intercultural cosmopolitanism and beyond.....	5
2.2	Cosmopolitanism and the arts	9
2.3	Watsuji's betweenness	12
2.4	Transculturalism.....	14
3.	The subject of interest: <i>Augustijn</i>	17
4.	Plan of inquiry: Design and implementation of methodology	21
4.1	Positionality in the research: Between research, personal subject and job	24
5.	Results and interpretation of empirical data	28
5.1	Autoethnographic examination of the film installation.....	28
5.2	A small detour: Informal interviews and one initial focus group	36
5.3	Interview with Omar A. Chowdhury.....	36
5.4	Focus groups with recipients.....	41
5.5	Summary of results.....	48
6.	Discussion: A cosmopolitan experience of unease.....	51
7.	Conclusion.....	58

Abstract

This thesis will try to break with the idea that cosmopolitanism only means the encounter and exchange between Self and Other. Departing from theories of Watsuji's betweenness and Ortiz' transculturalism this thesis brings in a notion of the individual as being in *between* Self and Other, between his*her own subjectivity and society and thus participating in different cultures simultaneously. The empirical unit of analysis is the film installation *Augustijn* by the artist Omar A. Chowdhury. The 'reverse journeys' of the two protagonists Stijn and Omar, one of them who has converted to Islam while the other has become an atheist, will provide the basis for the conceptualization of a disrupted Self/Other dichotomy. *Augustijn* will be approached through a triangulation of qualitative methods, an autoethnographic inquiry, an interview with the film maker Omar A. Chowdhury and four focus groups with two recipients of the piece in each focus group. The main result to be discussed in the thesis will be the notion of unease about the ambiguity of Stijn's and Omar's relationship. This ambiguity is mainly caused because some scenes in *Augustijn* seem to be scripted and others not and stemming from the fact that many recipients partly identified with Stijn while strictly opposing parts of his narrative. In my discussion I argue how the feeling of unease about the ambiguity of who of Omar and Stijn is speaking in *Augustijn*, can be transferred back to a disruption of Self and Other in theory. The feeling of ambiguity about Self and Other (in oneself) can cause a feeling of unease that can be tolerated and even intriguing. Thus, I argue how the feeling of unease about one's own ambiguity and betweenness between Self and Other can provide a new cosmopolitan understanding where we as individuals are equal in our complexity and equally facing the complexity of our world we are constructing.

List of Figures

Figure 1: Systematic depiction of theoretical framework (own graphics)	16
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1. Introduction

Decreased distances, increased speed, decreased boundaries, increased complexities. Never has it been this easy and hard at the same time to be connected globally and follow the many possible directions of a cosmopolitan way of living, at least in a comparatively privileged setting. With growing global interconnectedness, approaches, concepts and theories of cosmopolitanism(s) are changing and diversifying constantly. Cosmopolitanism has been subject of academia and research across disciplines for centuries, from ancient Greece to Kant to new post-modern notions. Not only has it been addressed in an academic context, but it has also arrived in every-day language surrounding the question of what cosmopolitanism is and even more important, who a cosmopolitan is and what does make him*her a cosmopolitan. In an academic context, theories of cosmopolitanism can be applied on individual, societal, organizational and institutional levels and, broadly speaking, “imply an attitude of openness as opposed to closure” (Delanty 2012, 2). However, once more precise definitions of openness are pursued and in particular how openness is acquired and practiced, many speak of the acceptance of the so called Other and more so the exchange with the Other. Thus, a cosmopolitan is someone who opens up new perspectives in the light of the encounter with the Other (Delanty 2009, 13, 2011, 642). As much as cosmopolitanism has been subject of different disciplines, the subject of a Self/Other dichotomy has also been talked about extensively across disciplines so that some arrive at the conclusion that “we are suffering from [...] an absolute despot duality that says we are able to be only one or the other” (Anzaldúa 2007, 41).

In my thesis I want to address this dichotomy and will steer into a direction that focuses much more on the individual and the encounter of difference in oneself, or in other words the Self and the Other in oneself. The theoretical approach I am using in my thesis is Murphy’s (2015) application of the Japanese philosopher Watsuji Tetsurō’s concept of *betweenness*, based on the idea that the individual is conceptualized in his*herself as much as within and from his*her social relations, and thus *between* the Self and the Other. In order to make his concept more approachable I will exemplify its importance by describing and applying the concept of *transculturalism* that was introduced by the Cuban scholar Fernando Ortiz. Thus, I am not only trying to break with the mentioned dichotomy, but I will also try to explore how one may find and explore a disrupted Self and Other in oneself, going away from larger social groups, rather aiming at a conception of Self and Other in the individual, in oneself.

I will not only argue for a step away from a Self/Other dualism in theories of cosmopolitanism, but I will also engage in a dialogue with myself and Others around an art piece that I

believe may be helpful to understand how disruptions of Self and Other may be perceived. The specific art piece and why it serves as a good research subject in my thesis will be discussed at a later point, but art in general seems to be a good point of connection to cosmopolitanism. Ideally, art does not know any borders or language barriers, because art is a process itself that emerges from the dialogue between the artist and his*her surroundings and/or with him*herself. However, there is still little research on the relations between cosmopolitanism and art. As I will explicate, art and cosmopolitanism can very well be seen in combination as they both aim at disruptions, fluidity and ideally an openness for more than just one's own subjective view on the world. Next, stemming from my theoretical discussion and my exploratory interest, I have chosen the film installation *Augustijn* by Omar A. Chowdhury, first presented in October 2018 at the Forecast Festival in Berlin. As I will lay out in the theoretical part of my thesis, I want to make a case for a cosmopolitan notion that allows for a disrupted Self/Other dichotomy. Because *Augustijn* was produced by the Bangladeshi-Australian film maker Omar A. Chowdhury, a former Muslim who is now an atheist, and Stijn Leidegen, a young Belgian convert to Islam, I will argue how *Augustijn* can serve as a good empirical subject in the arts because the duality of Self and Other has been disrupted by the 'reverse journeys' that both have taken. Two research questions will be approached in my thesis. The first and primary one, guided from my theoretical approach will be "How does *Augustijn* explore disruptions of a Self/Other dichotomy?". Furthermore, in order to involve more exploratory possibilities to engage with my data and derive valuable insights from the empirical work for further discussions in theory I will pose the second and subsequent research question: "How is *Augustijn* related to cosmopolitanism?". The main goal of my thesis is to bridge the gap between the very abstract ideas of cosmopolitanism and the empirical subject *Augustijn* in order to be able to describe a larger potential relevance of cosmopolitanism for the arts and the other way around. This way, I am also addressing a shortage of empirical research in the field of cosmopolitanism. Thus, my research interest is on one hand the art piece itself as the specific unit of analysis and on the other hand the more general goal to derive valuable insights from the (empirical study of the) arts for the theoretical discourse of cosmopolitanism, especially regarding the duality of Self/Other. My aim to explore disruptions of this dichotomy shall also reflect the increasing importance of hybridity for understanding contemporary societies. Especially in a context of increasing social and economic exchange on a global level, such dualisms need to be tackled differently and with more openness for fluidity.

Augustijn will be approached from three different methodological perspectives: First, there will be an autoethnographic inquiry on the art piece that is incorporating basic elements of a

film analysis based on social semiotics. Second, there will be an interview with the artist Omar A. Chowdhury and third, there will be focus groups with recipients of the art piece. Throughout all three steps I will specifically look at how the two protagonists in the film work, Omar and Stijn, as well as the relationship between the two of them is perceived. I base this on the pre-supposition and conceptualization of Omar and Stijn as being representations of disrupted Self and Other where the binary between the two is not traceable anymore. My study does not aim at a representative result but rather towards explorations that are driven by my research participants as well as by my own autoethnographic reflection of the art piece and its effects. Through the methodological encounter of *Augustijn* from different perspectives I will finally arrive at the conclusion that the realization of a disrupted Self and Other in oneself, or, in other words, realizing one's betweenness between Self and Other, can be channeled through a feeling of unease and discomfort about complexity and ambiguity. Through my methodological inquiry I will come up with two main results that will provide the basis for my discussion. One is the ambiguous relationship between Stijn and Omar and the uncertainty about who of them is speaking in which ways in *Augustijn*. The other is the self-identification with Stijn that many of my focus group participants described. I will relate both these findings to the feeling of unease, followed by my discussion about a cosmopolitanism that involves acknowledging, experiencing and accepting complexity as well as tolerating ambiguity and dynamism in oneself, the world, and one's own position in it. My elaboration on the ambiguity of Self and Other, how it results into a feeling of unease and how this feeling can be both uncomfortable as well as intriguing will also be the new finding I can contribute to the already existing research.

2. Cosmopolitanism

The many notions of cosmopolitanism and the highly inflationary use of the word makes it necessary for me to clarify which aspects of cosmopolitanism shall serve as the theoretical basis in my thesis. It can already be said that the variety and diversity of different ideas what cosmopolitanism can be also provides the possibility to serve a more open research process in order to be open for many different directions. First, it can be helpful to recall the actual etymology of the word:

Cosmos refers to the whole world, yes, indeed, the whole universe, although in practice the reference is to the world as the globe. Polis is the label of a bounded political community, normally a small city state. (Stråth 2012, 72)

Especially the inclusion of the political dimension of the word is important and will also be significant at a later stage in order to distinguish cosmopolitanism from other theories,

especially interculturalism. However, the political dimension of cosmopolitanism does not necessarily refer to a political community in a sense of citizenship and belonging to a human community that is administered by a political body of representation. The political function of cosmopolitanism refers, in a much broader way than (global) citizenship, to the awareness and respect for “the idea that human beings are in a fundamental sense equal and that they deserve equal political treatment” (Held 2003, 514). Held (2003) also differentiates between three different notions of cosmopolitanism, a political one, a legal one and a cultural one. While the political one aims much more at the earlier described idea of global citizenship and legal cosmopolitanism at its legal implementation, cultural cosmopolitanism describes “the capacity to mediate between national traditions, communities of fate, and alternative styles of life” (Held 2003, 525). Departing from this cultural notion of cosmopolitanism, especially cultural scientists who operate with cosmopolitanism describe it as an “an ethos of cultural openness” (Kurasawa 2004, 240), or an openness for the “cultural other” (Sobré-Denton 2013, 1). Some even go further and do not only call for openness but even positive engagement, celebration or appreciation of difference (Appiah 2006, 25; Nava 2007, 5; Sobré-Denton 2013, 7; Zhao 2015, 522). It is important to say that openness does not mean what Beck (2004, 144) described as “banal cosmopolitanization” that “occurs as a forced and unintended side effect” of increasing global interconnectivity, such as consumption of music or sport like yoga that might actively be taken or even appropriated from other cultures while their consumption or practicing does not necessarily mean to be more open for the so called Other. Thus, cosmopolitanism excludes “the taste for the exotic otherness of some cultures as an act of distinction” (Noble 2013, 168). More central is not only a general openness towards the so called Other, but even more the understanding that culture is a construction that flows and changes, emphasizing “the fluidity of individual identity, people's remarkable capacity to forge new identities using materials from diverse cultural sources, and to flourish while so doing” (Scheffler 1999, 257).

In order to open up new perspectives and for real cosmopolitanization to happen, an exchange must occur in what Delanty (2009, 13) describes as “the light of the encounter with the Other”. Conversely, in a next step general openness in the encounter with the so called Other and the understanding and appreciation of its difference to oneself is also believed to lead to more self-reflexivity about one's own position in the world and one's own context in relation to the Other. In other words, openness for the Other in the exchange with the Other leads to more self-reflexivity of the Self (Caruana 2014; Nagata 2004; Rovisco 2009; Wahlström 2014). Wahlström (2014) for example has tried to provide a conceptual framework for the empirical research on cosmopolitanism in order to assess and understand how self-reflexivity among other

categories of cosmopolitanism can be achieved. While it is important to formulate ideas how cosmopolitanism and its 'components' such as openness and self-reflexivity could possibly be measured in the field this will not be subject of this thesis as I have chosen a rather exploratory and open empirical approach. Besides, openness and self-reflexivity are not enough to describe cosmopolitanism which is why I want to introduce more specific concepts in the next chapter in order to raise an understanding how the encounter and exchange between Self and Other can look like conceptually. Furthermore, I am purposefully including perspectives that try to break with Western-Centrism in cosmopolitanism.

2.1 Critical and intercultural cosmopolitanism and beyond

Cosmopolitanism has often been described as an ethnocentric approach or an idea of westernization. Delanty (2012, 4) points out: "Most conceptions of cosmopolitanism emanating from the Kantian idea, which in turn derives from the original Stoic philosophy, presuppose a largely western approach to history and modernity". Besides, accompanying the discussion over normativity, values and ethics, the Western influence on all levels leads some to identify "contemporary colonial conditions" (Shome and Hegde 2002, 258). Especially in a context of Global Studies, where global interconnections and cultural and societal experiences of globalization processes in different regions of the world are examined, it is crucial to find and improve theoretical notions that originate in diverse academic fields and diverse regions. In order to pursue new ways of defining and living cosmopolitanism beyond Western-Centrism, the term critical cosmopolitanism has been shaped, which includes and embraces peripheral and subaltern ideas of what cosmopolitanism means. Mignolo (2011, 44) claims that for cosmopolitanism "there is no need to take Kant as the blue print". He argues that "if cosmopolitanism shall be preserved in the humanities [sic] goal toward the future it should be 'cosmopolitan localism'" that takes into consideration different local and regional notions of cosmopolitanism merging into an idea of diversity, plurality and several cosmopolitanisms (Mignolo 2011, 43).

Mostly, cosmopolitanism is regarded as a practice and thus cosmopolitan understanding is constantly being changed and reviewed. There is no final stage when a cosmopolitan understanding is being achieved but it is a never ending "cultural discourse" (Kendall, Woodward, and Skrbis 2009, 107). If we understand cosmopolitanism as both discourse and practice it "must be actively constructed through practices of meaning-making in social situations" and can never be "an absolute or fixed category that resides simply within some individuals more than others" (Delanty 2012, 2). But not only is the discourse with and the encounter of the so called Other leading to a deeper understanding of the unknown but also of one's Self. As Hansen

(2011, 86) points out, “cultural creativity” is expressed in “what communities and individuals are in process of becoming through the experience of reflective openness to the new fused with reflective loyalty to the known”. Emerging from the idea that cosmopolitanism should be considered as a discourse, the field of intercultural cosmopolitanism has emerged. The general idea of intercultural cosmopolitanism is that not only an abstract appreciation for difference and for cultural Others is needed but in a second step there needs to be some kind of “perceived and meaningful connection” (Sobré-Denton 2013, 24). An empirical study by Mau, Mewes and Zimmermann (2008, 15–16) points out that “[i]nter-ethnic and inter-cultural relations promote the development of cosmopolitan values and improve the capacity to accept the other in their otherness as equal and to perceive cultural differences as a source of enrichment”.

However, the exchange between people, or in a more theoretical sense between the Self and the Other also includes a spatial dimension. In addition to the intercultural component of exchange between Self and Other, cosmopolitanism also includes various dimensions of space(s) where cosmopolitan understanding or cosmopolitanity is being configured by the individuals forming, moving and exchanging in those spaces. Beck (2004, 153) for example describes a “space of dialogical imagination” including “both the location of one’s own lifestyle within the horizon of other possibilities, and the ability to see oneself from the viewpoint of those who are culturally other”. In intercultural cosmopolitanism, some argue that “cosmopolitanism doesn’t just reside in any one individual but is something that emerges in the ‘in-between’ spaces of difference and intercultural interactions and performances” (Sobré-Denton 2013, 26). But what are those spaces in between, what exactly can the space be like where Self and Other engage in a meaningful connection? A more detailed description of the cosmos – the world or the globe, as it was stated in the very beginning – is thus crucial for a further discussion about cosmopolitanism. In one sense the world simply can mean to *be* the discourses forming it, thus discourses can be a form of world-making. The understanding of discourse as a spatial dimension is the point of departure for several concepts of how the world may be described. This spatial-discursive dimension to cosmopolitanism can be exemplified by the two concepts of third space¹ by Homi K. Bhabha and transdifference by Breinig and Lösch that tackle the idea of the spaces ‘in between’ in very similar and yet different ways. Bhabha describes the third space as a hybrid space “– the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, *inbetween* space – that carries the burden of the meaning of culture” (Bhabha 2004, 56; emphasis given). Essential to his concept is

¹ In the following, “third space” with a space between both words will be used for Bhabha’s notion while “Third-space” will be used for any other or more general notion.

that Bhabha denies the essentialism of a prior given originary culture that mingles and mixes with another culture which would then typically be called intercultural. Much more important about hybridity is to “not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to me is the ‘third space’ which enables other positions to emerge” (Bhabha 1990, 211). Going one step further “all forms of culture are continually in a process of hybridity” (ibid.) and boundaries between Self and Other thus become fuzzy or even non-discernable because original cultures of Self and Other are either non-existent or non-traceable. Essentially, Bhabha’s third space is also a postcolonial emancipatory project that aims at the empowerment of the (post)colonial subject in relation to its former colonial master. While coloniality and colonialism have been largely based on inequalities of power, “third space displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom” (Bhabha 2004, 56). In those third spaces one needs to learn to listen to the differences rather than ingesting cultures as one’s Other (Reiss 2004, 110). At this point, it is important to cover the colonial and hegemonic notion that often accompanies the discourse around Self and Other. So far, I have only spoken about Self and Other as representations of different subjectivities and/or different cultures. However, it has to be mentioned here that Self and Other also hold a colonial and hegemonic relation based on inequalities of power. Beginning with Said² a discourse has emerged of how to deconstruct the dualism of Self and Other if we take into account that “the Other” has been constructed in “the West” as the romantic, exotic and backward counter-part to one’s own part of the world. At this point, I cannot and do not want to elaborate on this hegemonic notion in the discourse around Self and Other, but it is important to take it into account when we think about power relations as in Bhabha’s third space.

However, it may not always be feasible to think of the space where cosmopolitan meaningful connections can be established only in a post- or decolonial sense. In a broader imagination it can already be enough to see a Thirdspace as a space of constant flux:

Thirdspace is a metaphor for the necessity to keep the consciousness *of* and the theorizing *on* spatiality radically open. [...] In its broadest sense, it is a purposefully tentative and flexible term that attempts to capture what is actually a constantly shifting and changing milieu of ideas, events, appearances, and meanings. (Soja 2009, 50; emphasis given)

² Said, Edward W. 2003. *Orientalism*. Reprinted with a new preface. Penguin Modern Classics. London: Penguin Books

A broader understanding of a Thirdspace can be found in the concept of transdifference where the term does not necessarily refer to an emancipatory project, restricted to the specific historical and political context of postcolonialism (Kalscheuer 2009, 41). Transdifference does not deny or deconstruct differences, the boundaries between Self and Other may still be quite apparent as “there can be no transdifference without difference” (Breinig and Lösch 2002, 23) so that the concept is still based on the exclusionary binary model. Transdifference thus,

refers to whatever runs ‘through’ the line of demarcation drawn by binary difference. It does not do away with the originary binary inscription of difference, but rather causes it to oscillate. Thus, the concept of transdifference interrogates the validity of binary constructions of difference without completely deconstructing them. This means that difference is simultaneously bracketed and yet retained as a point of reference. The term of transdifference refers to such areas of language, thought, and experience that are excluded by the either/or while retaining difference both in its logical and experiential aspects. (Breinig and Lösch 2002, 23)

Transdifference is experienced when Self and Other meet and must question the universal validity of their own cultural behavioral patterns, values and material; in this process of negotiation about identity a neutral Thirdspace becomes necessary, so that former boundaries become fluent through negotiation, contradiction and tension (Breinig and Lösch 2002, 25; Kalscheuer 2009, 41). This means that difference is also constructed and becomes apparent in the encounter and exchange with the Other in the first place. Only the common and collaborative creation of a neutral Thirdspace can then provide the setting to produce and experience transdifference where subjects moving in this space “on the one hand, highlight individual aspects of the self/other relation at the expense of others and, on the other hand, stand in contradiction to various other differences along alternative lines of inclusion/exclusion” (Breinig and Lösch 2002, 25).

Both concepts, Bhaba’s third space as well as Breinig and Lösch’s transdifference, describe Thirdspace as the space being formed in communication between Self and Other. Bhabha’s concept denies the existence of originary binaries but Self and Other are and have been hybrid creations themselves. Bhabha supposes difference and inequality while transdifference even sees necessity for difference in order to establish meaningful connections where transdifference is experienced. Here, the establishment of a neutral Thirdspace happens first through the negotiation of the Self’s and the Other’s own identities as well as the new collective identity and second through the reproduction of difference through the encounter between Self and Other. However, the most important difference between both concepts is the question of power: Bhabha’s third space is based on a former colonial power inequality and contemporary postcolonial

power inequality where now the formerly Othered re-negotiates identity and power with the former colonizer pushing for empowerment and emancipation. Meanwhile, transdifference establishes a neutral Thirdspace that is constructed purely in the encounter and exchange between Self and Other where power relations are not paid attention to. However, much more important in my thesis for the understanding of space in cosmopolitanism is the overarching idea of both concepts that space is being formed in the encounter *between* Self and Other. In my thesis, I will not go more into detail how a Thirdspace may look like in practice but in order to understand the political dimension of cosmopolitanism and where and in which space(s) cosmopolitanization can happen, the concept of Thirdspace will be needed in the discussion of my empirical study.

2.2 Cosmopolitanism and the arts

Even though I would argue for more research on how cosmopolitanism can be addressed and researched empirically also in terms of what variables of cosmopolitanism can be measured in which ways, in my thesis I have chosen a rather exploratory and open approach for an empirical study of cosmopolitanism. I would argue that as much as the diversity and openness of cosmopolitanism can be an obstacle for the empirical application of the concept it can also provide a basis for empirical work that is specific and yet open for new findings, which arise in a rather exploratory research process. Cosmopolitanism can serve as a theoretical basis for empirical research which is not too restrictive but rather provides direction. Therefore, the theoretical basis of cosmopolitanism as I have introduced it can also serve a very open but guided examination of the art piece *Augustijn* throughout my thesis. The research on art itself requires rather open and exploratory ways of investigating because of the open, boundary-crossing and exploratory characteristics that art involves. In an ideal understanding, art does not know language barriers, nor does it follow a hegemonic narrative of what art is because, ideally, art is always counter-hegemonic or at least ground-breaking and not following any norms. Of course, it cannot be forgotten, that once we take a step back from the ideal of art and rather look at the art *industry*, it is easy to detect deep inequalities on a global level in terms of access to funding and participation. Nonetheless, besides looking at markets and social structures surrounding the discourses around art, the focus can also be put on the individual and his*her exposure to art and aesthetics activities. The individual producing art is likely to look for the exposure to new people, places, circumstances, in other words a “temporary stress reaction that the artists are looking for, which provide[s] them with new possibilities to recreate themselves” (Vargas de Freitas Matias 2016, 87). Here, a first parallel can be drawn between art and cosmopolitanism

as they both require encounter with difference. The artistic activity as a reaction to this encounter can then also be seen as “the ability to frame problems flexibly from different perspectives” (Dunne 2017, 193) and thus an artistic form of self-reflexivity. Moreover, art can also be linked to notions of cosmopolitanism when we look at how art can be viewed both politically and spatially. As I elaborated earlier, cosmopolitanism and especially the political dimension of cosmopolitanism can be explained as a space being discursively formed by the actors. At this point it would go beyond the scope to give an extensive overview over the many ways how art is being considered political. But the political dimension of art, and moreover, how art can create a discourse that we can understand as a space (as with Bhabha’s third space and Breinig and Lösche’s transdifference) can be briefly exemplified here, looking at Jacques Rancière’s understanding of the politics of aesthetics and art. Rancière refers to politics enveloping a sphere of experience, the reality of common objects and the capacity of the subjects forming and recreating the space (Lindroos 2008, 71). Based on his understanding of politics, he also understands art as a tool to foster and enhance a collective political experience, or what in an interview he called “a specific space-time sensorium [which] defines ways of being together or being apart, of being inside or outside, in front of or in the middle of, etc” (Rancière quoted in Lindroos 2008, 71). In his view, the political dimension of art does not mean that art represents or depicts social structures, conflicts or identities, but that the discursive space being formed by individuals collectively experiencing and conversing about art and in this way linking themselves to the art piece is the very political dimension of art. Art thus both nurtures and accompanies a reframing of practices, manners of being and modes of feeling and saying and how they are “interwoven in a commonsense, which means a ‘sense of the common’ embodied in a common sensorium” (Rancière quoted in Lindroos 2008, 71).

When we see one crucial aspect of cosmopolitanism in the celebration or appreciation of difference, then Appiah himself gives us an idea of spatial difference in his account of world literature. In what he calls “cosmopolitan reading”, he argues for a presupposition of a world “in which novels [...] travel between places where they are understood differently, because people are different and welcome to their difference” (Appiah 2016, 224). More generally looking at the academic discourse around world literature, we can assess more parallels to cosmopolitanism, for example when world literature is not understood as a worldwide canon of works and classics, but rather as “a mode of circulation and reading” (Damrosch 2018, 5) and “multiple windows on the world” (Damrosch 2018, 15; emphasis given). Even though the direct relation between cosmopolitanism and world literature has still not been covered sufficiently (s. Domínguez 2011), further parallels can be drawn for example to critical cosmopolitanism and

Bhabha's postcolonial argument of inequality and difference between the (former) colonizer and the (formerly) colonized. As Moretti (2004, 149–50) argues, world literature is not simply to be seen as all the literature in the world but rather to be comprehended as a conceptual inter-connection of problems. Departing from World-systems theory, the problem inherent to world literature that he calls out is the profound inequality of inter-related literatures around the world which he bases in what he calls a world literary system. He claims that in most peripheral cultures the literary genre of the novel arose as a mix of hegemonic Western formal influence and local materials which is why also in this discourse it is advisable and necessary to call for a critical approach to world literature, accessing the discourse also from subaltern and decolonial points of views. This inequality within world literature and art in general needs to be pointed out and should not be forgotten.

Little literature can be found that is specifically linking cosmopolitanism and art or discussing cosmopolitan approaches in the arts but the existing research on this specific topic gives valuable insight how closely related art and cosmopolitanism are. Meskimmon (2010, 9) argues for art not only as a representation of the world but also a form of world making. Papastergiadis (2012, 221) even uses the term of aesthetic cosmopolitanism when he refers to “a cosmopolitan worldview that is produced through aesthetics”. Because ideally art does not know any borders or language barriers, “[e]ven if rooted in a specific place, nation, community and context, art is cosmopolitan by nature” (Gonçalves 2015, 206). Aesthetic activities and creativity (ideally) do not hold any boundaries of right and wrong, understanding and non-understanding but they are themselves a way to look beyond what is known and already understood. Thus, aesthetic activities “foster individual flourishing, are a form of political imagination and are a model of discourse not regulated by truth” (Halsall 2014, 132), also not by one's own one. To see art as a way of interacting with the Other and exposure to difference that is not regulated by any normativity or pre-stated truth is highly important for the understanding of cosmopolitanism in my thesis. I am curious about how art can lead to more questioning of oneself and one's values and ideals; thus, a normative basis to cosmopolitanism and art cannot or can only rarely exist and if it does it is exactly those disruptions of normativity that I am curious about. To explore disruptions and aim at a more fluid understanding of cosmopolitanism in theory through the empirical encounter of an art piece shall be a goal of my thesis. Thus, I am interested to see art not as a representation of cosmopolitanism but rather a cosmopolitan state – a dynamic and process-based understanding of world-making. How can art be the oscillating in-between that is connecting as well as disrupting Self and Other? At this point it is also important to distinguish between the production of art and the observation of the final art piece by an audience.

Throughout my thesis I do not want to elaborate or assess how art making can be understood as world making or cosmopolitan activity, but I will focus on the final art piece that may in some way be perceived as a state or even cause of disruptions of some kind, specifically amongst its audiences, but also in the intention of its producers. The argument I am making for the empirical exploration of an art piece and specifically disruptions and breaks with pre-formulated truths is also leading me to the theoretical framework of my thesis aiming at a very specific disruption that I am keen to explore: The disruption of so called Self and Other.

2.3 Watsuji's betweenness

Cosmopolitanism as I have laid it out so far and as it will be important in my empirical study basically includes two dimensions. On one hand the social and cultural dimension that is based on a hypothesis of difference and a setting where so called Self and Other meet in an exchange. On the other hand, we find the spatial dimension, where space is created through this encounter and reformulated and renegotiated through the exchange and discourse between Self and Other. However, what I want to argue is that in all the fluidity of space as Soja (2009) calls for it we also need to claim more fluidity in the conception of Self and Other, essentially moving away from the dualism and binary of both towards the question of "Who is the Self and who is the Other and why can I not be both?". In other words, I want to apply a notion of cosmopolitanism that does not only ask for "recognition of the otherness of the other, beyond the false understanding associated with territoriality and homogenization" (Beck 2004, 143). It does also look at how the individual, speaking of myself and anyone, can recognize the Other accompanying one's Self, and hence the otherness of oneself, as well.

In order to break with the dichotomy between Self and Other it can be helpful to move away from the very abstract conception of Self and Other as theoretical descriptions of different societies or cultures. Instead, I would like to focus much more on the single individual and his*her relationship to oneself and his*her social surroundings. One of the few who has actively problematized the dualism of Self and Other in cosmopolitanism is Michael Murphy who applies Watsuji Tetsuro's (1889 - 1960) betweenness (aidagara 間柄) as a form of breaking and disrupting the dichotomy of Self and Other. As Murphy (2015) points out, Watsuji is breaking with conventional Western thought of focusing either on individuality or social relationality. Watsuji denies that human thought and action are either based in the responsibility of the individual or in his*her relation to the (social) environment. Much more, Watsuji brings in a notion of social consciousness that unifies time, space, the individual and the social. Watsuji does this also from a Buddhist perspective where those dimensions are often unified in spiritual belief.

He argues that betweenness has to be understood as something dynamic, “as a subjective inter-connection of acts [...] which undergoes constant transformation” (Watsuji 1996, 18–19). In his translation of Watsuji’s *Rinrigaku*, Carter (1996, 337; emphasis given) explains that in Japanese the term *ningen*, or “human being”, “man” or “person” includes a dimension of a between-space in which people are located, because the term “is composed of two characters, the first, *nin*, meaning ‘human being’ or ‘person’, and the second, *gen*, meaning ‘space’ or ‘between’, as in the betweenness between human beings”. Thus, the terminology of “human being” involves a dual nature for the reason that “we are individuals and we have individual personalities and unique histories, *and yet*, we are inextricably connected to many, relationally, for we exist communally” (ibid.; emphasis given). Furthermore, Watsuji’s notion of dynamic betweenness also refers to a temporal dimension as well as a spatial dimension, because the individual is grounded in past interconnections of acts of other individuals who have shaped space and society before. This implies as well that the individual acting now and shaping space and society in relation to other individuals determines interactions and world-making between individuals in the future. In addition, Watsuji does not only point out the spatial and temporal dimensions of betweenness but also their mutual relation, because on one hand, the conception of Self and Other opposing themselves cannot be imagined “apart from the subjects standing in opposition to one another spatially. On the other hand, this opposition between the self and other is possible only through the subject’s disruption, by becoming two temporally” (Watsuji 1996, 224). Only in this way, we can comprehend, that, “[o]nly what was once one can stand opposed to itself in such a way that the opposition between the self and other may arise. Only what is capable of becoming one is divided as self and other” (ibid.). Accordingly, “[b]etweenness consists in the fact that self and other are divided from each other [...] and at the same time that what is thus divided becomes unified” (Watsuji 1996, 35).

Concluding, Watsuji is breaking with the duality of Self and Other and localizes the individual *between* him*herself and his*her social relations, where the spaces between person and person are filled through “act-connections” (Watsuji 1996, 18) which have also been configured by past interrelations between individuals and which are shaping future interrelations between individuals. Understanding the mutual relation between spatiality and temporality as well as individuality and social relations, we are never either individual or social beings and we are never either temporal or spatial beings. Much more we are grounded in practical interconnections of acts that are always individual and social, temporal and spatial (Murphy 2015, 5). Similar to the two notions of Thirdspace that I introduced earlier, Watsuji describes the space between Self and Other as communicative, dynamic, interconnected through the actors creating it

and hence based on their subjectivity. However, he also sees a between in between the individual itself (*gen*), so that I consist of my Self and my Other and you consist of your Self and your Other and thus we also dwell in each other's betweenness, me inheriting parts of your Self as my Other and you parts of my Self as your Other. Watsuji also speaks of the simultaneity of being a human being and becoming a human being, calling it a "transformation from being to nothingness, and from nothingness to being" (Watsuji 1996, 19).

I want to point out that from a tradition of Western rational thought, Watsuji's point on the oneness of space, time, Self and Other can hardly make sense. The fact that the individual is both product as well as producer of society and that both are interlinked with each other presents a new kind of complexity that takes us beyond classical logic (Morin 2014). But I also find it important to choose approaches to cosmopolitanism that follow the understanding of critical cosmopolitanism in including alternative and subaltern theories. Moreover, in order to be able to describe and examine globalization, transformation and, what Beck calls the "metamorphosis of the world", we also need to call for a "metamorphosis of theory" (Beck 2016, 71). If theory wants to describe dynamism it needs to be inherently dynamic and fuzzy. The conceptualization of the metamorphosis of the world cannot be brought about by "following the universalistic understanding of theory, because the notion of universalistic theory excludes analytically what is at stake here – the change of universalistic assumptions" (Beck 2016, 74). Watsuji's understanding of the world as a plural and as "hetero-spatial-temporal" (Murphy 2015, 8) leads us "to an account of critical cosmopolitanism that moves beyond conceptual Eurocentrism through an approach to social theory grounded in a relational social ontology" (Murphy 2015, 3). Important to say is that with Watsuji the idea of culture as constantly changing remains because "existence is in constant flux, the perspective from which a group of people may be seen as a totality is never fixed. Completeness is never achieved" (Murphy 2015, 8). "Otherness, in this view, is not a fixed universal artefact open to the gaze of abstract reason but is across and within cultures *and ourselves*" (Murphy 2015, 11; own emphasis).

2.4 Transculturalism

In order to clarify this very abstract approach of cosmopolitanism I want to add another understanding of an incorporation of Self and Other within oneself. The model of transculturalism is attributed to the Cuban scholar Fernando Ortiz. He describes transculturalism as the following:

Synthesis of two phases occurring simultaneously, one being a de-culturization of the past with a metissage with the present. This new reinventing of the new common culture is therefore based on

the meeting and the intermingling of the different peoples and cultures. In other words, one's identity is not strictly one dimensional (the self) but is now defined and more importantly recognized in rapport with the other. In other words, one's identity is not singular but multiple. (Ortiz quoted in Cuccioletta 2002, 8)

By looking at transculturalism and how the concept has developed from interculturalism we can also understand better how Watsuji's betweenness can be applied. Transculturalism, as well as betweenness goes beyond intercultural or multicultural perspectives. In multicultural approaches, the distinction of groups and determination of differences is important while in interculturalism those differences remain but through the discourse between delimitable and distinct groups or individuals of those groups a new 'inter-culture' arises. Instead, in transculturalism "the focus, from a socio-philosophical point of view, is on identities as a hybrid construction that have developed through discourses, and on culture itself as a discourse" (Reichardt 2017, 44). Thus, through discourse and encounter with the so called Other, the individual gains an understanding of the difference that lies within him*herself, hence he*she recognizes the Other in him*herself. Transculturalism does not only exist on the macrolevel of societies but reaches through to the microlevel of individuals' identities and thus it, "not only accepts the otherness of the other but also allows human beings to dwell in-between cultures, unshackled by the bonds of belonging" (Elhayawi 2011, 178). To give a rather practical example, a person can very well unify traits, passions and interests in him*herself, that are considered to be part of certain cultures. An individual can be an inhabitant of Patagonia and Muslim with Sicilian parents, with a passion for Baroque music, fluent in Hausa and a great cook of Masala Dosa even though this example might be hard to find. Anyway, especially with constant moving, traveling and living abroad, or generally any exposure to new and unknown cultural stimulation we can say that an individual subject increasingly acquires new characteristics that he*she is encountering on his*her personal journey and thus he*she "may participate in many different cultures simultaneously" (Lewis 2002, 23). Transculturalism thus involves fluidity and fuzziness of identity opposing homogeneity and coherence of cultures by proposing a topographical design of in between spaces (Reichardt 2017, 45).

Throughout my elaboration on theory of cosmopolitanism, I have introduced the aspects of 1) openness for the Other which leads to 2) self-reflexivity about one's own relation to the context of the world. I also explained that the encounter between Self and Other shall be understood as a dynamic and ever-changing discourse that is taking place between Self and Other. I exemplified how this discourse could be conceptualized by introducing two spatial dimensions to this discourse, Bhabha's third space and Breinig and Lösch's transdifference where space is

being formed in the encounter *between* Self and Other. Furthermore, I introduced my theoretical framework, going beyond the notion of Self and Other but conceptualizing how I as an individual can be both Self and Other at the same time. I suggested Watsuji's betweenness that Murphy has applied in theory of cosmopolitanism where the individual is seen as composed and composing him*herself in practical interconnections of acts, which are always individual and social, temporal and spatial. In other words, the individual is formed by his*her own subjectivity as well as by his*her relation to other individuals' subjectivities sharing and forming space, in past, present and future. Going one step further, the individual can recognize the Other in him*herself through an encounter with the Other. In order to make the conception of betweenness more approachable I briefly explained the concept of transculturalism where the individual can participate in many cultures simultaneously and doing so, recognizes the Other in him*herself – the Otherness of the Self.

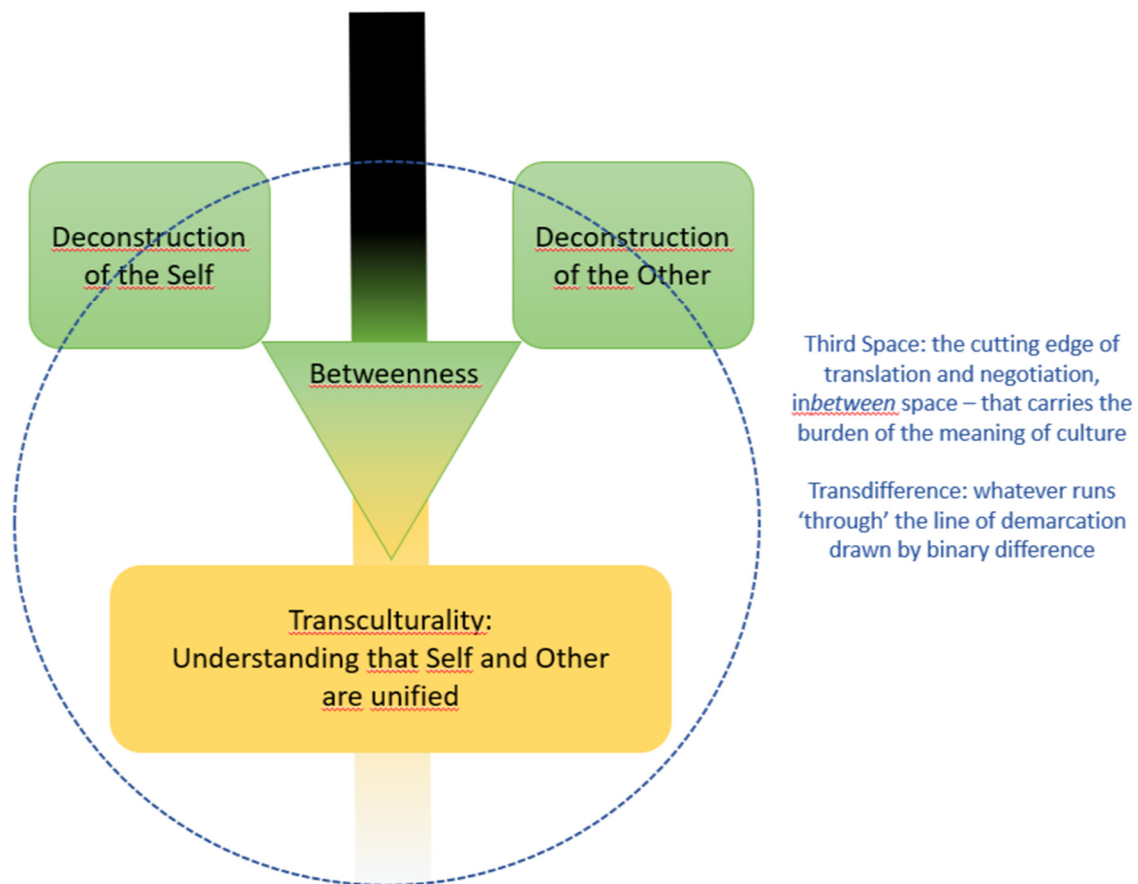


Figure 1: Systematic depiction of theoretical framework (own graphics)

Before going to the next chapter, it is important to say that the following empirical study of the film installation *Augustijn* shall not in any way serve to measure or validate cosmopolitanism. Much more, the discussion of cosmopolitanism should on one hand illustrate the strong theoretical interconnectivity with notions of Thirdspace, betweenness and transculturalism. On

the other hand, the problematization of the Self/Other dichotomy in cosmopolitanism and my continuation of this critique towards more disrupted and fluid identities dwelling in between Self and Other can also very well serve as the theoretical basis for my empirical case study as I will describe in the next chapter. Based on my theoretical discussion and the understanding of art as cosmopolitan by nature I now want to describe how an art piece can explore, reflect or establish a disruption of a Self/Other dichotomy.

3. The subject of interest: *Augustijn*

In order to explore how cosmopolitanism and art can be seen connected to and interrelated with each other, I decided to choose one specific art piece for my exploratory study in order to narrow down the research scope. Holding the position of a project assistant with the Forecast Festival between June and October 2018 in Berlin I discovered the art piece *Augustijn* by Omar A. Chowdhury. This film installation seemed to fit my theoretical interest quite well, which was how an art piece could explore, reflect or establish a disruption of a Self/Other dichotomy. Before it can be elaborated how *Augustijn* could serve as a unit of analysis related to the theoretical gap that has been addressed, the piece will briefly be described.

Augustijn revolves around a young man's conversion to Islam in the post-industrial city of Aalst in Belgium. The Amsterdam-based artist Omar A. Chowdhury, who was a Muslim before he became an atheist, constructed a parafiction conflating story and nonfiction to reflect the personal, religious and ideological questions that arise from his discussions with the real-life protagonist and Muslim convert, Stijn, about Islam. *Augustijn* was born after the two met when the artist ended up taking the wrong train, and Stijn approached him during the journey. Once the journey ended, they both went their ways and Chowdhury only thought to develop an artistic dialogue with Stijn a few months later. Because they had not exchanged contact details Chowdhury went to find Stijn in Aalst where Stijn supposedly lived. Chowdhury went to several mosques during the Friday prayer until he found someone who could connect him with Stijn. Because of their beliefs (or rather atheistic 'non-belief' in Chowdhury's case), both Chowdhury and Stijn have faced exclusion from the communities that raised and shaped them. The characters' traversing identities and the mirroring of their respective journeys in opposite directions are critical threads woven into a narrative that oscillates between fiction and nonfiction, ultimately blurring both. *Augustijn* was first presented in the form of a multichannel film installation with three channels on the Forecast Festival in October 2018 in Berlin. (Forecast 2019d, 2019c; for an image of the installation s. Fig. 2 in Appendix)

Forecast is an international platform for knowledge transfer “and offers artists and creative thinkers from anywhere in the world the chance to work with accomplished mentors toward bringing their projects to fruition” (Forecast 2019a, para. 1). In the third edition of Forecast six mentors supported six artists in the implementations of their respective project ideas. In addition to the mentorship that took place from May 2018 till the showcase of all projects in October 2018, each mentee received a production budget of at least 7.000 € (Forecast 2019b). Omar A. Chowdhury’s mentor was Omer Fast, a film maker from Jerusalem, living in Berlin. The production of *Augustijn* was also supported by the Australia Council for the Arts, the Dutch Embassy in Berlin as well as Netwerk, Aalst. Even though the production process of *Augustijn*, also in collaboration with Chowdhury’s mentor Omer Fast might be very interesting to cover, those shall explicitly not be considered in this thesis.

Each of the three channels lasted around 20 minutes and was running in a loop on one large screen each. All screens were positioned in a large cinema room slightly offset from each other in different rows of chairs. The sound of each channel was audible through speakers being positioned at the respective screen so that the sound of each channel was audible in the entire room (for access to digital versions of all channels s. Appendix). Meanwhile, in front of every screen there were headphones with the sound of just this one screen so one could sit at one screen and only listen to the sound of this specific screen. At a later stage, in January 2019, Omar A. Chowdhury presented a single-channel version of *Augustijn* at the International Film Festival Rotterdam (IFFR), lasting around 50 minutes.

Departing from my theoretical critique and aiming at a more disruptive understanding of Self, Other and towards the in-between between the two, I immediately saw a connection to *Augustijn*, when I read the concept notes while the piece was still in the making. *Augustijn* does not only cover the story of the young convert Stijn but also discovers the question of Omar who originates from a religious family and used to be a Muslim. Thus, he represents what in “the West” is often seen and has been constructed as “the Other”, which makes him “the Othered” that has lived in “the West” for most of his life. Meanwhile, the protagonist Stijn comes from a rather rich family in Belgium and has chosen Islam, “the Other” as his belief and faith in life. In other words, Self and Other have been reversed in this relationship between Omar A. Chowdhury and the protagonist Stijn; Stijn and Omar have gone on two ‘reverse journeys’ and arrived at the respective other’s point of departure. This potential tension or disruption of Omar as “the Other inside the Self” and Stijn as “the othered Self” reflects disrupted identities and a dissolved or at least fluid Self/Other dichotomy. Thus, for the empirical exploration of *Augustijn*

throughout my thesis, I reflect on Stijn and Omar as representations of disrupted Self and Other that engage in a conversation of some kind in the film work. Once I explain my methodological approach, I will also elaborate on how this shall be applied but I can already mention that throughout my empirical analysis I will examine the roles of Stijn and Omar (as disrupted Self and Other) as well as the relationship between the two (as them forming an in-between space) from different methodological perspectives.

Before elaborating on my methodological approach, I would like to contextualize *Augustijn* in the film maker's artistic career. The artist Omar A. Chowdhury was born in 1983 and raised in Bangladesh until the age of six when his family moved to Australia where he then spent most of his life. Raised in a very religious Muslim family it caused conflicts with his parents when Chowdhury decided to become an atheist breaking with the belief and the religious roots that his parents had raised him with. Originally being a computer scientist, Chowdhury became a film maker and visual artist quite late, beginning with solo as well as group exhibitions in Sydney, Dhaka and Berlin. Currently Chowdhury is living in Amsterdam where he is a post-graduate resident in the two-year artist-in-residence program at the Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten. In 2016, Chowdhury held an exhibition in Dhaka, Bangladesh, titled *Age of Saturn*, an artistic encounter and display of his research on the political and economic historian Dr. Shahidul Zaman, a cousin of his father. Chowdhury put together documents and books that Dr. Zaman had collected throughout the years in an immense archive providing insights to both his own life as well as the history of Bengal and Bangladesh which is deeply connected to disruption of national boundaries, displacement of people as well as colonization and postcolonial politics. Additionally, Chowdhury formed documentary-styled film pieces and texts about Dr. Zaman to be presented in the exhibition. Central to Chowdhury's work around Dr. Zaman is the (semi-)fictional nature of the character Dr. Zaman and his life story. One will not know which parts of the story about Dr. Zaman are invented to which extent or if the character is invented completely while the fictional nature of the character does not mean that his stories might not be the ones of others. The in-between state of Chowdhury's artistic reflection on Dr. Zaman's life in between fiction and reality, history and present is what deeply contributes to his work. In his self-explanation in the exhibition brochure of *Age of Saturn*, Chowdhury describes:

Omar Chowdhury makes moving-image, photographic, sculptural, conceptual and textual installations based on immersions into contested spaces and their histories. Often mixing notions of ontology, political economy, and the spirit, they hold in uneasy tension various polarities: facts and the surreal, humour and melancholia, rhythm with chaos, weakness and power, and memory with

forgetting. Out of these cohesions and frictions he produces densely woven languages and environments of moral and psychic inquiry. (Chowdhury and Zaman 2016, 26)

The semi-fictional base to Chowdhury's approach of art is central also for the understanding of *Augustijn* and my further elaboration on the piece throughout my thesis. When I met Chowdhury during my project assistant job in Berlin as well as during the many informal conversations which I had with him during the production phase of *Augustijn* and during my research for this thesis, I got the feeling that his artistic work is deeply personal to him. Interacting with the (real?/semi-fictional?/fictional?) people or characters that also form his artistic work, such as Dr. Zaman in *Age of Saturn* and Stijn in *Augustijn*, also means to reconnect to his own history of being a person of color with a colored person's name raised in Australia but originating in Bangladesh with a Muslim family background. In his most current self-description, he writes:

Omar A. Chowdhury is an immigrant from historical Bengal—a vanished, decolonised place. Disoriented by this geographic and temporal rupture he makes meta-fictional environments that house tightly-coupled fields of objects, actions and representations which include texts, performances, films, photographs, sculptures, sounds, archives, electronics and code. (Chowdhury 2019, para. 1)

Notions of past and present and how they connect to his own position in society and history are what drives him in his artistic work, thus providing him with an artistic mode to re-appropriate his own history of displacement:

His layered and elusive installations are attempts to travel through time and into the lives of others – into what he feels was taken from him. Appropriating the processes and tools of phenomenological hermeneutics and modernist narratology his practice effaces the partitions between what is real and what is not. (Chowdhury 2019, para. 1)

Finally, the semi-fictional nature of the characters that Chowdhury allows to speak through his art is also what motivated me to research around *Augustijn* and become a part of the semi-fictional nature of *Augustijn* where I am uncertain who Stijn is and why Omar lets him speak. When Chowdhury writes “[i]t makes us deeply uncertain about our relation to the past, about who to trust, and where one expects art to stop” (Chowdhury 2019, para. 1), I can very well identify with this description of his art. It is yet too early to go deeper into my own interpretation and reflection of *Augustijn* but I can already state that the question of who to trust or even who is who and who is speaking will be central to my empirical work where I want to try to understand who the character Stijn is in *Augustijn*, who Omar is in *Augustijn* and how they configure their relationship in *Augustijn*. At this point it is also important to mention that when I speak about Omar, I am signifying the character of Omar in the film piece, while when I speak of Chowdhury, I mean the artist. However, *Augustijn* only shows Stijn talking while Omar is not

visible throughout the film work, even though he once in a while makes statements or asks questions.

4. Plan of inquiry: Design and implementation of methodology

Departing from my theoretical review of cosmopolitanism, I have formulated my motivation to move past a dichotomy of Self and Other and towards a rather disruptive understanding of Self and Other found in between the two. I have also explained how *Augustijn* may connect to my theoretical perspective based on the ‘reverse journeys’ that Stijn and Omar have taken in terms of from which background they are coming from and how they have decided to break with that. In the following, I will now explain how I would like to approach my two research questions methodologically. Posing my first research question “How does *Augustijn* explore disruptions of a Self/Other dichotomy?”, it is most important to say once more that the aim of my examination of *Augustijn* shall not be to validate theory. Through my methodological approach I will not in any way try to measure the level of cosmopolitanism, how *Augustijn* could be understood as a cosmopolitan art piece or a piece of cosmopolitan aesthetics or how the characters’ narratives in *Augustijn* could be interpreted as cosmopolitan. Rather, the exploration of and reflection on the art piece shall serve as a discovery of boundary crossing and disruptions of notions of Self and the Other in order to derive new insights from the empirical work for theory of cosmopolitanism. The fact that the atheist Omar A. Chowdhury, coming from a conservative Muslim family, engages in an artistic dialogue with a Muslim convert from Belgium contains both a dimension of disruption as well as personal reflection on the meta-level of the arts. In order not to limit myself exclusively to the question of Self and Other but to also be open for findings tackling different questions around cosmopolitanism I have also posed the more general research question “How is *Augustijn* related to cosmopolitanism?”. In my theoretical review I have also described the rather general ideas of cosmopolitanism as a mindset of openness and self-reflexivity about one’s own position in the world. This rather open understanding of cosmopolitanism may provide guidance for this equally open second research question.

In the following, the design and analysis of three different methods will be laid out. Throughout my research I conducted 1) an autoethnographic inquiry fed by elements of film analysis based on social semiotics, 2) a semi-structured interview with Omar A. Chowdhury and 3) four focus groups with two recipients of *Augustijn* each. I did not view any method as more important as the others, rather they should be seen as complementing each other even though I lay out my findings starting at my rather personal autoethnography and ending with

other people's perception of the piece. I followed an approach of method triangulation in order to capture a more complete and contextualized portrait of the art piece under study (Polit and Beck 2008, 543) and to gather multiple perspectives on the art piece. All three methods were carried out simultaneously, which is why I will refer forth and back to other parts within each section. However, I have chosen a specific order to describe the methods I have used in a way to make it most approachable for the reader. My inquiry will be based on the presupposition of Stijn and Omar as representations of a disrupted Self and Other, departing from their 'reverse journeys' of conversion. Hence, in all three steps I will look at how Stijn, Omar and the relationship between the two of them is perceived throughout the three different methodological inquiries. What I will not cover in my thesis is the narrative that Stijn uses to describe himself, except if there are patterns about his narrative that I see persistently appearing throughout my data, especially in the focus groups. I am not trying to analyze in how far Stijn or his narrative may reflect cosmopolitanism or not, but much more how my own, Omar A. Chowdhury's and the recipients' reflections on and understanding of the piece may depict a disrupted Self and Other dichotomy or possible other and/or new connections to cosmopolitanism.

My plan of inquiry will first include a personal autoethnographic reflection of my own perception and engagement with *Augustijn*. It shall also reflect my own positionality not only as a researcher but also as someone frequently watching films and paying attention to stylistic elements such as structure of film pieces and camera movement. Therefore, my autoethnographic reflection is being fed by analytical findings I gathered in a basic film analysis based on social semiotics. As I will explain at a later point, this research is on one level very personal to me because it reflects identity struggles and disruptions that I could in some way relate to. For this reason, I chose to include a rather personal reflexive part, the autoethnographic examination, which also reflects on my own emotional experiences and involvement within the research throughout the past months. This way, my own feelings and experiences will also be "incorporated into the story and considered as vital data for understanding the social world being observed" (Anderson 2006, 384). How I precisely conducted the autoethnography will be explained in the result section rather than at this point because I recognized the way of doing my autoethnography as much a result as the actual final text that has developed.

After my own autoethnographic inquiry, I will briefly describe a few general findings from one focus group that I conducted before the interview with Omar A. Chowdhury. I will explain first how the focus group made me decide to conduct more focus groups with recipients rather than individual interviews and second how I told about certain reflections shared in this focus

group in the interview with Chowdhury. In a next step, I will elaborate on the semi-structured interview that I conducted with Omar A. Chowdhury as well as several informal conversations and observations throughout the set-up phase of *Augustijn* in Berlin. I conducted the interview in Amsterdam where I also visited a show that he took part in at the Rijksakademie. The interview will serve as the main subject to be analyzed. First, the interview served the purpose to find out more about the production process as well as the final art piece. Second and more importantly I tried to address Omar A. Chowdhury with specific questions around Stijn and his character in the film, as well as how Chowdhury saw his relationship with Stijn both in the final art piece as well as the film making process. Since I had already established my theory-derived categories of Omar, Stijn and the relationship between the two of them I chose a structural coding approach that allowed me to apply my “conceptual phrase representing a topic of inquiry to a segment of data that relates to a specific research question used to frame the interview” (Saldaña 2013, 84) as well as to “initially categorize[...] the data corpus to examine comparable segments’ commonalities, differences, and relationships” (ibid.). After a first coding cycle I had discovered many codes that related to the three categories. Having these codes, I analyzed my data once more to find additional phrases and codes. In order to also allow for more freedom in the analysis of my data I also used initial coding that is usually rather applied in Grounded Theory (s. Charmaz and Belgrave 2007). Even though my goal was not to establish a new theory I still expected this method to be valuable to find new patterns in my data that would help me later to finally derive new insights for theory of cosmopolitanism, having another “starting point to provide the researcher with analytic leads for further exploration” (Saldaña 2013, 101). This approach also took two rounds of coding, one to find and establish patterns in the data and the other one to find more phrases fitting the codes pre-established in the first round of coding. Besides, one may already have wondered why I have not mentioned to interview Stijn as well. Originally, I had thought about conducting an interview with him since I conceptually speak of him as part of a disrupted Self/Other dichotomy. However, during my research process I decided not to interview Stijn for multiple reasons which I will explain at a later point.

The third part of my inquiry were four focus groups, one conducted before the interview with Omar A. Chowdhury, the other three after. The focus groups involved a short introduction that I gave about the art piece and the ‘reverse journey’ that Omar and Stijn had taken, followed by a complete watch-through of the three channels, one after the other. After watching the film piece, I began to engage in an exchange about the art piece, trying to rather have a conversation between my two participants and me just guiding the conversation around specific points of interest. I wanted to know about first general impressions, reflections and feelings as well as

about how the focus group participants saw Stijn and Omar and the relationship between the two. The focus groups ended with me asking for a general outcome, most important reflection or summary of the experience with the art piece. Like in the analysis of the interview with Omar A. Chowdhury, I first coded the results of the focus groups looking for codes for the categories of Stijn, Omar and the relationship between the two. Second, I looked for reappearing patterns that I found across the data in order to derive new insights and common reflections and perceptions. Important to mention is that in the analysis of the interview with Chowdhury and the focus groups I decided to summarize the findings throughout the structural coding process as categories because those categories had been pre-formulated from theory (Stijn/Omar/their relationship). Meanwhile, I described my findings in the more general initial coding process as patterns and not categories. Just one interview with Chowdhury and four focus groups would not have allowed for a precise formulation of categories. Therefore, I decided to call the similarities between the focus groups and the repetitions within each focus groups patterns not to raise the expectations of well formulated and well reduced categories. Generally, conducting the focus groups did not aim at any representative results regarding the reception of *Augustijn* as there are many possible ways to understand an art piece. Much more I expected diverse findings in collaboration with people from diverse backgrounds in order to replenish the findings from my other methods.

The recordings of the four focus groups were transcribed and coded. Like in the analysis of the interview with Omar A. Chowdhury, I chose two different coding methods in order to analyze and engage with my data, one being structural coding and the other being initial coding. The procedure was the same, the structural coding process took place with the pre-established categories of Stijn, Omar and their relationship (two coding cycles) and the initial coding process targeting more general reoccurring patterns in what the focus group participants had said (two coding cycles).

4.1 Positionality in the research: Between research, personal subject and job

Before I dive into the description and analysis of my methodological results, it is important for me to reveal to the reader in the best possible sense my positionality in the field. I find it crucial to also relate back to myself and reveal and reflect how my Self (and my Other?) is involved in the research process, questioning my own relationship with the social world and the way in which I understand and interpret my experiences as the researcher (Cunliffe 2003). In my general understanding, it is nearly impossible to distinguish between gathering data and producing data since the way I am interpreting my collected qualitative data is also based on

my own personal and academic background. In the following, I will broadly cover three perspectives on my positionality, one being my relationship to the subject of my research, my theoretical perspective as well as my personal interest, the second one being my relationship to the research participants and the third one being my relation to the research context and process (Savin-Baden and Major 2013).

My positionality is strongly impacted by the fact that I am a White³, male, university-educated, heterosexual, middle-class, German, European human⁴. Especially as my thesis also tackles questions of identity, religion, skin color and regional background, on a global level and also taking into account global power dynamics I can clearly assess that I am rather a representative of the so-called Self than of the Other. Hereby, I mean that I have been raised in the part of the world where the contemporary dichotomy between Self and Other has its origin, for example in literature or art⁵. The Other has been a construction that was always seen in relation to Europe/"the West" even though "the West"/Europe and thus, the Self were never really defined (s. Hall 1996). Besides, academia as we know it today is to the biggest extent based on the way academia and research has been in "the West". For those two reasons I see myself largely as a representation of the Self rather than of the Other and even though I try to break with this dualism I remain more a representative of the hegemonic Self than of the othered. However, as I explained earlier, in this thesis the colonial and hegemonic dimension of Self and Other shall not necessarily play a role, much more I see the terminology of the Other also as a general representation of everyone who is not me and of everyone who is the Other to someone and his*her subjectivity. Thus, everyone is the Other to someone.

Furthermore, my role as an early academic in the social sciences also provides me with the skills and the access that are needed to discuss this topic from the angle of cosmopolitanism. Regarding my relation to the research subject, it is very apparent that the discourse around cosmopolitanism and the theoretical perspective that I have taken are deeply rooted in academia and the social sciences. Someone who is not familiar with the field might not discuss my interest in disrupted identities in the same way as someone familiar with or being a part of this field. Consequently, the vocabulary and even the theory that I use to describe and tackle the

³ I choose to write "White" with a capital letter as for me it reflects more than just the skin color but the political power and privilege that I hold with the color of my skin in a historical, cultural and racial context.

⁴ Though "human" may sound a bit emotive I choose to use this word also to reflect the idea of cosmopolitanism that humans are fundamentally equal and that beyond all the other parts of my positionality that I listed this is the one that does not exclude anyone else.

⁵ Once more, I refer to Edward Said's Orientalism.

dichotomy of Self and Other might not be someone else's choice. Someone else might call the concepts that I am using differently and might not relate them to cosmopolitanism or a discourse around Self and Other, the language might be completely different.

Furthermore, I am making an effort to also use theories and concepts that did not emerge in "the West" which is where I have been raised and to a very big extent socialized. To use concepts like Watsuji's betweenness, Bhabha's third space or transculturalism which is largely attributed to Ortiz also means that I am essentially making use of decolonial theories that form a counter-narrative to Western academia and education. In order to not fall into the trap of appropriating those concepts and speaking *for* the Other, I am trying to use those concepts with caution and respect for their origin and even more because I deeply believe that they enrich the discourses not only in Western academia but especially about cosmopolitanism.

In addition, it is important for me to explain that my research subject is also profoundly personal to me. Throughout the master's in social sciences that I am finishing with the submission of this very written piece, I had the privilege to expose myself to constant new stimulation, moving and personal growth, spending four semesters in three different countries. For two years I have studied theories and concepts of globalization as well as many different faces of the world while my life itself became globalized in constant motion and flux. My studies and my personal life were entangled deeply in a way that I was essentially studying my life and living my studies, all with people who meant family, friends, study and living companions to me. The moving and shifting of academic and personal reflection in exchange with others, is what I like to think of as a "thinking-space". This "thinking-space" is "*both* a processual movement of thought *and* a privileged site at which this movement is amplified and inflected by novel configurations of ideas, things and bodies" (McCormack 2008, 2; emphasis given). The high amount of intensity and stimulation I have exposed myself to for the past two years has made me grow and expand my knowledge and mindset. I have coped with more and more confusion, uncertainty and complexity about what the world consists of and what my position is in it. After I had conducted the interview with Omar A. Chowdhury we also talked about this thesis and my personal interest in the research which is how my following thought developed out of the conversation with him that I recorded with the interview:

Exposing myself to more and more global complexities has brought me to a point where I didn't understand a lot of complexity anymore, also discovering a lot of complexity in myself and how I reacted to these constant new vibrations and impressions. I didn't know anymore who is this other, who is this self and who am I.

Not only is the theoretical approach quite personal to me, but also my personal connection to art has for long been crucial to coping with complexity because I have always been fascinated by the impossibility to make rational sense of art while for me the importance of just seeing and observing is much more central to its understanding or appreciation. This is also why the connection between cosmopolitanism and art became my research interest very early, even before I knew about *Augustijn*. The questions of “what is art” and “why is it art” are constantly transforming which makes art uncertain and complex in its deepest roots. The connection between art and cosmopolitanism became thus very early the theoretical foundation and personal motivation of my thesis. However, it is important to reflect on art as a subject which is often perceived as highly exclusive. Even though I make the point that art does not know any borders or language barriers, I still am aware of the fact that the discourse around art, for example in museums, magazines and the public sphere, is vastly controlled by a small community of professionals which for many has turned art into something that they believe not to understand because of limited access and cultural capital.

Furthermore, I shall also discuss my own positionality in relation to the participants of my research. First of all, I believe that I found a very unique piece of art that I am exploring now. I am definitely positively intrigued by *Augustijn* and can still only understand it to a certain extent while more and more understanding of the piece also causes more and more questions to me. Like in Chowdhury’s film piece, I also found a certain uniqueness in the conversations between Chowdhury and me because the angle he has on his work is also deeply grounded in social scientific theory and philosophy. Thus, the personal interest in the entanglements of arts and social sciences was something that I found connecting us. However, the experiences that Omar A. Chowdhury has had as a person of color are not the ones I have had with my own positionality as a White in Western Europe. The same counts for my relation to Stijn who is a Muslim convert and hence he also has a different relationship to his society than I am having. However, seeing my position an in-between in between Stijn and Omar as I am exploring their relationship in *Augustijn* I find myself representing a mixture between the two, on one hand being an atheist with a personal interest in art and social sciences like Omar and on the other hand being a White straight male in a Western society like Stijn. Regarding my focus groups, it is important to mention that all participants were familiar with me and I with them, and some of them even friends or family members. On one hand, in the discussion this may have biased the participants in the focus groups and me in the interpretation of their statements, but on the other, it was supposed to create a certain atmosphere of trust in the conversation. I will also elaborate on the design of the focus groups in the respective section.

I would also like to mention that my empirical research originated in the job with Forecast. Thus, throughout the week before the festival when *Augustijn* and the other art pieces were set up in the venue I was not able to devote as much time to conversing with Chowdhury or Stijn and to observe the final production phase as I would have liked to. Most of the time I was occupied with the general work around the festival and thus not able to focus extensively on my research process at the time. However, after the festival I still had enough time to talk to Chowdhury, also during the days I stayed in Amsterdam to interview him.

Finally, I should address that speaking about cosmopolitanism and the understanding of a world community in my case also comes from exposure to a wide range of stimulations in every-day-life experiences, conversations with people and different academic systems all around the world. To be interested in and even think and write about a global human community and to discuss what cosmopolitanism could mean is also rooted in my own privileged background as someone with access to theoretical and academic discussions about the world, in the world, as well as the possibility to travel to most places in the world because of sufficient financial resources and a passport that gives me access to most countries in the world.

5. Results and interpretation of empirical data

In the following, I will describe and interpret my findings that I gathered in my methodological inquiry in order to later discuss the link between my empirical findings and the theoretical foundation I have set earlier.

5.1 Autoethnographic examination of the film installation

Besides the description of my positionality within the research in 4.1, I found that another approach of personal reflection, also in my methodology, was important. Throughout the period of almost ten months in total during my job in Berlin and the research and writing process about *Augustijn* I have tried to explore the film piece as openly as possible from different perspectives. Originally, I had started to do a film analysis of *Augustijn* and had thus looked into different fields and approaches of film analysis. Because of my research interest in how Omar and Stijn as well as their relationship are depicted and perceived in *Augustijn*, I discovered the approach of film analysis based on social semiotics where the social dynamics between characters in a film are mainly interpreted through the analysis of camera perspectives and movements. This approach does not provide characterizations of what camera perspective can be interpreted as what kind of relationship, but it provides the analytical tools of what should be analyzed how, while the interpretation is always depending on the specific context of the film piece. Iedema

(2001) carries out his film analysis based on three questions that he derives from social semiotic theory: 1) Representation (ideation): what is it about?; 2) Orientation (interpersonality): how does it enact the social?; 3) Organization (textuality): how is it put together as semiotic construct? Those questions are each answered by looking at individual shots and frames, at entire scenes, and also at the work as a whole as well as the shot-to-shot/frame-to-frame relationships and scene-to-scene relationships and thus how the work is cut, edited and being put together. For this to be easier, it is helpful to carry out a film analysis based on features such as angle of the camera, the choice of the frame (e.g. wide shot or close-up) and also the camera movement (e.g. fast or slow) (s. Bateman and Schmidt 2012; Bordwell and Thompson 2013). As aforementioned I wanted to look at Stijn, Omar and their relationship in all my methods. Thus, I thought that by looking at how Stijn was being staged by the camera and thus by Omar?/Chowdhury? would reflect Stijn's and Omar's relationship. Furthermore, I found that the way *Augustijn* was being edited and how different shots and scenes had been put together, was important for the understanding of *Augustijn* from the perspective of social semiotics.

However, throughout my analysis of the film piece I found that at some point I distanced myself more and more from the actual work and the reaction it caused on me when I had watched it the first time. That time, on one hand I felt very captivated by Stijn and the fact that some scenes seemed to be scripted and some not, but on the other hand I was very overwhelmed by Stijn's presence and his constant reflection about himself and purely by himself. Throughout my research, I found the feeling of unease to be a reoccurring pattern and subjectively most interesting finding while, rather objectively speaking also addressing a gap in theory of cosmopolitanism. Hence, I made this theme the empirical main finding of my thesis. Therefore, I decided not to approach this pattern of unease from an analytical point of view as it would have been the case with a pure film analysis but rather from a personal and subjective point of view. This would include an illustration of my own personal involvement and emotional reflection of *Augustijn* but also consider the findings of the film analysis I had conducted earlier that would obviously impact and bias me in my autoethnography. Even scholars of film analysis suggest that the background and bias of the person analyzing the film is crucial for the outcome of the analysis. Hence, the interpretation of a film piece "must always depend on the particular observers involved and their own respective bodies of knowledge, especially as more abstract levels of diegetic interpretation are taken up" (Bateman and Schmidt 2012, 149). Even though I try to be very cautious to not make a research too much about myself, I started to look into ways to rather show the process of my own personal development in the research and how my connection to the film piece and the research has changed over time. Accordingly, I chose to

conduct more of an autoethnographic inquiry of *Augustijn*, in order “to create an emotionally and intellectually charged engagement of selves, bodies, texts, and contexts” (Holman Jones 2007, 1). This autoethnographic inquiry became my own and personal way of dealing with my analytically enriched but yet subjective perspective on *Augustijn* and the findings and reflections I had gathered through my other methods.

In a way, one may see this inquiry as my own position *in betweenness*, in between myself and my research participants. Earlier, I explained the approach to the film analysis I had chosen because I want to reveal in which way I had engaged with *Augustijn* on an analytical level before I did the following autoethnographic inquiry. This way, it might be easier for you, the reader, to understand my own background knowledge of the piece⁶. There are plenty of ways of conducting an autoethnography, one is to simply start to write and then start to develop a certain narrative (Adams, Holman Jones, and Ellis 2015, 69). What appeared quite quickly was a narrative directed at Stijn, the character in the movie and the only person who was related to my research that I had not formally talked to. My autoethnographic inquiry basically started as soon as I began to dedicate myself to *Augustijn* during my job with Forecast. After all, the following text was only written after I had conducted all the other methodological steps, the interview with Chowdhury as well as the focus groups. Nevertheless, I decided to position my autoethnographic inquiry before the other methods because I wanted to structure the methodological section starting with my own, rather subjective and self-reflexive approach to then move further and further away from myself towards reflections of other recipients of *Augustijn*. Simply, I did not want to end the methodological section with my own reflection as this would have taken away a lot of importance from the findings I generated by talking to my research participants. Consequently, the following text includes reflections about findings that will only be explained in the next sections. However, to anticipate some of those findings already now, is not supposed to cause misunderstanding. Much more, the following autoethnographic narrative can be rather seen as an open and associative self-reflection reporting about my experience, how my point of view has developed throughout the research and where I feel I am standing now providing you, the reader, with an I/eye-witness account (Caulley 2008):

This is where you come from, but this is not where you belong. I (Martin) am not sure what to say, where to start, there is no starting point, it is a process without an end. Writing this after

⁶ For the detailed film analysis refer back to the Appendix. The film analysis is attached in order to provide more understanding about my own preliminary work before I conducted the autoethnography. The analysis itself shall not be covered in this thesis.

I have talked to everyone, everyone but you, I am still not sure who you are. Stijn. You are the example, you say, you know yourself, you are the example for a membership in both worlds. Chowdhury even admires you and how convinced you are about your faith, he told me. But then I cannot forget the question of who you are – you know where you do not belong, but do you know where you belong?

Watching it all over again, from beginning to end even though there is no beginning, no end. I see once more how the two of you met, two people, two versions of your first encounter. When I spoke to him, Chowdhury was not exactly sure how he had met you, but he said that he as well as Omar had had quite similar stories, how your version might be, I don't know. But maybe how the two of you met does not even matter but that you have met, this is a fact, you have engaged in a dialogue whose witness I am now. [Because witnessing the dialogue between you and Omar has given me responsibility and the response-ability to correspond back to you as well as to share with others what I have witnessed.]⁷ It goes on into your reflections about life, conversion, where you are and where you came from: This is where you come from but this is not where you belong – the trees, the soil, the blue sky, the wooden sheds, the gravel road – you look at all those things while you tell me how you do not belong here. “Are you gay or something? Or even worse?”

“I am the example”, you tell me. You trust in God but not in people. I remember one of the first things that someone mentioned to me only very briefly in a side note, after watching the installation in Berlin: “Er ist zu abgeklärt” – You are too mellow and detached. I used to be neutral towards you, I found the person who said this too critical, but now after four months that I have spent writing about what people say about you (and many more things of course), I begin to find you a bit fake-humble, naïve and, yes, also too detached. But at the same time there is more to the story. Because I still have not figured out, in all this time, who you are.

I remember how you, talking in the Belgian forest, created some pity in me for you, for your father's reaction that clearly nobody deserves. But I have watched too many times how you go off about girls and I have heard too many times how the women who have watched you speaking about them, have told me that maybe the way your dad has raised you also contributes to the

⁷ The bracketed sentence was added two days after I had written the autoethnography because I accidentally discovered a text that talked about witnessing as a way to encounter the Other and engage reflexively with the Self. I found this sentence to be a good addition to my own words. For more depth on the concept of witnessing see: Oliver, Kelly. 2001. *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 5.

fact that you chose this very fundamentalist version of Islam for yourself. Where you belong now, if I believe you. If you believe yourself.

But then, next scene, you talk to Abdullah. No clue who this is, no clue how you met him, I don't even know if he exists or if he is a weird kind of aesthetic idea that Omar and you have come up with? Or maybe only you? Or just Omar?⁸ I remember, the first time when I watched this scene, I was laughing out loud. I love this kind of weird shifts where suddenly the viewer, me, has to question everything I have seen so far. First scene Omar and you talking on a train, both bridging and creating space as you recreate your encounter. Next, you reflecting about yourself, and then all of a sudden: "Who is the opposite person? What the fuck? What are they doing? Is it all fake? Why do they stage this dialogue? Is there a script or was it rehearsed?", is what I wrote down a few months ago in my field notes. And I remember from this point I was questioning everything you had said before as well as everything you would say from now. No question where you belong, but just: Who are you? Although, I feel you are content – you meeting this guy who shares your story of being a convert, having adopted a Muslim name and supposedly sharing your story, your narrative, your questions – meeting Abdullah makes you feel where you belong.

You tell me you are part of both worlds, the Belgian world and the Islamic world. But then in both worlds you speak of them. You speak about these people in your city that don't care about countries and projects like you do, they are the people who belong to this city where they can be themselves. But you, you cannot be yourself here, you say. They just live their life, but you don't, you actually have a purpose, not like them, you have nothing in common with these people. But when you tell me where you belong, you talk about a different them. How they come from other countries and another life, how they will eventually put their mind correctly and change for the better, which is why you have mercy for them. You know both perspectives, both worlds. I think you clearly contradict yourself: You tell me how you are the example how Islam and Belgium can go together. You tell me how you are the example for how Belgium and Islam are indeed NOT incompatible. But all of a sudden you talk about them, these Belgian people – they, they, they. The They, that you are not a part of but later you say, "The Belgian way of

⁸ After I had written this text, I watched *Augustijn* again and I realized that there was actually someone speaking in the background, but almost not audible. I had not noticed that in all the many times I had watched *Augustijn* before.

thinking has nothing in common with the Islamic way of thinking". Is it not all exactly this – an entire contradiction?

A contradiction, also you drinking a glass of water, sitting topless in the Belgian sun. You show your white skin, the white skin that reflects your privilege every day to the people who surround you. Your privilege that you carry with your skin, shining bright and outshining the people who cannot talk, the people of color, silently sitting in the bus. And still, you talk about them and also them, the society you don't belong to, and I clearly don't understand, how you can go on and on about the guy taking his shirt off and taking a selfie with you in the scene before, he is not like you, you say. You find him at least a little bit backward, no? It feels good to be the Other and turn it around, so you have your own Other.

But I know that Omar cut and edited this shot. He placed you without your shirt just after the scene with the shirtless guy.

I am trying to understand you. Or maybe by now, I try to understand how Omar has placed you. Or how you let Omar place you. I have come to terms that there is maybe nothing to understand about you. Because one time you are reading from a script, the other time you are just talking. It took me a few times of watching to understand the numbers and to understand in which scenes YOU are speaking (1, 1; 2, 1; 4, 1/3; 3, 1; 6, 1; 7, 1; 8, 1/9; 10, 1; 11, 1; 5, 1; 12, 1; 9, 1; 13, 1; 16, 1; 14, 1) and the ones where you are reading from a script (3, 4; 4, 1/3; 5, 5; 8, 1/9; 9, 7; 10, 4; 14, 5; 15, 6; 2, 11; 15, 3). But of course, I know now that maybe this is just a layer that I feel I have understood but even in this the two of you might be tricking me. I can actually not know how this script came about, how it was made, and who is speaking here. Just that I am not so upset about it as some people in my focus groups who were clearly overwhelmed after they had watched the film piece that Omar and you created. Because they had a hard time to accept that the person delivering the misogynist speech might not have been the person producing it. To hear from a man how girls are so vulnerable and how he knows so well what they want, is quite disturbing to hear. But is it not almost too obviously placed on the surface of this film piece that I could actually be sure that this is who you are?

The question of Omar does not let me go. You, Stijn, are obviously talking here, if I agree or don't agree with your words, then I can say that I do or don't agree with YOU. But the more I have watched the film piece the more I have started to wonder about the role of Omar. Is he simply manipulating you? Did he make you the subject of his own speech and/or his own artistic desire to mindfuck me? Did you allow him to manipulate you? When I didn't understand you, I

started to try to understand the film piece, how it was made and also the hidden dynamics between you and Omar. Because the more I became familiar with Augustijn, the more I found importance in Omar's speech and the camera. "And action!", "Can you walk a little bit", "I think we missed a little part". Omar is the director, but it is not obvious how he has directed you when the camera was not turned on, what he asked you to do. His presence as the director in the film piece is quite hidden, but it is there, and he does not hide it. He shows it just as much so that I ask: Who is speaking here?

The camera is always close to you and always a little lower than you. I think in the beginning that created a bit of intimacy and trust between you and me (and I saw that Omar and you were close too, as much as the camera was close to you), but the more you spoke just right into my face the more overwhelmed I got. When I saw the entire film installation in Berlin for the first time, I had to leave the room at some point. After half an hour in the dark space, wandering from screen to screen, sometimes wearing the headphones, sometimes not, I just couldn't cope with Stijn from all sides anymore. Here, you talking about your dad, from one corner I hear you performing the Adhan and from the other side of the room I just hear you talking about how girls are so vulnerable. And your face is just so big and expressive, I can barely see what the background is because your face just fills everything. And most of all you constantly look at me – at the camera. And I don't know if the camera is representing Omar or if it is really just you talking to me. It became too much of you for me, I was overwhelmed.

Even though I didn't have this feeling again in all these months that I watched Augustijn over and over, I found the small things that might also contribute to a certain feeling, to my feeling of that day, this Unbehagen, my feeling of unease and discomfort about the uncertainty of who is who. Things don't seem to fit well, contradict themselves, and Omar has also edited the film piece this way: The scenes are full of small shots that do not fit the shot after, for example when you drive a car and the shot shows a highway through the front window but then the next shot is within a city. Or when the second shot in one scene shows you standing in a hallway very far away from the camera but the scene where you speak standing in this exact hallway is a different one. Small things that don't fit together and that might give me a subtle feeling of unease.

What can I say? I have gone on a journey of trying to understand who you are, I have looked at you from different perspectives and yet I have not found who you are. And maybe it is just that – maybe you are not being. But you are fluctuating, you are in a threshold state, in a state of betweenness, in constant flux, constructing your identity all the time, becoming. And you do

that in relation to Omar. Or does he construct you in a way that it looks like you are the constructor of yourself?

When Augustijn was not yet finished, Chowdhury sent me a preliminary version of the first channel that contained the scene where you are performing the Adhan. I honestly had goose bumps when I heard you chanting. Inside a white, empty room just full of you, the sound of your voice echoing back towards you and towards me sitting in front of my laptop screen. It could not unfold the power the big installation could have but still, in that moment I had a spiritual experience. I knew what you meant with being blessed.

“And... action!”?

How does all this relate to me? I find myself between admiration and aversion for Stijn, sympathy and suspicion for Omar, between belief and disbelief, hiddenness and non-hiddenness, between Stijn and Omar, Self and Other – confusion, unease, uncertainty, disruption. And I ask: “Where do I belong?” At this point I will not analyze or reflect on my own autoethnography which I want to speak for itself. But it is worth mentioning that I chose to include an autoethnographic approach also to gain a better understanding of myself and why I might have been so tempted to do research on *Augustijn*, when I heard about the theme of the ‘reverse journeys’. To reach some kind of self-understanding that lies at the intersection of my biography and society, a “self-knowledge that comes from understanding our personal lives, identities, and feelings as deeply connected to and in large part constituted by – and in turn helping to constitute – the sociocultural contexts in which we live” (Anderson 2006, 390). I think it is partially that the feeling of unease that *Augustijn* caused in me, which was uncomfortable but bearable and even intriguing was also a representation of my own experiences of change, movement and disruption throughout my own encounters with(in) the world and different places that I exposed myself to and that I was exposed to in the past two years of my academic career. Just that in this case this emotion was caused by one specific art piece which made it more feasible and approachable through research while the feeling and the topic remained personal. Witnessing the artistic dialogue between Stijn and Omar in *Augustijn* has made me witness disruptions in myself, has pushed me between my Self and my Other. I have had the ability to respond to the encounter between Stijn and Omar through an autoethnographic text directed at Stijn and I have, at the same time, responded to myself and shared my eye-witness account with you, the reader. Linking it back to a cosmopolitan notion of betweenness, I have found myself “embodied, embedded, response-able and responsible with/in the world”, so that “we encounter the

very exciting possibilities that cosmopolitanism offers in terms of communicating with others in and through difference” (Meskimmon 2010, 93).

5.2 A small detour: Informal interviews and one initial focus group

In the beginning of my research after the Forecast Festival in Berlin, I chose to watch the film piece in an informal setting with several people in order to expose myself to plenty possible interpretations. Thus, I did several informal watch-throughs of *Augustijn* with friends, always one at the time. Most of the viewers referred mainly to the fact that assumingly the piece included scripted and non-scripted scenes. Thus, they were all questioning what had been real or not real about Stijn. Some of them also mentioned that they felt a lot of sympathy for Stijn and his conversion, also due to the fact that he had faced objection from his father about his conversion. This developed towards a more distant feeling once Stijn started to talk about his relationship to women. After I had done several watch-throughs I designed a focus group format as a method in the inquiry of my thesis because I wanted to open a rather conversational form of reflection about *Augustijn*, rather than an interview with just one person. I will elaborate more on my choice of this method in the respective section. However, I would like to mention that I conducted a first focus group before the interview with Chowdhury that originally served the purpose of a pre-test of this method. Throughout the conversation in this first focus group, the most apparent reaction and also topic of the conversation after watching *Augustijn* was a feeling of strong confusion and uncertainty about who is speaking in the film piece. Both focus group participants elaborated expansively on this feeling of ambiguity which I also described to Chowdhury when I interviewed him a few weeks later. One of the participants even revealed that to an extent he could see himself in Stijn while he also clearly rejected some of the ideas Stijn had unfolded. Albeit it is yet too early to describe and analyze the findings of the focus group, it can already be mentioned that the participant stated that he saw Stijn as his Self and Other at the same time. I am also mentioning this here because the feeling of ambiguity and confusion, or rather *Unbehagen*, or unease as I will call it later, started to become the most intriguing and apparent finding, both in the first focus group and the informal interviews with friends as well as my own perception of *Augustijn*. Moreover, in the interview with Chowdhury, this ambiguity, or belief and disbelief, as he called it, also took a large part of our conversations.

5.3 Interview with Omar A. Chowdhury

During the festival, Omar A. Chowdhury had already participated in a Q&A where he mentioned how he saw himself as “a constructor of the work and also a participant”. At the same occasion he also described how his interest in *Augustijn* was not to just show Stijn and his

identity but “how identities are constructed and presented in and of themselves, so the abstract and sort of logic of that, rather than whatever the specific identity is”. These two ideas, one that Omar A. Chowdhury saw himself very much as a participating part in the work as well as maybe a certain fluidity in the work itself in terms of how Stijn was being shown I had in mind when I made my way to Amsterdam to interview Omar A. Chowdhury.

Structural coding: How does *Augustijn* explore disruptions of a Self/Other dichotomy?

When coding the transcript of the interview, I first explored how Chowdhury described himself in the film piece, Stijn and their relationship. Most importantly it is to say that Chowdhury made a clear distinction between himself and the character Omar in the film: “I think it's a very simplistic position to take to expect Omar to have political or ethical positions that I would expect of myself.” More than describing Omar as a character, Chowdhury also mentioned how he felt quite unsure and even skeptical about what Omar actually was like as a character:

Omar, now talking about the person in the film, I think it's really undefinable what his role and who he is. I don't know if you have a clearer idea than I do. Like, I find him a fairly sinister character frankly.

At a later point in the interview he even described Omar as manipulative and controlling. However, during the coding I felt that Chowdhury was not always sure who he would speak of when it came to the editing and cutting of the film. He spent some time to talk about how the “most powerful thing in a film [...] is the way it's been edited together” but how the viewer usually did not think about this power of the editor. In one moment, Chowdhury talked of himself for example when he said that with the script “I also wanted Stijn to confront him with his own words”. In a different moment he said that the other “Omar represents kind of film making processes” so that it was never entirely clear if he clearly distinguished between Chowdhury and Omar when it came to how the film had been put together. All over, Chowdhury painted a picture of a very devious character Omar who had a secret agenda in the background of the film of why to show Stijn while never being visible himself.

In the meanwhile, Chowdhury described Stijn as knowledgeable about Islam, “smart”, “adventurous” and in “a position of flux” but also as being fascinated by people in Belgium who would take distance from him as soon as they knew he was a Muslim. I figured that in all these cases he talked about the real Stijn if a real Stijn even exists. But Chowdhury described Stijn also as a character who was powerless in relation to Omar and even “trying to please” Omar.

He described the relationship of the two characters as very unequal in favor of Omar and yet he stated that “even when Stijn is trying to please Omar he is constructing Omar”.

Initial coding: How is *Augustijn* related to cosmopolitanism?

Throughout my initial coding process, my goal was to derive new patterns from my data that had not been reflected before. Throughout the initial coding process, I was able to find and establish four patterns from what Chowdhury had said: The intention to create a feeling of confusion and unease coming from the reenacted scenes and the script; aesthetic choices to create an authoritarian or even fascist narrative; thoughts about the city of Aalst as shown in *Augustijn* and finally general thoughts and statements about Self-Other relationships.

Most of all, Chowdhury described how he had thought of including the script and the reenacted scenes in the film installation: “[...] it was a desire to problematize and complexify things [...]. It's like, it's too easy to find a position towards him and the work and his issues.” He went on that he had hoped for this to confuse and flummox the viewer because the origin of the script was always unknown so that the repetitions with the script “really throws it back on the person and puts them into a bit of a tumult”. I also explained to him the reaction that *Augustijn* had caused in the first focus group and he was happy it had achieved this kind of reaction and confusion. The ambiguous feeling that Chowdhury hoped to trigger by increasing complexity and even uncertainty about the origin of the script made me derive the pattern of unease from my data. Interestingly to mention is also that Chowdhury discussed that this confusion was something that was very uncomfortable to experience alone by oneself and that “[y]ou feel like resolving it and you can try resolving yourself, but you often try to resolve it through conversation 'oh, what did you think'. I think this is important for art works to do this.” As I will describe later, this statement also contributed to my decision to do focus groups with recipients rather than individual interviews.

Furthermore, Chowdhury explained that he also saw the way how Stijn was portrayed in the film piece as a representation for a more general form of authoritarianism. He saw *Augustijn* and its making also in a contemporary context of increased right-wing populism for example with Trump and Brexit that he saw as counter-reactions towards increased globalism and complexity. Thus, *Augustijn* also uses a lot of “real fascist political language [which] is the construction of the great leader, everywhere, the great leader's life and what the great leader believes and his personality and how attractive it is”. Describing the “fascist language” of the work he went on explaining filmic elements, such as the “[a]ngle of the camera, him [Stijn] on

the way he takes up the frame, the way he's dressed to some extent, the way his hair is cut" that he found crucial in the creation of this big narrative. I have to mention that the conversation about fascism was rather short and took only a bit of time compared to the entire interview but I chose to include this pattern of authoritarianism because I had reflected on the very overwhelming experience I had had about Stijn during the film installation already and the fact that this turns up again in a similar way made me decide to mention it here and either include it or not include it in my later discussion.

The third pattern that I established was derived from what Chowdhury had explained about the city of Aalst. Obviously, the city had played a role in the film because so few, but still specific places had been shown in *Augustijn*, usually in an industrial setting with no or just few people. Chowdhury explained that Aalst in its history had been a place where politics and religion had always mixed. He explained that historically, Aalst had had a lot of hospitals that had been founded by clerics, monks and nuns to take care of people of lower social status which is why hospitals had also performed a certain political function. Nowadays, Aalst was suffering from similar problems like many other Western European post-industrial cities like people with no jobs and no perspective that are looking for new visions and versions of life. In such an environment, also the newly founded mosque was a hub especially for young people like Stijn who did not want to be part of this old world anymore. Hence, the background and how it had been shown in *Augustijn* was crucial also to see the setting of the place where such an authoritarian narrative like Stijn's could emerge.

Ultimately, Chowdhury and me also went into a discourse around Self/Other dichotomies when I told him that someone in the first focus group had seen Stijn as his Self and Other at the same time. Chowdhury described how in his view Stijn was very conscious of his own construction of his identity "taking on these very artificial alien ideas and he's trying to fit them onto himself and he's doing a pretty fucking good job with it". At the same time, Chowdhury also described the nature of their relationship in the film piece as "Omar being a colored person's name looking at a white person talking on colored people". This reflected the reverse positions they had taken now, Omar being representative of the colored formerly 'Othered' who was now looking at the White person who had formerly othered the Other but was now othering himself. However, Chowdhury stated that the 'reverse journey' had not been of real interest to him but his fascination had much more been about the construction of Stijn's identity and how he relates to Omar in the film. Meanwhile, to him the 'reverse journey' just meant a rather anecdotal point of interest to make the potential viewer curious about the film piece.

At the end of the interview, Chowdhury pulled up a quote by Homi K. Bhabha from his *Location of Culture* where Bhabha is talking about the colonial subject mimicking their masters and describing mimicry as being “at once resemblance and menace”⁹. Chowdhury indicated that this mimicry being at once resemblance and menace was very connected to what was going on in *Augustijn*. It is pure speculation but after further reflection on the quote by Bhabha and how Chowdhury had explained it, I felt that a lot of confusion about who had been speaking in *Augustijn* and who had created the script transformed into a new and weird kind of resolution: The character Omar had possibly used the White privileged Stijn to mimic the formerly Other – Omar – the former colonial subject, as an act of payback for coloniality. Omar had made Stijn to mimic the Other and had thus achieved to transform and colonize what had formerly been the Self in its Self in dissociation to the Other.

A very crucial decision during my study was if to conduct an interview with Stijn as well. I know that the person Stijn exists and I met him once in Berlin where unfortunately I did not get a lot of time to speak to him. So far, it has become apparent that the question of *who* Stijn is, or more of who is speaking through him, is the biggest issue that is raised in *Augustijn*, but never answered. Thus, I finally decided not to conduct an interview with Stijn because *Augustijn* is playing mainly with the uncertainty about who Stijn might be, also in relation to the character Omar, and in which ways he and his speech are fictional or not. Conducting an interview with him would likely have dissolved the fascination of and the uncertainty about who Stijn is. I am aware that it might seem like a contradiction to try to break with Self/Other dichotomies and then not include one of two main characters of my unit of analysis. But I believe that my perception of the aesthetic effect of the piece would have been negatively impacted and in fact disappeared to a large extent by talking to Stijn and getting to know his ‘real’ role in the making of *Augustijn*, meaning if he is an actor, a real person or something in between. Importantly to say is that during the interview with Chowdhury, he encouraged me not to do an interview with Stijn, in order to not dissolve the question of uncertainty about Stijn. Nevertheless, at a later point, Chowdhury reached out to me again because he and Stijn had shown the single-channel version of *Augustijn* in Rotterdam where they also had answered questions from the audience after the screening. According to Chowdhury, Stijn had responded in a way that would contribute to the feeling between “belief and disbelief” which is why he now suggested to conduct an interview with Stijn. However, he kindly requested to be present during the interview with Stijn

⁹ Bhabha, Homi K. 2004. *The Location of Culture*. Routledge Classics. London ; New York: Routledge, 123.

which I had to decline because the setting of the interview would not have been neutral, and I could not have known if and in which ways Chowdhury's presence would have impacted Stijn in his answering. If on one hand one could argue that in this case Chowdhury might have seemed a little bit protective, on the other, I could clearly understand his hesitation because he did not want to give away his sovereignty of interpretation and thus his agency as the producer of the piece. Hence, I kindly declined the option of conducting an interview with Stijn.

5.4 Focus groups with recipients

The following description of my data analysis will cover all four focus groups, the one that I conducted preliminarily (s. 5.2) as well as the three following ones. In order to aim at a more diverse data setting I tried to conduct my focus groups with people with different backgrounds in terms of gender, age, profession and regional or national origin (s. Appendix). Originally, I had decided to do interviews with one recipient each after watching the piece but for two reasons I chose to conduct focus groups with two people each: First, the initial focus group had shown me that a conversation between two people who have the same knowledge about the film piece and had watched it the same number of times can have a more reflexive and equal conversation than with me who had watched the piece so many times. Other than just me trying to ask specific questions about the art piece, I felt that the openness for interpretations and emotional engagement with an art piece could be reflected much better if I allowed two people to openly reflect on it, while I would only steer, moderate and facilitate the discussion. Moreover, I decided that two people would be a good amount, to not have a too extensive discussion with too many interpretations breaking with the scope of my thesis. Second, in the interview with Chowdhury, it stuck with me that he had said how art was something communal describing confusion as something that one would like to resolve in communication. Thus, because I had seen this feeling of unease and discomfort in the first focus group, I decided to create an environment for constructive irritation and reflection with the chance to openly resolve potential conflicts while I would just be observing and moderating. My idea to create a focus group as an environment for collective experience and reflection of the art piece also links to my argument of how I see art and cosmopolitanism related as I described before, applying Rancière's understanding of the political dimension of art and its ability to both foster and accompany a collective experience, a "common space-time sensorium". Additionally, I wanted to gather more personal reflections and revelations which was why I tried to create a more personal and intimate setting. This was mainly because in my personal reflection about the piece as well as in the initial focus group that originally had only served as a pre-test, I found *Augustijn* to be

quite challenging and emotionally involving. Hence, I chose to conduct the three other focus groups with people that knew each other and to an extent also myself so they would feel more comfortable in opening up. In each focus group I let the participants watch the three channels after each other. It is important to mention that this could not reflect the actual installation as it had been set up in Berlin where visitors were able to move around freely between the screens. Furthermore, the size of the screen I chose was a large 18-21" wide-screen which could still not reflect the large 3x2 meter screens on the Forecast Festival in Berlin. But since my research was limited in this technical aspect where I could not just set up the original installation, I had to accept this difference. Unfortunately, my focus groups were also limited in the way that I was not able to conduct any focus group with people who positioned themselves as believers of Islam. For one part, where I lived while writing this thesis, I did not have access to Muslim friends or acquaintances in my circles and I had made it a requirement for my focus groups to be conducted with people who knew me and vice versa as I explained earlier. Besides, after four focus groups I chose to terminate my empirical research because at some point I would have collected too much data for the scope of this thesis. Thus, I had to accept and acknowledge this weakness in my data collection where a voice of Muslims would have been important considering the fact that Stijn is a Muslim (convert).

Structural coding: How does *Augustijn* explore disruptions of a Self/Other dichotomy?

First, I observed how the recipients of *Augustijn* described Stijn, Omar and their relationship. I found that Stijn was mostly described as patriarchal and oppressive of women. Even though in *Augustijn* Stijn is reflecting on his experience of how he used to treat women and how he states to now respect them, my research participants kept pointing out his statement about the woman as the 'queen of the house'. One research participant mentioned how even though Stijn was now describing himself as more respectful towards women his thinking was "still embedded in this like they are the subject and I am like the patriarch who controls whether they feel good or bad" (I6). The perception of Stijn as patriarchal and even misogynist was mainly brought up by female focus group participants in their late 20s and early 30s while the other participants either did mention Stijn's relation to women only briefly or not at all. More surprising than the description of Stijn as patriarchal, oppressive and misogynist I also found the reoccurring idea that Stijn had already been raised in this kind of way and that this had even caused his conversion. Stijn describing how his father taught him that every man needed a strong woman behind him made some of the recipients conclude or suppose that feminist ideas and increasing gender equality had turned Stijn towards an ideology, or rather a certain form of

ideological Islam where he could find stability according to how he had been raised. In one focus group with two women, the conversation circled around Stijn's relation to women as well as around his relationship to his father and how he might have raised Stijn in a very patriarchal way. One participant in this focus group was describing it as "since he did not find his society to be compatible with what he was raised with, so he found that compatibility in this religion or like religious society that he thought was compatible which is why he acquired it" (I1). The idea of that quote reflects also how Stijn might generally have been looking for more stability and guidance in his society which was also a repeating code throughout the data that was mentioned by many research participants with all personal backgrounds. One participant mentioned Stijn's desperate seeking for guidance, reflecting out loud, „also schien er wirklich auf der Suche gewesen zu sein" (I8)¹⁰, more drastically one person was even describing him as "a lost kid" (I6). The image that people got from Stijn was often that of someone who had not been able to cope with progressive changes in Belgian society, one calling his speech a "generelle Gesellschafts- und Fortschrittskritik" (I3). Several people were actually questioning why Stijn had converted in the first place because he had not at all talked about why and how he had converted (I2, I4). Instead, they rather suspected that he somewhat had just been looking for general guidance. This was also reflected in general conversations about belief systems in some of the focus groups. In one focus group, the participants made a distinction between the (Islamic) doctrine stating certain rules and the culture that has formed around the doctrine. One of the participants comes from Pakistan and thus a country with a large Muslim majority, while she describes herself as atheist. The other participant comes from Mexico, which she repeatedly described as very catholic and conservative while she defined herself as non-religious. This might be relatable to the fact that both specifically distinguished between religious doctrine and culture while other focus group participants did not refer to this fact. They both agreed that Stijn's speech about women had much more been rooted in culture than in the actual doctrine. Of more importance in their opinion was that in their understanding Stijn was trying to find himself somewhere and restricting himself because "his own self is not making sense" (I1). Someone else even questioned the purpose of Stijn's conversion to Islam because he felt that it didn't even matter which religion it would be: "ist eigentlich im Grunde genommen egal [...] in welche Religion du konvertierst, das ist, im Grunde genommen bauen sie alle irgendwie auf

¹⁰ Considering the limited space for this thesis and my current target audience to be comprehensive of German, I chose not to translate the German citations into English. However, the content will still be understandable without any knowledge of German as I describe my findings in a rather general way while the quotes shall only exemplify those.

Mythen auf, auf Glauben” (I4). Thus, on one hand Stijn was seen as someone who had not found stability in his society in the past, while, on the other, his belief and identity now was being interpreted as a new belief system to offer him structure, more than the actual spiritual belief. Finally, most recipients expressed that they had not been sure if Stijn was real or if he had been more of an actor or maybe even acting some parts and being himself in others. In all focus groups the participants used a variety of words to describe him, some just as an actor/Schauspieler (I3, I5, I8), or as the protagonist (I6), a prototype (I6) or a character (I2, I5, I6). Two participants questioned the authenticity of Stijn, not being sure if or when the things he had said were real (I3, I8).

In the meanwhile, Omar was described as rather absent in the piece, some had even expected him to talk much more in order to have an exchange about the ‘reverse journeys’ of conversions. Instead, “Omar would be talking like not more than four or five times” (I1). While Stijn was described as “monologizing” (I3), Omar was seen as rather absent and reserved. Some people also characterized Omar as moderating (I8), helping (I7) or curious (I4). The code that was most prominent about Omar was a certain ambiguity that people felt about him. Because he had never been visible or only rarely been audible people focused on what they had heard from him, which was mainly him directing Stijn, asking Stijn to perform in a certain way or to repeat something. Thus, Omar was often seen as the film maker who had been holding the camera, had been giving instructions and had been trying to moderate Stijn’s monologue but generally letting him talk freely. But as Omar had been expected to be such an important part of the film piece, because of how Omar and Stijn had met and how they had taken these ‘reverse journeys’, one participant said how “while watching this I always have the image of him behind the camera” (I6). Her conversation partner also mentioned how knowing about Omar’s Muslim background “fed this ambiguity, it fed the hesitation” (I5) of why Omar could possibly give the voice to such fundamentalist Islamic values if he had converted from that very religion. In one case, the reflection on Omar resulted in the entire questioning of his own motives and intention why to do such a film about a Muslim convert with rather strong idealistic views because “why if he had his reasons for converting out of Islam into atheism, was he so, I don’t know, encouraging, provoking in a way” (I6).

The descriptions of Stijn and Omar were completed by descriptions and assumptions about their relationship. The people in one focus group had expected more of an exchange between Omar and Stijn, rather than just Stijn speaking (I1, I2). They were surprised that there had not been an exchange in the film work, but they still found it apparent that Omar had been directing

Stijn to perform in a certain way. They also supposed that the many close-ups and the fact that they found Stijn ignoring the camera reflected a close relationship and/or preliminary work to establish a certain kind of trust for Omar and the camera. One of the participants of this focus group is also a hobby film maker which is possibly why this was the only focus group where specifics about film making and techniques were discussed. Another participant formulated Omar's directing behavior in the film piece in a more drastic way when she said "the Azān, how he [Omar] was, you know, egging him on to have that in a white majority country have that from the rooftop and then he was like highfiving him and then he pulled back and he like encouraged him and then almost like he was like a pony, you know?" (I6). One person described Stijn's and Omar's relationship as a friendship (I3), his conversation partner in the meanwhile saw Omar as more mature than Stijn (I4). All over, most descriptions of the relationship of Stijn and Omar were rather hypothetical, usually the focus group participants made rather hesitant assumptions of the relationship or had ambiguous feelings about it. One person wondered "inwieweit die abseits der Kamera und des Drehs ähm sich was zu sagen haben, weiß ich nicht" (I7), someone else's statement reflected quite well the ambiguity that people mostly felt about the relationship: "So I don't know if this is what this is what Omar wants Stijn to say in order to or is this what Stijn wants to say and Omar is the one facilitating it" (I5).

Initial coding: How is *Augustijn* related to cosmopolitanism?

Throughout the initial coding process, I was able to find and establish four categories, or rather patterns. As aforesaid, I choose to call them patterns because I found that because of the small sample of participants my results remained rather paraphrased so that I was not able to really narrow down my findings towards very specific categories. The patterns that I found were the following: A feeling of unease and discomfort, usually related to the reenacted scenes and the script; a (partial) self-identification of the participants with Stijn; thoughts about the city as shown in *Augustijn* and finally general thoughts and statements about Self-Other relationships as they called them or as I would interpret their statements.

The structural coding process had already shown that there was a certain feeling of ambiguity about Omar's and Stijn's relationship amongst the focus group participants. As I have described earlier, the first focus group I conducted seemed to me very much about this ambiguity and feeling of discomfort even before analyzing the transcript. Thus, I also paid attention if possibly more research participants would describe a similar feeling. I tried to approach each focus group as if there had not been any before, but I am very aware that I was partially biased in the three focus groups following the first one as I was wondering if a similar confusion or

discomfort would be expressed. Throughout my initial coding process, it became then also obvious that I could establish a pattern covering the reenacted scenes and the therefore used script. In all four focus groups the fact that scenes had been repeated was mentioned even though I never specifically asked for any opinion about this matter. In one focus group the question around the script and what it was about became the most apparent one:

I was never sure if he was talking from his point of view only or also he was talking, or he was reading Omar's experience maybe or, I don't know, or something, maybe they rehearsed, or maybe was recorded and then printed out and then reread to see if he was making sense, I don't know what was the dynamic behind it. (I2)

Her conversation partner speculated if Omar had given Stijn the script with questions written on it for Stijn to cover a few of them in his monologue. In two other focus groups, the question of authenticity was posed, one participant stating that “in der vorgelesenen Version wirkte es nicht mehr authentisch, also als hätte es irgendwie nicht, als käme es nicht aus seinem Herzen, sondern es wäre ihm verordnet worden” (I8). However, the focus group that had been conducted preliminarily remained the one where the film piece had caused most discomfort and unease. In this focus group, one participant began the conversation saying, “I don’t know who believes what” (I5) and his conversation partner described that she felt “like I got played” (I6). After more than half an hour of discussion, with a certain kind of resignation, it was stated that “all of this discussion is just undermined by the fact that *they showed us* that it was scripted” (I5), thus not referring to the fact that some parts of *Augustijn* had been scripted but that the scripted parts were so apparent. To me he seemed very uncomfortable with Stijn’s speech about women and he expressed how he was having “this kind of gut-turning reaction” (I5). But for him it was not that the speech itself created such a feeling of antipathy but much more the fact that he did not know whose words the words had been and thus who to challenge. He mentioned how “I feel like I need clarity to call it [the obvious bullshit] out. Otherwise I'm calling out something where the intentions are something else” (I5). In the analysis of this focus group, I was also able to trace a development of how the participants positioned themselves towards their feelings of unease. While in the beginning both participants seemed rather overwhelmed with the ambiguity, they later explained how their reaction was rather a tempered reaction, a hesitation (I6) which I saw as more of a wait-and-see attitude with more relaxation and acceptance of the feeling of unease. Finally, one participant even stated that she was “so intrigued” (I6) by the discomfort she had felt.

In case of this focus group, it became also apparent that one participant’s feeling of unease and discomfort came from a certain self-identification with Stijn. How Stijn was talking about

his past and how he had used to treat women apparently made the focus group participant associate his own past with Stijn's speech. I cannot say where exactly he saw the parallels between himself and Stijn and in the moment it seemed too personal to ask but he described how "to put myself with that projection with those associations [about women] as if were me, that was part of the gut turning as well" (I5) as if he had had similar associations in the past. He was also the only male participant in the focus groups who extensively elaborated critically on Stijn's speech about women. In the last part of the focus group when I asked people for an overall reflection or summary of the discussion and the art piece, he explained his position as "if I look in the mirror and see an Other but know it's me" (I5). He also has a background in the social sciences which also explains why he would use such phrasing. In different ways I found the pattern of self-identification also in the transcripts of two more focus groups. One participant mentioned how she could feel empathy with Stijn because she had also been in a process of seeking followed by a later conversion from Catholicism to Buddhism. One of the participants of the other focus group also described how he could see himself in Stijn because of the participant's own seeking in the past, also in a religious and spiritual way as well as having feelings of guilt that he did not specify (I7). The other participant of this focus group identified herself in a rather positive way with Stijn because she mentioned how she had found him so ambitious even though he was living in this drab and depressing urban environment where, according to Stijn "90 Prozent der Leute machen einfach nur, leben einfach nur ihr Leben, ohne überhaupt irgendwas zu reflektieren" (I8). This might have been because she had also been raised in a small village that she left with the age of 18, against her family's will and without their support. Not directly linked to self-identification with Stijn but still regarded as a positioning towards Stijn were some focus group participants that described their sympathy for Stijn and his struggles being a convert while they would also have a rather distant feeling because they disagreed with parts of his narrative about women. One focus group participant described, that she had gone "from love to hate with his character" (I2).

Furthermore, the third pattern I could track, was the participants' reflections on the city, a pattern that I had also found in the interview with Omar. In three of the focus groups, the urban setting and surroundings were mentioned, in one focus group people were just referring to the scene and the statues being shown without further elaborating on this. In the other two focus groups, the surroundings were described as rather drab and depressing. In one focus group the participants mentioned how the entire film piece had only been about Stijn and Omar, while the place was "secluded without any human activity", showing "a not so good side of it [Belgium]" (I1). While one participant of the other focus group described the city as "trostlos", also

representing a drab Belgium that she noted Chowdhury had wanted to show, her conversation partner found the shots of the urban areas rather annoying, because there had been nothing that was somehow appealing or catching one's attention.

A last pattern I found was rather general and remained quite fuzzy but complemented a pattern that I had already established in the coding process of the interview with Omar A. Chowdhury. I could trace certain statements where participants would either talk about different Self-Other relationships, usually related to Stijn, or where I connected the idea of Self and Other to statements that did not include their specific words. Even though this pattern might seem exceedingly fuzzy to be mentioned here, I still decided to include it because of the purpose of my research that tries to explore disrupted Self/Other dichotomies. Particularly, this included reflections on Stijn's position in society and how he related himself "being Belgian in this outside of it way" (I6). More specifically, the participant stated how Stijn was othering himself towards his own society:

You found a way to outgroup yourself from your ingroup in a way that makes you the chosen one, it makes you the different one and yet you still have this desire to firmly associate with the ummah and with a community of people. It's this dualism between individualism and universalism. (I6)

Another participant mentioned how the belief that Stijn was now promoting was still not grounded in himself completely. During the monologue of Stijn he felt that „er muss das jetzt ein Stück weit rechtfertigen, nicht nur gegenüber anderen, das wäre verständlich, sondern auch sich selbst gegenüber“ (I7). In other words, the participant reflected how Stijn's Othering of himself towards society was not only in order to be more empowered in his own choice to be a Muslim but also in order to feel more convinced about his choice. A different reflection was shared in two other focus groups where the participants expressed their lack of understanding for Stijn's othering of Belgian society and why he did not see the Muslim community as part of it. They said that he had not travelled somewhere else and acquired his new belief there but how "this awakening, it happened living in his own society" (I1). Others also described how Stijn had constantly been talking about women in relation to him (as in a Self-Other relation), as if their well-being and subjectivity would much or exclusively depend on his actions.

5.5 Summary of results

Before I will discuss the findings and relate them back to the theoretical starting point of my thesis, I would like to sum up the results that I have presented throughout this chapter. I conducted three methods, an autoethnographic inquiry, an interview with Omar A. Chowdhury and four focus groups with recipients of *Augustijn*.

Chowdhury explained how he saw Stijn as a rather powerless character in relation to Omar while he still had a lot of privilege to talk the way he did because of his Belgian heritage and the fact that he is White. Many of the recipients meanwhile referred to Stijn as patriarchal and misogynist in his speech. Some of them referred back to Stijn's own family background where Stijn had already been raised in a certain patriarchal way which possibly had made him turn towards fundamentalist Islam. The description of Stijn as a lost person who had needed structure and guidance was also a recurring one. The character Omar was described in various ways. In the interview with Chowdhury, he characterized Omar as a sinister character who possibly manipulates Stijn to talk in a certain way. Meanwhile, the recipients depicted him in a much more diverse way. While some described him as moderating, curious and more mature, others felt that he was rather directing, using his power as the director and even following his own hidden agenda. In case of the latter the role of Omar was never quite clear to the recipients but rather his character was perceived with uncertainty about his nature. This resulted also in uncertainty about the relationship between Stijn and Omar which was perceived as **ambiguous**, leading into the general question about **who is speaking** in *Augustijn*. In the example of my autoethnography, my own narrative directed at Stijn circled around the question of who Stijn is and how he may relate to Omar. Finally, I found that the question of who was speaking in *Augustijn*, and in how far Omar had possibly made Stijn talk or in how far Stijn had talked independently and with full consciousness of his own words, was still not possible to answer up to this point. One of the recipients raised a similar point when he stated that he did not know who would believe what. Furthermore, Chowdhury explained that the 'reverse journeys' of Stijn and Omar had not been an important motive for him, but rather just a good way to trigger curiosity in the viewer before watching *Augustijn*. Much more, he found the uncertainty about their relationship important and not the fact that they had gone on those 'reverse journeys'. Addressing a similar point, some recipients were surprised about the fact that there had not been more of an equal exchange between Omar and Stijn, sharing and expressing their experience about their conversions. More crucial for Chowdhury than the 'reverse journey' was his intention **to flummox the viewer** by using the script and including re-enacted scenes in order to make it harder or impossible to criticize and question Stijn's narrative. This included his description of Stijn and Omar as characters in a film, where the viewer would never know in how far those character originate in reality or just are fictitious characters. The fact that some scenes were re-enacted called the attention of all participants in every focus group. While for some this only caused questions, others felt in some ways emotionally affected or even overwhelmed. This also applied to the relationship between Stijn and Omar as it was never clear where Stijn

would speak or where he would be steered or even used by Omar because the origin of the script was unknown, but the presence of the script was not hidden. Their ambiguous relationship and the fact that some scenes were acted out and others re-enacted also contributed to a feeling of **unease, or *Unbehagen*** as I called it in German, both in the focus groups as well as in my own experience reflected in the autoethnography. In one focus group there was also a traceable development of how the participants positioned themselves towards their feeling of unease. Like in my own experience in my autoethnographic inquiry, the participants were overwhelmed by the ambiguity of the piece which later resulted in more acceptance of this very feeling and even a certain fascination for the feeling or rather the ambiguity of the piece. Similarly, I also expressed feelings of both being overwhelmed as well as being intrigued by the ambiguity in my autoethnography. Many recipients also **identified themselves with Stijn**, some because they had also been seeking guidance and structure before. One participant saw herself in his character striving for new perspectives outside his own little city while a different person could relate to Stijn's misogynist ideals that were similar to the ones he and people in his environment had once had. In some cases, this self-identification also fed the feeling of unease because participants could on one hand very well put themselves in Stijn's position while on the other hand they also felt a clear aversion against him.

Finally, I also coded some of Chowdhury's and the recipients' statements as representative of disrupted Self/Other dichotomies for example when I interpreted Chowdhury's reference to Bhabha's *Location of Culture* as if Omar (the Other) had manipulated Stijn (the Self) to try to become the Other by **mimicking the Other** like the colonized Other had formerly **mimicked the colonizing Self**. In case of the analysis of the focus groups, it was mentioned several times how Stijn was othering himself to his own societal origin as well as to women. Furthermore, some of the participants could identify themselves with Stijn while at the same time they also felt a lot of antipathy and distance to him. One participant referred back to the notion of Self and Other stating that it was as **"if I look in the mirror and see an Other but know it's me"**.

Some of the other findings shall not be discussed any further. Because I have generated a lot of different findings that would exceed the limited space I have in this thesis, I will focus on a few findings that I find most appealing for the discussion in the next chapter as well as novel for their utilization in theory of cosmopolitanism. For a comprehensive understanding of my research process I included all findings in this chapter, but some of those findings cannot serve the discussion of my research questions as they will not be relatable to them. The findings not to be discussed include the recipients' description of Stijn's motivation to seek guidance in

radical Islam, and the general role of fundamentalist belief systems. Furthermore, the depiction of the city of Aalst as drab and *trostlos* (as described by Chowdhury and some recipients) was a reoccurring finding and relates back to the question of Stijn's journey of seeking for guidance because apparently his society and city do not give him this kind of structure anymore. The theme of young adults turning to new kind of fundamentalist belief systems such as fascism (as described by Chowdhury) or totalitarianism, radical Islam or other fundamentalist value systems is an important matter also in the social sciences. However, at this point this shall not be discussed any further, but much more the focus in my discussion will focus on the persisting matter of unease (largely stemming from the ambiguity of Stijn's and Omar's relationship as well as from the re-enacted scenes) that reoccurred throughout all my methods.

6. Discussion: A cosmopolitan experience of unease

After pointing out the findings to be discussed in this section, I want to remind of the two research questions posed in the beginning, "How does *Augustijn* explore disruptions of a Self/Other dichotomy?" and "How is *Augustijn* related to cosmopolitanism?". First and foremost, the separation of both questions in how they will be answered here shall not be kept. Much more, the two questions posed rather served a motivation to specifically examine Self/Other disruptions in *Augustijn* (with the first one) and rather openly explore general relations between the art piece and cosmopolitanism (with the second one). The choice to pose two research questions was also motivated by the idea that the rather specific question could serve as a basis for a rather specific methodology design (e.g. with structural coding steps), while the more open question would be covered in an equally open methodological inquiry (e.g. with initial coding steps). Thus, the results that occurred from posing the two research questions shall be discussed collectively.

I chose *Augustijn* as the art piece of inquiry in this study because Stijn and Omar had 'switched roles' in their representation of a Self/Other dichotomy, Stijn being disrupted between his Whiteness and his belief in Islam and Omar being disrupted between being colored and his 'non-belief'. But finally, these 'reverse journeys' were not so important as I found out. Chowdhury has not constructed a conversation or dialogue between the two where they collectively explore and narrate these disruptions, because his intention was not to show the similarities and differences between the two in their process of conversion. Moreover, many of the recipients had expected exactly this kind of dialogue about the 'reverse journeys' and when they did not find it to be this dialogue, they questioned much more the ambiguous relationship between Stijn and Omar, leading into the crucial question of who is who, and who believes

what. This question was also the central motive of my own autoethnographic inquiry. Thus, the disruption of Self/Other in *Augustijn* does not explore the switched perspectives of the two characters but much more the problematic that it is not even known who is who, who is speaking and what is scripted or not scripted. Thus, in the following chapter, the discussion will not only be about how *Augustijn* explores the disruption between Self and Other – Stijn and Omar. More specifically, I also want to elaborate how the phenomenon that many of the recipients, as well as myself, were not sure of who was speaking and in such a way drifting *between* Omar's and Stijn's truth can be translated into a more conceptual question of how an individual may drift between Self and Other as well as between other binaries. Furthermore, I will also discuss how the notion of unease can be applied in studies of cosmopolitanism and I will therefore connect my findings to the concept of tolerance for ambiguity.

Before diving deeper into the interrelations of disrupted Self/Other dichotomies, other binaries, the feeling of unease as well as cosmopolitanism, I briefly want to elaborate on some thoughts around the spatial dimension of cosmopolitanism. Looking back at my data and the way the conversations in the focus groups had developed, I found that these focus groups were in some ways cosmopolitan spaces themselves where identity was questioned, discussed and reconfigured. In other words, the questioning of Stijn's and Omar's identity/identities and the collective discussion about who had been speaking, framed a specific sphere of experience, where, linking it back to Rancière, "manners of being and modes of feeling and saying are interwoven in a commonsense, which means a 'sense of the common' embodied in a common sensorium" (Rancière quoted in Lindroos 2008, 71). The focus groups did not only provide a space to witness the identity construction and deconstruction of Stijn and Omar by watching the film piece but to actively take part and thus link the discussion back to oneself, emerging as the disrupted oneself. Taking up Bhabha's third space again, we can see *Augustijn* as an example of exactly this, a third space, where the former colonizer and the formerly colonized meet and reframe their individual identity as well as their collective one. This is also the approach where we can take into account social inequalities, because Bhabha formulates his concept on the premise of coloniality of power. When Bhabha points out, that "by exploring this Third Space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of ourselves" (Bhabha 2004, 56), we can understand this as a way of recognizing the other in a harmonious and deeply empowering way for both sides. However, here, *Augustijn* provides a different and exciting line of thought that I have already touched earlier explaining the idea of mimicry being at once resemblance and menace. I argued that a possible interpretation of *Augustijn* is that the character Omar had manipulated Stijn, representing the former colonizer, to now mimic the Other, and

thus achieving a switch of power towards the formerly colonized. In this understanding, the third space that Stijn and Omar had created in *Augustijn*, would not only have been a space of empowerment, displacing the histories that constitute it, but even setting up a structure of authority that is hiddenly and latently putting the formerly colonized into position of temporary power. In that case, the subject speaking would be the White, Belgian Stijn as a representation of the former colonizer while the subject actually narrating and directing the speech is Omar. At this point, the ambiguity of not knowing who is speaking and if, if not or how the character Omar might be manipulating Stijn, cannot be solved and shall endure and be endured.

The question of who is who and who believes what could not be answered in the focus groups either. However, as I conceptualized Stijn and Omar as representations of a disrupted Self and Other, I should ask here, who is Self and who is Other and who of them believes what? This aspect is, what Meskimmon calls “a threshold”. This threshold is the encounter between Self and Other, where their origin and identity are not clear and can be interpreted in various different ways and where “these binary oppositions can be seen and undone toward very different ends” (Meskimmon 2010, 34). In this case, one end could mean that the entire speech originated in a script written by Omar, the other end would mean that Stijn is the one speaking while Omar does not do more than holding the camera. Most likely, the truth will be somewhere in between, but where exactly will not be solved. Thus, it can be more helpful to look at this betweenness in a more dynamic way, where the answer of who is who always drifts between both binaries depending on the (changing) perception of the viewer to finally reach the conclusion that this cannot not be specified any more. Besides, the discussions in the focus groups exemplified how disruptions could only be called out after the art piece had triggered a dialogue in the first place. In a way, the art piece or rather the characters Stijn and Omar formed an Other to the focus group participants. Hence, the disruptions I am explaining here were only uncovered through the active engagement with the viewers’ Other – Stijn and Omar – and the debate about their respective individual truths and possibly their collective truth.

Throughout my research and beyond the disrupted dichotomy of Self/Other and Stijn/Omar, I found many statements in the data that reflected the disruption of many binaries, such as between scripted/non-scripted (referring to the narrated content) – between real/unreal (as how the piece was often perceived) – between belief/disbelief (how it was reacted to) – between love/hate (which could be understood as a response and positioning towards the character(s)). Especially the positioning between self-identification and antipathy for Stijn, I consider as an understanding of betweenness in oneself through the betweenness of the characters in the film

piece. The example of one focus group where one participant was distressed by the paradox of his self-identification and his objection of Stijn's narrative while, moreover, the origin of this narrative was uncertain, can be seen as an example for how a disrupted Self and Other caused a disruption in him. Additionally, the fact that this focus group participant had found the misogynist narrative of Stijn as partly representative of his own speech in the past can be related to the historical dimension of betweenness as the focus group participant found parallels between how he had spoken in the past and the speech Stijn's was using in the present.

“Ambiguity – confusion – discomfort – flummoxing – hesitation – overwhelming-ness – questioned authenticity – tempered reaction – tumult – Unbehagen – unsure-ness”
*(all words synonymously used for **unease** in my data collection)*

At this point, I want to elaborate on the motive of unease and how it is related to disruption and cosmopolitanism. Here, I am discussing unease as the consequence of one's own realization of being disrupted between Self and Other as well as other binaries, as described above. Reminding of the concepts of betweenness and transculturalism, I argue that the comprehension of one's own transculturality, one's own realization of disruption and betweenness between Self and Other can cause unease and discomfort about the newly emerging complexity of one-self in relation to the world. I also argue, that this comprehension is nothing to be understood intellectually or through explanation but rather by experiencing it, which is why I call it a cosmopolitan experience. Thus, I will first elaborate on the experience of unease as a realization of complexity and second, I will briefly explain how art can channel such experiences.

In the case of *Augustijn*, the feeling of unease was largely stemming from the ambiguous relationship of Stijn and Omar. In one moment, one might think that Stijn was speaking, the next moment it could already have been Omar, so that one would never be sure who's speech it is that they listen to. In the focus groups, what I found was the participants' constant positioning and repositioning towards the narrative in *Augustijn*. Once more, I would like to point out the focus group, where the participants were overwhelmed by the ambiguity of the piece which later resulted in more acceptance of this very feeling and even a certain fascination for the feeling or rather the ambiguity of the piece. Originally overwhelmed with the ambiguity, the conversation in the focus group resulted in a certain tolerance for the ambiguity, similarly to how I have experienced it in my autoethnographic inquiry. This process reflects a learning

of tolerance for ambiguity, *ein Aushalten*, both a bearing and coping with as well as accepting and embracing of complexity. Moreover, this tolerance of ambiguity does not only apply to the acceptance of not knowing who is speaking in *Augustijn*, but also of the fact that one may identify in some ways with the narrative while opposing it in other ways. This could best be reflected by the statement “if I look in the mirror and see an Other but know it's me”, which reflects the realization and the acceptance of the Other in oneself. The concept of tolerance for ambiguity is not new, it has already been covered for example in intercultural management where theory aims more and more at new ways of developing Western management theory while considering and coping with uncertainty of global markets. Looking at how tolerance for ambiguity has already been defined can help to state how the concept can be applied in theory of cosmopolitanism:

Ambiguity describes the perception of inadequate information to clearly understand stimuli or their temporal or spatial interrelationships. Ambiguous stimuli may be perceived as new and unfamiliar, unpredictable, or may be too complex to understand. (McLain 1993, 184)

This quote is very well reflecting what I uncovered in my research, where the stimuli given by *Augustijn* and the inadequate information about the relationship between Stijn and Omar caused unease in some focus groups and in my autoethnography. Meanwhile, the tolerance for ambiguity does not only imply the acceptance of it, but even more the attraction or appeal of ambiguity:

Tolerance for ambiguity is defined here as a range, from rejection to attraction, of reactions to stimuli perceived as unfamiliar, complex, dynamically uncertain, or subject to multiple conflicting interpretations. (ibid.)

This point is especially crucial for my argument, because I see the attraction that ambiguity can cause as vital for why one should even be willing to cope with unease and complexity. Rather than just accepting uncertainty and disruption as a form of resignation because the world just has become too complex to understand, exactly this dynamic complexity can be the very intriguing and exciting part of being in the world and finding and (re)defining one's position in it. Thus, tolerating ambiguity does not necessarily mean the passive acceptance of one's fate but rather the active positioning of approval and embracing of uncertainty. Therefore, I argue that the feeling of unease can be necessary for the realization of complexity but also as the fascination of coping with it. Comprehending complexity, thus, does not refer to its full uncovering and understanding but rather to the approach that not everything may be understood and that we may be slightly uncomfortable, and yet content in the unknown.

Going one step further, I also argue that the tolerance for this ambiguity in oneself and the recognition of the Other in oneself, may also contribute to tolerance of ambiguity in the world, and thus the recognition of others and their difference to oneself. The fact that some of the focus group participants identified themselves with some parts of the narrative posed in *Augustijn* while opposing others can be viewed as a way of active positioning of oneself towards the Other in an open, self-reflexive and critical way, allowing for ambiguity of simultaneous self-identification and opposition. Moreover, the acknowledgment that one's Self is configured in relation to the Other in a "notion of recursivity" is important "for understanding complexity at the human level" (Morin 2014, 17). I claim that this positive attitude towards complexity and ambiguity also allows for a positive attitude towards oneself for being able to cope with complexity and the unease it causes. In other words, "positive attitude to oneself that arises from such affective recognition [for the other] is that of trust in oneself" (Honneth 2001, 48). On one hand, the realization that the Self is also configured in relation to the Other can cause a feeling of unease, on the other hand it can be regarded as an achievement to acknowledge one's own complexity (in relation to society) and to be able to cope with it. This also gives the two components of openness and self-reflexivity as I introduced them in chapter 2 a new perspective. The openness for the Other within oneself contributes to one's own reflexive understanding of one's dynamism and fluidity.

At this point, it may be positive to look back from the individual towards society by asking, if one understands and embraces complexity, ambiguity and the unease they cause, how this can be linked back to a cosmopolitan understanding that may apply to more than just this one individual. I argue, that first the realization of difference within oneself (e.g. with a feeling of unease), second the individual's tolerance for ambiguity of oneself and third the ability to link this ambiguity back to others and one's relationship to them, can be the basis for a new understanding of cosmopolitanism. Acknowledging differences within oneself and to others while also appreciating this the fact we all carry our own differences binds us together and makes us all equal. This, we can also closely link to transdifference. Understanding that difference exists but that those are hardly traceable and definable takes us *beyond* the notion of difference and thus towards a notion of *trans*difference. Tolerating this ambiguity can function on both, the individual, as well as the societal level. Thus, if there can be something like a collective learning process of tolerance for ambiguity, then cosmopolitan societies can emerge. Moreover, as I have argued throughout my thesis (and many before me have done so), the individual cannot be conceptualized any other than through his*her relation to others, thus, society somehow always plays a role, when we look at the individual. On a societal level and/or global level, a

cosmopolitan understanding might not necessarily mean a global identity with shared values but rather a common understanding to tolerate complexity and a collaborative process to reach such a conclusion. However, this point shall not be addressed here any further but needs to be subject of more research, linked to art and beyond.

Once more, it is important to remind that in my understanding this process may rather be something to be experienced other than explained and intellectualized. At this point, not much more can be anticipated about how an experience of unease could be reflected on a larger level such as society. But one could see the four focus groups that were conducted along this thesis as little political spaces where one could engage with art in the discussion with one other person. Thus, each focus group formed a little micro-cosmos where disruptions could be explored and linked between art and individuals. It may be possible to do a similar exploratory empirical study with a larger scope in order to inquire about an understanding of cosmopolitan experience in a larger scope. Doing this, one possibility might be that we arrive at a notion of collective unease and the realization of global complexity that we are all facing collectively. In that event, it could be helpful to refer to Beck's concept of a "world risk society", where he has formulated an approach with a few similarities, arguing that a cosmopolitan notion can be found in the collective understanding that we as human beings all face the same global challenges, such as climate change (s. Beck 1996, 2016).

The vitality of the experience is also what we have to look at when thinking about how art can come into the picture here. I suggest that often language and content are less important than the artistic way of creating a message. Aesthetics and aesthetic choices such as the re-enactment of some scenes in *Augustijn* and the appearance of the script are way more powerful and captivating than the actual content of what is being said. In the case of *Augustijn*, because both characters also exist in some form in real life, the question where art stops cannot be fully answered. The narrative that Stijn uses reflects values that one might agree or disagree with, but what makes it impossible to position oneself is that the nature of the producers and the origin of the message are not at all clear. The many possible interpretations of what might actually occur in *Augustijn*, is also what makes the art piece a good example for how to relate art and cosmopolitanism. There is not a clear message or normative speech arguing for one or the other position but as I pointed out, the feeling of unease that was triggered amongst many of the recipients and myself is much more important. Looking at where in the research around art this notion already exists, I found the abstraction of feel-bad films. The pieces that this description refers to provoke a subtle or intense "feel-bad emotion" in the recipient, where the desire

for moral clarity is increased, and the uncertainty and open-endedness will cause frustration (Lübecker 2015, 109). Based on just one art piece, it is hard for me to elaborate how art can engage a cosmopolitan experience of unease, but the idea of an art piece where the narrative is very clear and straightforward while the narrator is rather hidden and unclear can serve for further exploration in this topic. In my thesis I finally put a lot of focus on the recipients' elaborations, and less on the producers' ones, which is why it might not be feasible to specifically produce an art piece that aims at tackling these kinds of disruptions that I covered. Rather it should be looked for already existing art pieces that expose disruptions from a recipient's point of view.

At this point, I would like to address a few limitations to my study. Throughout my thesis, I tried to critically reflect upon the limitations of my methods and the theory I have chosen, which I will not extensively repeat here any further. The one exception is to once more point out that I believe I would have gathered other interesting findings if I had included people with Muslim faith in my focus groups which I did not do as I explained earlier. Moreover, I believe that a study of this kind is fairly exclusive to a narrow audience that frequently or on occasion gets in touch with art. Thus, I did not conduct a focus group with people who state to never engage with art because I was not confident enough that this might provide me with many findings. In a study with a larger scope, I would have done so but I decided that according to the size of my study, I should only include people who in some way are interested in art. Additionally, I decided to specifically discuss the notion of unease in this chapter even though not all participants would reflect upon such a feeling. Although all the participants in some ways pointed out the ambiguity of Stijn's and Omar's relationship in *Augustijn*, some of them did not necessarily find that disturbing and/or intriguing but rather strange or even boring. However, I found that the notion of unease in relation to the ambiguity of Stijn's and Omar's relationship and thus to the disruption of Self and Other provided most novelty for the discussion about cosmopolitanism.

7. Conclusion

The goal of my thesis was to bridge the gap between the very conceptualized understanding of Self and Other in cosmopolitanism on one hand, and an empirical subject in the arts on the other hand. Moreover, I also wanted to derive new findings from my empirical study to enrich theory of cosmopolitanism and derive solutions how to address the problem of a Self/Other dichotomy. This was also motivated by the little empirical research on cosmopolitanism so far. In my thesis, I began with an overview on cosmopolitanism based on the idea of fundamental

equality of human beings. I explained how based on a critique of Western-centrism in theory, critical cosmopolitanism has emerged which includes and develops subaltern as well as post- and decolonial ideas. In order to distinguish between intercultural theory and cosmopolitanism, I elaborated on the political dimension of cosmopolitanism. First, I elaborated on the political dimension to be understood as space and I described how third space and transdifference both conceptualize space as in between Self and Other, the cutting edge of translation and negotiation (third space) or whatever runs ‘through’ the line of demarcation drawn by binary difference (transdifference). Second, I elaborated on the political dimension of the arts and aesthetics, using Rancière who puts forward the idea of a sphere of experience and the capacity of the subjects forming and recreating this space. The approach that I used for my theoretical framework, which has already been covered in critical cosmopolitanism, was Watsuji’s betweenness. He is specifically targeting the Western classical notion of Self and Other and proposes an understanding of the individual positioned in between Self and Other, in past, present and future. Here, the individual is configured both through his*her social relations as well as his*her own subjectivity and thus between the two. A similar point of view is taken in transculturalism where the individual is conceptualized as dwelling in between different cultures and thus as participating in many different cultures simultaneously. I included the approach of transculturalism not only in order to support Watsuji’s betweenness from a different perspective but also to draw a line between cosmopolitanism, betweenness and transculturalism on one hand, and interculturalism and multiculturalism on the other. After the theoretical foundation of my thesis, I explained why I chose *Augustijn* by Omar A. Chowdhury as the empirical study in my research. *Augustijn* was produced by Chowdhury as well as Stijn Leidegen, a young convert to Islam. Both characters in the film piece, Stijn and Omar, have gone on two ‘reverse journeys’. Stijn coming from a rather rich family in Belgium has chosen Islam, “the Other” or what has been made “the Other” in “the West”, as his belief and faith in life while Omar originates from a religious family and used to be a Muslim as a representation of “the Other” who has lived in “the West” for most of his life. I argued, that in this exchange, Self and Other have been reversed and disrupted in this relationship between Omar and the protagonist Stijn; Stijn and Omar have gone on two ‘reverse journeys’ and arrived at the respective other’s point of departure. Because both cosmopolitanism as well as art represent in my point of view notions of openness and dynamism while it is hard to research both empirically, I chose to design a very exploratory methodology and a triangulation with three different methods. Hence, I conducted an autoethnographic inquiry on the art piece that incorporated basic elements of a film analysis based on social semiotics. Besides, there was an interview with the artist Omar A. Chowdhury and last I

conducted four focus groups with recipients of the art piece. Derived from my research question of “How does *Augustijn* explore disruptions of a Self/Other dichotomy?” I developed the conceptualization of Omar and Stijn being representations of disrupted Self and Other. Thus, throughout all three steps I specifically looked at how the two protagonists in the film work, Omar and Stijn, as well as the relationship between the two of them was perceived. In order to derive more general findings that were not necessarily related to the dichotomy of Self/Other – Stijn/Omar, I also posed the more general research question of “How is *Augustijn* related to cosmopolitanism?”. The main findings in the analysis of my methods was the ambiguity about the relationship between Stijn and Omar, or in other words, who of them was saying and believing what. This issue mainly stemmed from the fact that some of the scenes in the film piece were re-enacted and others not and that there was a script that Stijn was reading from in some scenes while, however, the origin of this script was unknown. Meanwhile, I also found that many of the recipients identified themselves in some way with Stijn while they also opposed other parts of his narrative. Both the question of who was who in *Augustijn* as well as the paradox of identifying with him in some ways while opposing him in others resulted in a feeling of unease and discomfort amongst some of the research participants as well as myself as noted in my autoethnographic inquiry. In one focus group the feeling was even better described as being overwhelmed with the ambiguity while this feeling later transformed into a certain attraction and appeal. As basis for my discussion, I debated the notion of unease as the main finding in my thesis. I argued that this unease was on one hand caused by the ambiguous relationship between Stijn and Omar where the clear distinction between Self and Other was never possible. On the other hand, I elaborated that the understanding of one’s own disruption between Self and Other in oneself also possibly causes a feeling of unease. The fact that some of the focus groups were simultaneously strongly identifying with Stijn and strongly opposing him at the same time can be re-conceptualized as if one’s own realization and acknowledgement of one’s position between one’s Self and one’s Other and thus the realization of a disrupted identity causes a feeling of unease and discomfort. In order to enrich the theoretical foundation of cosmopolitanism that I had provided in the beginning of my thesis, I suggested how the notion of unease can be applied to cosmopolitanism. I argued that unease about the ambiguity of oneself comes with the understanding of one’s own complexity and that this holds the understanding of one’s own interrelation with society, the recursivity of individual and society. Looking back at my theoretical framework, I claim that one’s understanding of one’s own betweenness and transculturality can cause a feeling of unease about the ambiguity of oneself in an ambiguous world. At this point, I introduced the approach of tolerance for ambiguity that describes a range

of perception, from rejection to attraction, of stimuli that may be perceived as new, unfamiliar, too complex or subject to multiple conflicting interpretations. Based on this approach, I indicated that the attraction that ambiguity and unease can trigger, can also provide a positive and enriching perspective to cosmopolitanism. First, the recognition of the Other in oneself and the experience of unease about this realization is necessary to also recognize the difference of others and truly accept and embrace their difference to oneself. Second, the ability to cope with complexity and to be attracted by uncertainty and unease can also contribute to more trust for oneself. And third, and this will have to be approached in further research, I presume that a positive engagement with complexity, ambiguity and unease and even something like a collective feeling of unease on a larger level of society can be useful for cosmopolitanism. A collective understanding of complexity as tolerable and even intriguing can possibly be achieved if we understand that we all collectively face and contribute to complexity.

Finally, I would also like to point out that in my opinion a study around cosmopolitanism should also address the current global climate crisis that affects and will affect all of us. Not only does the issue increasingly slip out of control but it will impact all of humanity and especially the more vulnerable populations around the globe¹¹. From a perspective of cosmopolitanism, we need to take these inequalities into account. At this point, I also need to point out that generally I did not touch extensively on the question of global social inequality in my study even though I pointed out the importance of critical cosmopolitanism and subaltern and post- and decolonial approaches. I pointed at Bhabha's third space and the empowering component of his theory, but I did not elaborate any further on how his approach or other (cosmopolitan) approaches may relate to my findings, especially to unease. There are plenty of approaches to global inequalities being discussed using cosmopolitanism but none I could find that relates to unease or a disrupted Self and Other. This should as well be addressed in further research.

In a last note, I would like to point out that in further research about art in cosmopolitanism, it might be of use to understand the art piece as an actor itself. Earlier, I briefly noted that *Augustijn* can in one way be seen as an Other to the focus group participants as well as to me, and as an actor that flummoxes, disturbs and facilitates an exchange. Thus, it might provide interesting and new findings to initiate a discussion about how art pieces can stimulate and

¹¹ Delanty & Mota (2017) discuss the global climate crisis combining ideas of cosmopolitanism with the approach of the Anthropocene. For further reading s. Delanty, Gerard, and Aurea Mota. 2017. "Governing the Anthropocene: Agency, Governance, Knowledge." *European Journal of Social Theory* 20 (1): 9–38. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368431016668535>.

foster a cosmopolitan experience such as an experience of unease, departing from Actor–network theory (ANT). This way, we would also choose a different approach to the study of *Augustijn*, because it would not matter anymore who of Stijn and Omar would be speaking but we would see it much more as the art piece speaking.

Confirmation of Authorship

I hereby formally declare that the work submitted is entirely my own and does not involve any additional human assistance. I also confirm that it has not been submitted for credit before, neither as a whole nor in part and neither by myself nor by any other person.

All quotations and paraphrases but also information and ideas that have been taken from sources used are cited appropriately with the corresponding bibliographical references provided. The same is true of all drawings, sketches, pictures and the like that appear in the text, as well as of all internet resources used.

Violation of these terms will result in failure of the seminar and no credits will be awarded. I am aware that plagiarism is serious academic misconduct, which can lead to further sanctions on reoccurrence.

Freiburg, _____ (Date) _____ (Signature)

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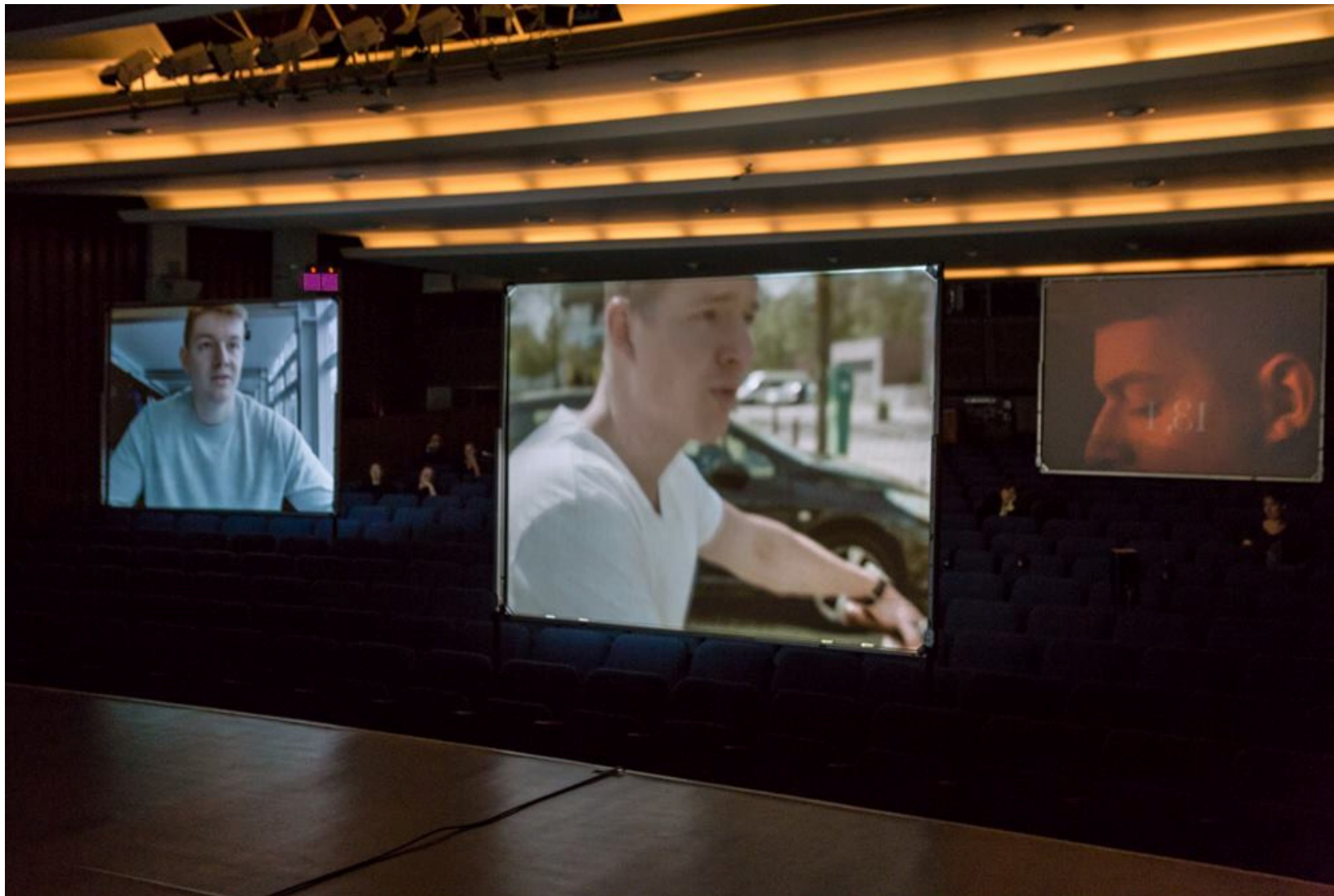
APPENDIX

Access links to *Augustijn* (confidential! – please do not share):

Channel 1: <https://vimeo.com/297077888/0db2039d11>

Channel 2: <https://vimeo.com/297082404/56e5d202dc>

Channel 3: <https://vimeo.com/297082744/34e83b540c>



Augustijn at the Forecast Festival (Credit: Laura Fiorio)

Orientation for autoethnographic narrative: Scene-by-scene Analysis

Channel	No	Scripted	Setting	Shots	Description	Quotes	Impressions	Reflections/Interpretations
Channel 1: Conversion								
0:00-1:40	1, 1	Not Scripted	-Sitting in Train	1 Blurry camera, moving 2 In train, camera facing Stijn, not moving but shaking, medium shot (eye-level close to medium close-up), Stijn looking into the camera, at one point Stijn moves closer to the camera, sound a bit edgy	- Omar talking about how they met		Shot from further away The only time when Omar is talking mostly Stijn replying to Omar but looking into the camera	Stijn replying to Omar but looking into the camera
1:44-06:08	2, 1	Not Scripted	- Hut in Forest	1 Landscape, camera moving showing the scene, dynamic shift to Stijn speaking, medium close up, mix of low height and low angle, Stijn looking into the camera always, 2:20 Stijn moving a bit, camera follows, new perspective with a building in the background, 4:33 Stijn walking Omar following, new setting, forest almost not visible anymore, 5:50 Stijn walking, camera following and filming him from the back	-Talking about faith in God -Telling the story how he told his dad about the conversion	S"Belgium doesn't feel like home for me but you will never forget where you come from" S"This is where I come from but it is not where I belong" O"But when the people on the street see you they think you belong here" S"Yes, first impression [...] but they will still see you as one of 'them' " S"I speak for most converted people, we have nothing in common" S"They try to show you Islam and the Belgian society are not going together" O"Incompatible" S"Indeed, but I am the example , my parents where fully atheistic but I am too proud to be a Muslim, I am to proud to practice my faith, but you have to make some effort." S"If you trust in people you will be disappointed but. if you trust in God, believe me, everything will be okay at the end"	feeling of moving from the forest to a more urban environment Stijn looking away into the wide, reflecting Stijn: fake-humble, naive, too sure of himself	Faith in God as a tool to be strong enough to keep practicing religion --> Faith in God helps to keep the faith in God

06:12-08:30	3, 4	Scripted	Cafeteria	1 Statues, low angle, medium close up 2 Cafeteria Stijn talking, low angle, medium close up, Stijn looking to someone, not into the camera, camera not moving at the end moving a piece of paper, Omar puts on soundtrack like the one in 3,1	-First shot: Statues (1 (Saints? Mary?)) -Simulated scene with script -Talking with a fictitious character	Who is the opposite person? What the fuck? What are they doing? Is it all fake? Why do they stage this dialogue? Is there a script or was it rehearsed? It is like practicing.		
08:38 - 12:14	4, 1/3	Both	School yard	1 Factory 2 Factory, camera moving showing the scenery, factory, camera low angle 3 Stijn talking to someone at the bell, camera low angle medium shot 3 School yard, medium shot, low angle, low height, 10:27 Stijn walking, camera following him filming from the back Cut (11:23) 4 School Yard, medium shot, low angle, Stijn looking into camera (scripted)	First shot and second shot: Factory at a river, trees without leaves Third shot: Stijn talking to someone through the door telephone - next shot: school yard, Stijn talking about the islamic teacher - next shot (with script): Stijn talking about his sister and how she is probably not hurt by his conversion	S"He said to me 'You know, if there is any question about Islam I cannot answer I will convert to Atheism', I said 'No problem, I will ask all the questions I can' but at the end I was the one converting" O"Were you trying to convert him to atheism?" S"Yeah, yeah" O" Do you want to walk a little bit" (stage direction)	New shirt after the cut, different hair cut as well	Scene partly real/partly scripted (1/3)

12:23 - 15:55	3, 1	Not Scripted	Cafeteria	1 Statues 2 Soldier Print 3 Monologue with fictitious character, Cafeteria Stijn talking, low angle, medium close up, Stijn looking to someone, not into the camera, camera not moving, soundtrack music that Omar puts on in 3,4	-First shot: Statues (1) (Saints? Mary?) -Second shot: Sculpture "Print" of a soldier -Continuing 3,4: Stijn talking to a fictitious character about conversion	Connecting through the same faith and life style like a stranger There is ACTUALLY someone he is talking to that one can hear very low I realized about after watching it countless times He is so happy to meet someone who is like him a converted Muslim
16:05:18:06	5, 5	Scripted	Inside car	1 Statues low angle, medium close up 2 Stijn laying down, medium long shot, high angle 3 Stijn driving, medium close up, low height, eye-level, in profile, 17:43 turning over pages	First shot: Statues (2) (Priests?) Second shot: Stijn laying on a carpet in a mosque Third shot: Stijn in a car driving (scripted scene)	S "These days if you believe you are much more a stranger than for example transgender. I have nothing against transgender but decades ago if you said I'm a boy and I want to become a girl people would be scared, they would say like you're crazy but now times are different and you know now if you say you are religious people say that you are crazy and get out of my house and you are not normal, you know, it's very strange.[...] It's a different world man, different society." turning over pages
18:15-21:00	6, 1	Not Scripted	Factory building	1 Factory, low angle, camera moving slowly from left to right 2 Corridor inside a building, wide establishing shot of the corridor, Stijn standing in the background 3 Stijn in empty white room, low level, medium close-up, Stijn looking into the camera, 19:29 camera moving away, medium long shot filming from Stijn's left front, him doing the Adhan, 20:38 black screen,	First shot: Factory building from the outside Second shot: Corridor, Stijn standing in the back Third shot: Omar asking about Stijn performing the Adhan in public	O "I want the Iman to go up and do the Adhan so all these white people can see it" The white room! Memory of the first time how powerful it was Black screen at the end intensifies that

voices of Stijn and Omar in the off

Stijn: Stijn performing the Adhan in an empty room
-Black screen

**Channel 2:
Political
Ideas**

0:00: - 01:26	7, 1	Not Scripted	At a collection of statues	1 Personal things 2 Stijn talking about sculptures, Close up from behind, height of his neck (behind the middle line), high angle, camera dynamic, him on the left side, the right side is open to provide view of the statues in the background	First shot: Collection of (Stijn's personal?) objects, Quran, Photo, Envelope, Sunglasses Second shot: Stijn looking at sculptures and talking about which one he would take home -Stijn would take the horse because there is a sura that has a title "The running horses"	Omar: Which statue would you have taken? http://www.englishtafsir.com/Quran/100/ https://www.al-islam.org/enlightening-commentary-light-holy-quran-vol-20/surah-adiyat-chapter-100
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01:33 - 04:11	8, 1/9	Both	Street	1 Lenin, medium long shot, low angle, 1:45 camera moving from right to left still showing Lenin 2 Selfie with topless guy, medium long shot 3 Stijn walking and talking, medium close up, low level Cut (3:20) 4 Stijn walking and talking ("we care about Bangladesh,...., scripced), medium close up, low angle, 3:54 Stijn passing the camera, the camera filming him from the back and following then Omar "cut"	First shot: Statue of Lenin (3) Second shot: Stijn taking a selfie if himself with a guy without a shirt	O"This is a working-class town" S" I said it to you, this is the place where I come from but it is not the place where I belong, you know I have nothing in common with these people. Have you seen these people? You can say 'You know it's funny, he's joking but he's not joking, they are really like this. My dad who has a degree who is an intelligent man, who is a respectful man he would have the possibillity to also be like that you know on a Sunday when there is like a football game and it is really hot because you know it's Aalst, it is as you said between working class but also between like the evolution being between a big city and being a small city. Aalst is just like that. You know this is also why a lot of people come to Aalst because you know a lot of people are like that. They belong to this city. That's also why a lot of people don't want to leave this city because they really love this city, you know I love Islam and Islamic countries love this city like that because they can be themselves. I can't be myself in this city." [...] At the end they just have lived their life. They just have lived their life in the city."	Wearing different shirt after cut (no v-neck)	The naked man: Statue, What did Omer not like about the statue? Last sentence: O "Cut" S" Was that good or do you have to do it again"
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04:15-05:47	9, 7	Scripted	Factory setting, truck entering a drive way 1 Trucks entering factory, establishing wide shot 2 Stijn on bike, medium long shot, low height, the camera moving closer into a medium close up, straight-on angle	First shot: Trucks entering a drive way Second shot: Stijn sitting on a bike, reading from a script (scripted) - Talking about the police station and cameras that they put because of drug dealers	O "And Action" O [filming the camera] "Oh yeah, right" (like in 9, 1) S "It's strange because 90% of the people are muslim so their values have to be better than other ones. [...] Desires, you know? They don't know how to put pressure on their desires, that's the problem. They come from other countries and another life, they come to Belgium and everything is free, earning money in a quick way, and you know they do things like this	Stijn reading mainly
05:55 - 09:11	10, 1	Not Scripted	Stijn sitting somewhere, not wearing a shirt 1 Plane, camera moving down to statue 2 Stijn shirtless, medium close up, low angle	First shot: Plane, camera move statue from the back (4) Second shot: Stijn drinking, not wearing a shirt	S "You know Belgian culture doesn't exist, Flamish culture exists" S speaking of a friend who said 'Look, the good thing about Belgian people, every culture in the world is more interesting than their own culture so they will change themselves to my culture, to my habits, my principles and at the end it will be like she was like a completely Moroccan girl.' And you it is really true cause... Look, we just care about the language, the Flamish language. We care about the things that aren't religious, the opposite way the care about the things that are religious." "The Belgian way of thinking has nothing in common with the Islamic way of thinking. [...] I have nothing in common with Belgian people." S" This is place where I come from but I don't feel like I belong here. But that is not a shame. [...] I see it as a blessing now." "Now I feel home wherever Islam is. [...] If I am in a Muslim community I will understand myself with them."	Stijn pouring water into a glass in the beginning, drinking at the end of the scene

09:18 - 11:00	11, 1	Not Scripted	Mosque, Stijn praying	1 Stijn praying, medium long shot from the right side of the back, when he's standing camera from low angle, we he's going down camera moving down to high angle		
11:04 - 13:02	10, 4	Scripted	Stijn sitting somewhere, not wearing a shirt	1 Plane, camera moving down to statue 2 Stijn shirtless, medium close up, low angle, Stijn looking into the camera	First shot: Plane, camera move statue from the back (4) Second shot: Stijn drinking, not wearing a shirt (SCRIPTED)	Stijn mainly reading from the script starting with "the thing is with Belgian people" which is a quote from a friend according to his speech in 10, 1 Stijn doesn't look into the camera at the end anymore. Stijn drinking water at the end of the scene. Is that stages as well? What is Omar doing in that moment? Almost seems like he is giving him a silent hint,
13:11 - 15:01	5, 1	Not Scripted	Inside Car	1 Statues low angle, medium close up 2 Stijn driving, medium close up, low height, eye-level, in profile	First shot: Statues (2) (Priests?) Second shot: Stijn in a car driving	"I guess we will [in 20 years] have two groups, the people who are secular and who don't give a fuck about religion and the people who are still very holding to their religion but the thing is, you know, I live in both worlds and as I said before it is very hard to combine both worlds unless you give something of yourself in exchange for something of them."
15:07 - 16:54	12, 1	Not Scripted	Grave Yard	1 Painting 2 Graveyard, camera following Stijn, low angle, medium close-up CUT 15:39 3 close-up of the gravestone and the mary behind the glass, you can see Stijn in the mirrored image but not Omar	First shot: Print/Painting of an old (medieval?) city Second shot: Stijn walking towards a little grave/memorial and talking	You see Stijn but not Omar in the glass mirroring

about feelings
and experi-
ences with Is-
lam (feeling
blessed) and
Christianity
(feeling good)

17:00 - 21:10	9, 1	Not Scripted	Factory set- ting, truck en- tering a drive way	1 Trucks entering factory, es- tablishing wide shot 2 Stijn on bike, medium long shot, low height, low angle, the camera moving closer into a medium close up, straight-on angle, low height, 19:19 cam- era turning from right to left, showing the street in a wide shot, 19:32 camera turning back to Stijn	First shot: Trucks enter- ing a drive way Second shot: Stijn sitting on a bike - Talking about the police sta- tion and cam- eras that they put because of drug dealers	90 [filming the camera] "Oh yeah, right" (like in 9, 7) S"They don't know the other world, they just know their Flamish world, I know both worlds , I know how it is to be in another country cause I have lived in Argentina, I know how difficult it is to live far away from your family in a totally different culture and yeah, it is not that I say that it is good what they have done but at least you need to show some mercy for it." S"Cause it's easy to say 'You know, they are bad, they don't belong here, they are just you know robbing people and selling drugs, in their country they wouldn't have to do it, they just profite the system' but you have to see it also in the opposite way, like you really need mercy because for them it's a totally different thing, you know of course after five years they will change and they will also, you know, put their mind correctly but in the beginning it's very hard, you just can't accept [expect] that people will leave their culture and leave every- thing and just like robots they will re- set their system, in a new culture they adapt to everything. It doesn't work like that, we are humans."	Stijn shows himself as more tolerant and understanding than other Flamish people. Can someone who finds him arrogant still be tolerant and accepting towards him and his values?
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Channel 3:

Role of Women

0:00 - 03:30	13, 1	Not Scripted	Street	1 Stijn in car (red), almost extreme close-up in profile 2 Stijn walking in front of his school, camera following him walking, from right back side and profile, medium close-up, low height, low angle	First shot: Stijn (profile in red) (Car?) Second shot: Stijn walking on a green street	S"I know it's not that good to speak with girls and go out with them. Like I say, it's a weakness. Imagine you're in the desert and you're very thirsty and I say to you: 'Omar, you can't drink until half past five' and you're so thirsty. So, it's very hard to don't drink when it's not half past five. Is the same with my weakness. I know I can do it, I have to stay calm but..." O"You're thirsty" S"No, I'm not thirsty or horny like you say in English but it's just also kind of amusement cause otherwise what do I have to do, sitting down, talking with..., Playstation, that's not something like... . You don't earn respect with playing playstation or studying." S"The problem is if you aren't married, you are always going to think like 'Okay, there is a better one or maybe I have to wait a little bit and then I will find a new one'. You will never be sure about her but if you marry her you have to live with her. So that's the good thing about it."	Chime in the background
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03:34 - 05:22	14, 5	Scripted	Inside a building (factory?)	1 Passing a factory in a bus, camera from the bus window 2 Inside a factory or sth.,	First shot: Factory at a river, sitting in a bus Second shot: Stijn talking (scripted), medium close-up, low level	S "It was like a game for me, once I did her it was like now you know it's 'Game Over', I won." S "A lot of girls they only do it when they fully trust you, when they are like you know, when they really live with you, so I bring them to a point where there is love at their highest, there is trust at their highest and then I directly leave them, so you know how hard it is for a girl? That's why I say, I broke a lot of hearts and I really feel guilty about it but no maybe because it's also something psychologically even like they used to be but you know, it could be my daughter, or it could happen with my sister, too."	Toxic Masculinity, quite obviously reading S giving Omar the text "I think many guys..."	
05:28 - 07:14	15, 6	Scripted	Car	1 Jesus behind glass 2 Stijn driving, medium close up, eye-level, in profile	First shot: Jesus statue behind glass (5), you see a reflection of trees but not of the camera Second shot: Stijn driving	S "	seems like the original	only scene without an "original" scene

07:20 - 10:53	16, 1	Not Scripted	Bus stop	1 Stijn praying, long shot, low height, low level (level of his feet) 2 busstop, Stijn talking, low level, medium close-up, Stijn almost in the centre of the image, golden cut	First shot: Stijn praying in a mosque Second shot: At busstop	S "There are a lot of girls like that, you know they say 'yeah, I believe', but they don't do anything a Muslim has to do. They drink, they go out, they... I don't want to say [not understandable] but you know what they do." S "Islam is like a gift ..." S "Especially girls, they are more vulnerable to it." S "I gave myself rules to become a better person, to become stronger. Then there are people, especially girls, they are more vulnerable to it, they say, you know, if they don't have the good knowledge about Islam, they will see it as a threat, as something that keeps them you know small. But infect it makes them bigger, but it is the perspective that they have to see."	S: "Imagine me to ask questions like questions you (Omar) have asked to your mom"
11:00 - 13:40	2, 11	Scripted	- Hut in Forest	1 Rails from train window 2 Stijn speaking, medium close up, mix of low height and low angle, Stijn looking into the camera always, 12:18 camera moving down showing the script 12:21 Stijn walking camera following, new setting, forest almost not visible anymore, 13:31 Stijn walking, camera following and filming him from the back	First shot: From a train window (probably) seeing the rails (scripted) -Talking about faith in God -Telling the story how he told his dad about the conversion	O "When I say inhibited just nod your head..." O "Stop there."	How many times have the dialogues happened for real and how many times have they been staged?

13:46 - 16:33	15, 3	Scripted	Car	1 Jesus behind glass 2 Highway filmed through the front window 2 Stijn driving in the city medium close up, eye-level, in profile, 14:30 Omar moving Stijns jacket to make space for the mic	First shot: Jesus statue behind glass (5) Second shot: Stijn driving Scripted	O " Just try to get the words right but also, you know, more active" S "These times we have a lot of feminism. And I really don't like it because feminism, they want to be free for their employer but they say that they are kind of slave for their husband and it's something really that I don't understand." O "Just go onto the next part I think" "You know they project into society that 'hey, we are slaves to our husbands' and at the same time they want to working 24/7 for their employers.[...] Even I am not raised in an Islamic way my father always thold me, showed me that a man is outside the boss but the woman is inside the boss and he wanted to show me, we are only strong men if we also have a stong woman. A lot depends on the woman, for example if she will raise the children, if she will take care of your children, she will deal with them." S"If you say in Dutch for example, they are housewives, but in Arabic we say 'they are queens of the house'." O "Cut"	second shot on the highway, next shot suddenly in a city	S "I don't understand something. How can I speak about stereotypes and then speak about feminism in" [three beeps - why?] Is that related to the fact that this is the only scene that has no original?
16:42 - 20:42	14, 1	Not Scripted	Inside a building (factory?)	1 Passing a factory in a bus 2 Person A in bus, medium close-up 3 Person B in bus, medium close-up, only the upper face visible, sleeping 4 Stijn talking in factory, low level, medium shot, Stijn speaking into the camera, 18:10 Stijn sitting down, the camera moving onto the other	First shot: Factory at a river, sitting in a bus Second shot: Person of color, orange shirt Third shot: Across from the seet of shot 2, one	Scripted? Seems like it, he always looks onto the ground He doesn't understand why girls like him more than they like God.		

side of his face, filming in profile

person sleeping, one person behind him on the seat behind him, turning the other way

Orientation for autoethnographic narrative: Semiotic Film Analysis after Iedema (2001)

	Individual frames and shots	Scenes	Channels and work as a whole
Representation (ideation): what is it about?	Mostly long shots of Stijn speaking while he is walking, sitting or driving. There are also shots of the city of Aalst showing mainly statues or factory buildings. Omar is not visible, only his voice is hearable in the off when he asks questions or gives instructions to Stijn.	Most scenes take place in an urban setting with Stijn talking about himself and his experiences in life as well as changes he has gone through. Omar is not visible but interacting with Stijn in most scenes (asking him questions, giving him instructions or removing a part of his jacket to uncover the microphone).	Stijn talking about different topics covering his conversion, his struggles with his father, belonging to a society or a religion, compatibility and incompatibility of Belgium and Islam, faith in Catholicism and Islam, women and his interaction with them in the past, society and its culture and values as well as migration. The three channels focus mainly on 1) (His) Conversion 2) (His) Political ideas 3) Women in his life and in society
Orientation (interpersonality): how does it enact the social?	Most shots are close-up shots of Stijn with a low angle and/or a low height. Omar as the person holding and moving the camera is never visible but he gives instructions for Stijn and also asks him questions that	Most shots are close-up shots of Stijn with a low angle and/or a low height. Omar as the person holding and moving the camera is never visible but he gives instructions	Stijn mostly in close-up shots with low angle and/or low height. Omar is holding the camera and gives him instructions or asks Stijn questions to answer.

	Stijn responds to. Many shots show statues, factory buildings or other parts of the city but rarely any people in the city except in 8, 1/9 a shirtless guy and in 14, 1 two people in the bus not speaking.	for Stijn and also asks him questions that Stijn responds to.	
Organization (textuality): how is it put together as semiotic construct?	Stijn is always really close to the camera (hence the viewer and/or Omar), he is put into context of an empty city with few people but large factory buildings and statues reflecting the history of Aalst. Shots that cover Stijn talking show him either dynamic (walking) or reflexive as well as repentant and speaking in retrospect (sitting).	One up to five shots form a scene, scenes that include speaking consist of at least two shots. One is showing a part of the city (e.g. factory building or statues [moving camera or wide establishing shot] or e.g. supposedly personal items of Stijn. The other is showing Stijn walking or sitting and speaking. If a scene has more than two shots, it is mostly that the first few shots are introducing the scene and the place while it is still only one shot that shows Stijn talking. Three scenes (4, 1/3, 8, 1/9 and 12,1) include cuts in the monologue of Stijn. Because of the long narrative shots of Stijn talking scenes consist of very few cuts in relation to the length of the scene.	Original and re-enacted scenes never come after each other and most scenes come twice (original and scripted). 13 scenes are original scenes according to the numbers, eight scenes are re-enacted according to the numbers and two are consisting of both original and re-enacted shots according to the numbers. Seven scenes were not re-enacted, and one scene does not have an original. Sometimes shots that would actually be part of one scene come in a different scene e.g. in 6, 1 when a wide establishing shot shows Stijn very far in the background standing in a hallway but then the next shot is inside a room, not in the hallway anymore. In scene 7, 1 there is a shot when

		Sometimes shots within a scene don't connect to each other e.g. in 15, 3 when the second shot is out of a car front window showing a highway while the following shot in the scene is showing Stijn driving from inside the car but in the city.	Stijn is standing at the exact same spot in the hallway like in 6, 1 even though the two scenes are not connected to each other.
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Interview guideline for semi-structured narrative interview with Omar

How would you explain the relationship and interaction between you and Stijn?

What's the thing that stroke you the most about Stijn?

What do you think is crucial about Stijn's identity as it is being depicted in your work?

What do you think is crucial about how Stijn is constructing his identity or how Stijn's identity is being constructed? Do you think you are also a constructor of his identity?

"What happens is hopefully that you are watching yourself and how you react to the work".
Can you elaborate on that?

How is it for you to see Stijn performing rituals that are part of your personal history and that you were raised with?

And how do you see parallels maybe to yourself, to your past and to where you come from?

How do you see Aalst as a space as being important for the narrative of your work?

How did the idea of the script come up?

Statues and Structure of the film?

How did you and Stijn meet?

Would you call yourself cosmopolitan or something like a global citizen?

Categories and sub-categories in the interview with Chowdhury

Stijn	privileged
	powerless (against Omar)
	character
Omar	director / holding cutting power
	own agenda, manipulative
	character
Relationship between Stijn and Omar	unequal, Omar holding power over Stijn

Patterns in the interview with Chowdhury

Unease/complexity	
Fascist language of the work	
City of Aalst	
Self/Other/Betweenness	

The sample of the focus groups

Focus Group 1 (I1 & I2): Female, 29, Pakistani, Social Sciences student, describing herself as atheist & Female, 33, Mexican, Social Sciences student, describing herself as non-religious (friends) – Focus Group in English

Focus Group 2 (I3 & I4): Male, 27, German, Biology and Chemistry student, describing himself as Atheist & Male, 76, German, retired psychologist and describing himself as Agnostic (former flat mates/I3 being I4's care assistant) – Focus Group in German

Focus Group 3 (I5 & I6): Male, 28, US-American, Social Sciences student, Atheist & Female, 30, US-American/Pakistani, English teacher, Atheist (couple) – Focus Group in English

Focus Group 4 (I7 & I8): Male, 57, German, Coordinator of a home for asylum seekers, protestant & Female, 58, German, German as a foreign language teacher, protestant (Married) – Focus Group in German

Interview guideline for focus group discussions

What are your general impressions? How do you feel?

How do you see the interaction between the artist and the protagonist?

Do you think Stijn is very self-reflexive? Why? Why not?

What do you think about his identity? (finally not asked cause in the context of the interviews the question did not seem to fit)

Do you feel that Stijn is very convinced of what he is saying?

Was it important for you to know the background story of Omar and his background and Stijn and his background?

Can you take some kind of conclusion or a summary out of your experience of watching the piece?

Categories and sub-categories in the focus groups

Stijn	Patriarchial, oppressive, misogynist
	patriarchal in his own family background
	looking for guidance, belief system
	actor/prototype
Omar	absent, silent, neutral (neutral)
	curious, moderating (positive)
	own agenda, director, ambiguous
Relationship between Stijn and Omar	Omar's power as the director, ambiguous, relationship not clear, close relationship

Patterns in the focus groups

Feeling of unease	Confusion, Ambiguity, hesitation, tempered reaction repetition of scenes, relationship between Omar and Stijn? role of script? (reading Omar, questions from Omar, lack of authenticity, reading his previous speech), Numbers
Self-identification with Stijn	conversion, Seeking
City of Aalst	drab and empty
Self-Other relationships	Self-Othering
	Othering his former Self (which does not make sense)
	Othering of Belgian society (as not inclusive of Islam) and women

Example of coding procedure

- I6: Of like **who is actually thinking what. Assuming that there won't be any straight forward answers** or maybe like for instance if we had the privilege or the extra bit of information like what the artist had in mind as a standalone piece it is clear that **its intention is to leave that fuzziness there**. And taking it as it is and trying to ask more questions like if it was just clearly a documentary style and Stijn was saying what he was saying I would just come out guns blazing and I'd be like 'this is why blablabla like so many things', right? **But it immediately tempers my reaction**. That **fuzziness tempers my reaction because I have to ask the question of who is what?**
- Confusion of who is who
Acceptance of unease
Unease: Intention of art piece
Description of feeling: tempered reaction, not possible to attack anyone
- I5: In the beginning I was thinking to myself 'Oh, **I wish that they wouldn't have put in that...**'
- Description of feeling:
Not liking the feeling of unease
- I6: **Ambiguity.**
- Ambiguity
- I5: Yeah, or those scenes where you **question the intention** because you kind of want to react about what they're showing you but then they put it in and **your reaction is tempered** then you get this like **false start**, this like **hesitation**.
- Unease: The ambiguity makes me question the entire piece and why they would do this, not possible to attack anyone
- I6: And you know what else it's making me think of is how much of the time people are performative, right? **Like in this way it is a documentary-styled, but maybe not**. And he's saying what he's saying and we're consuming. But it makes me think of all the people who I've ever spoken to or seen also on social media who speak this way and I consider whether theirs is **also a performative kind of belief**. But to me it's just like streaming life it's like 'Oh, this is how you feel about things and so I judge you now'. But it's making me think if maybe **how much when they stop when the camera of our conversation isn't rolling** how much they're also considering 'did I say that? Maybe I don't fully feel this way, but I perform my complete devotion to an idea.'
- Art piece: ambiguous in itself
Stijn: performing
Art piece/film making: role of the camera
- R: Do you feel that Stijn is super convinced of what he is saying?
- I5: No. I feel like he's **an actor**. At the end of the day **I feel he's just an actor reading a script**.
- Stijn: Actor

I6: I feel, like one other reason why I was saying like what I did earlier about his masculinity male fragility still being like earlier and after converting him or his persona or character. There is a commonality between the two which I can very easily see can happen in real life whether or not this is I can see how you can be both atheist and Muslim convert and still have the same basic profile, it's just that this thing serves to like reinforce and protect you in this way. And so, you can make an argument for yourself and your shitty ideas now. But this concept of whether he was sure or not... I don't think that I have all the information that I need to make that statement. It's just like kind of grainier than that for me. I think he's a lost kid.

Stijn: character

Religion/belief system: excuse to promote his actual values/belief system

Ambiguity/uncertainty

Stijn: lost kid, looking for guidance

I5: I also don't think you can say he's a lost kid. They obviously collaborated to produce this.

Relationship: complicit

I6: Sure, I just mean his persona, his character is that of a lost kid. As forceful as he comes off about knowing what he's knowing about Islam and 'hamdulla' he is still projecting a floundering.

Stijn: character

Stijn: looking for guidance

I5: Like you want it so bad that you like fight it till you make it [two words not understandable] so it appears that if others validate this appearance then you maybe feel like you actually do have it. You are this thing. At the same time, you are reading from a script. So, this is always the question, how convinced is he of this. We don't know what he believes, he might be super liberal, progressive, he might be new age, he might be transcendental, he might be incredibly conservative. But this is this image of a White converted to Islam. This is the image that they wanted to show us, so without that intention.

Stijn: white

Art piece: intention

I6: I am curious what they wanted to show us because they showed us even more. Like you even think about the intention, right? Like when this one scene he says, 'Is that good or do I have to do that again', Omar says 'Yeah, we have to do it again', he looks frustrated right. So, then the meta-question is if that's the take that he includes in the movie, maybe that's also scripted. You know. And it's like where does that questioning stop.

Omar: editing and cutting

Ambiguity