

Ib Margido Grønmo

Emotional engagement in *Utøya 22. Juli*

Bachelor's project in KM2000

Supervisor: Eva Bakøy

May 2019

Ib Margido Grønmo

Emotional engagement in *Utøya 22. Juli*

Bachelor's project in KM2000

Supervisor: Eva Bakøy

May 2019

Norwegian University of Science and Technology

Faculty of Humanities

Department of Art and Media Studies



Norwegian University of
Science and Technology

Emotional engagement in *Utøya 22. Juli*

Bachelor's thesis

Subject Code: KM2000 – Spring 2019

Candidate number: 10053

Number of words: 7987 (Excluding the front page, table of contents, summary and reference list)

Table of contents

1. Introduction (p. 3-4)

2. Main Content (p. 5-19)

2.1. Theoretical Context (p. 5-10)

2.1.1. Murray Smith: Alignment & Allegiance (p. 5-6)

2.1.2. Margrethe Bruun Vaage: Embodied Empathy (p. 6-9)

2.1.3. Balázs & Plantinga: The Close-Up (p. 9-10)

2.2. Analysis (p. 10-19)

2.2.1. *Utøya 22. Juli*: Formal elements, Film Style & Alignment (p. 10-14)

2.2.2. *Utøya 22. Juli*: Sympathy & Embodied Empathy (p. 14-17)

2.2.3. Reflections: Historic Tragedy, Sympathy & Empathy (p. 17-19)

3. Conclusion (p. 19-20)

4. Reference list (p. 21)

Summary

In this paper I examine what makes *Utøya 22. Juli* an emotionally engaging film. I ask the question: How does the filmmaker (Poppe) combine formal elements to elicit our sympathetic and empathetic engagement with Kaja in *Utøya 22. Juli*? In the analysis, I present two arguments that, when taken together, aim to answer this question. Overall, I argue that one of the key attractions of the film is to sympathize and empathize with the main protagonist Kaja.

1. Introduction

As spectators of fiction film, there are multiple elements that capture our attention, and draw us into the fictional world. We can be fascinated by aesthetic qualities, such as how formal elements are used, or we can be fascinated by how an actor's performance brings a character to life. There is however, one element that most fiction films have in common. Narratives usually revolve around characters, and we follow these characters through the diegesis and experience events with them. Our engagement with these characters, is an integral part of being engaged in the narrative. As a student of film theory, I have personally been drawn to the relationship between the spectator and the characters we meet on-screen. Being emotionally engaged in a character, can be a powerful experience and an attraction in itself.

I had such an experience when I watched *Utøya 22. Juli* (Poppe, 2018) for the first time in the cinema. In the film we follow the main protagonist Kaja (Andrea Berntzen) closely, as she and other youths attend a summer camp on the Utøya island. Suddenly, the sounds of screams and gunfire in the distance transform the seemingly peaceful island into a chaotic terror-inducing nightmare, where Kaja desperately tries to find her sister. When the credits rolled past at the end of the film, the entire audience sat in silence. Not a word was spoken, and no one left their seats. We sat there in solidarity, emotionally drained, contemplating the events, until the lights were switched on. The film is based on the real-world massacre that happened on Utøya, on July 22nd in 2011. This can partly explain what happened at the cinema, as many of us were emotionally invested in the event before seeing a depiction of it on film. However, the film is a fiction film, and I was left wondering why the experience was so powerful.

The task of understanding and explaining film experience, is one of interpretation. We enter the cinema with our own experiences, values and beliefs. As such, watching a film is a profoundly subjective experience. However, that doesn't mean that the filmmaker can't employ techniques to guide that experience in a certain direction. In *Utøya 22. Juli*, we're attached to Kaja for the greater part of the film, and I felt a great deal of sympathy for her, and empathy with her. In fact, I was so thoroughly engaged with this fictional character that I felt as if I was experiencing the event with her. Was this the intention of the filmmaker? This is what I want to investigate in this analysis. Emotional engagement then, will be the main focus of this paper. My purpose is to find out how the filmmaker makes the film emotionally engaging, both in terms of sympathetic engagement and empathic engagement. Secondly, my purpose is to contribute (in a small way) to the further study of character engagement, by

highlighting the importance of both sympathy and empathy. I aim to show that both of these emotional responses are equally important, and that they build on each other.

This leads me to the following question: How does the filmmaker (Poppe) combine formal elements to elicit our sympathetic and empathic engagement with Kaja in *Utøya 22. Juli*?

To answer this question effectively, I will examine some of the theoretical underpinnings of character engagement. Here I will focus on Murray Smith's structure of sympathy (recognition, alignment and allegiance), and Margrethe Bruun Vaage's integrative account of empathy (embodied empathy, imaginative empathy, pre-reflective understanding and emotional output). These theories are particularly important for this paper, as they provide detailed descriptions of these emotional responses. They are, however, large bodies of work, so I find it necessary to compress their views into what is most relevant for this paper, given the limited space. I will therefore not include Smith's recognition component, or Vaage's imaginative empathy component. Secondly, I point to Béla Balázs's understanding of the close-up, and Carl Plantinga's scene of empathy, to clarify the importance of the close-up.

Thus my approach is to first establish a theoretical context that highlights the most salient concepts within the aforementioned theories. Secondly, the analysis itself is a monographic in-depth analysis of *Utøya 22. Juli*, as opposed to a comparative analysis. Within the analysis I present two arguments that examine specific scenes in the film from the perspective of the aforementioned theories. I also draw in different examples and broader movements in the film to reinforce my arguments. As such, the analysis is a formal- and style- analysis that examine these elements in relation to the theory I use. I will highlight elements of mise-en-scène (with a focus on facial expressions), cinematography (with a focus on close-ups), editing (the lack of editing) and sound (off-screen sounds). The first argument points to formal elements, film style, and our alignment with Kaja. The second argument points to our sympathetic and empathic engagement with Kaja. Afterwards, I will provide a segment dedicated to reflections on the film's relation to the real-world historic tragedy, and the theory I have used. Lastly, I will summarize my findings in the conclusion segment.

2. Main Content

2.1. Theoretical Context

2.1.1. Murray Smith: Alignment & Allegiance

According to Smith, the concept of alignment is close to Edward Branigan's concept of focalization. Focalization entails that we're given story information through the perspective or lens of a character, or that we see what the character sees and hears, and how this affects the character. Alignment thus has to do with how we're placed in relation to characters, which in turn gives us more-or-less information about their actions, feelings and knowledge. Smith argues that the two most salient concepts within alignment, is spatio-temporal attachment and subjective access. Spatio-temporal attachment entails being bound to one or more characters in space and time, in other words, inhabiting the same room as them, at the same time. Being attached to one character more than others, leads to a greater alignment with that character, in force of the information and knowledge we "share" with that character. Attachment can be exclusive or dynamic, as in being bound to one or several characters (cross-cutting for example, is a typical editing technique employed in the latter case). Subjective access has to do with the degree of access we have to the character's interior state or subjectivity. It is therefore related to the transparency of the character; do we get access to what the character feels and thinks? For example, this can be accomplished by subjective narration (a character explicitly or implicitly tell us or other characters what they feel and think – Narration, voice-over, dialogue, monologue), or close-ups and reaction shots that reveal the interior state of the character (emotional expressions that we understand as expressing feelings or thoughts in relation to the surrounding events). Furthermore, if a character is opaque (not transparent – for example, uses a muted acting style, doesn't reveal or share thoughts and feelings, or the film employs techniques to hide character subjectivity) we have less subjective access to that character. Combined, spatio-temporal attachment and subjective access coalesce into a structure of alignment. Alignment then, is in large part a matter of the degree of information we have in relation to and about characters. Note: Alignment does not in itself lead to sympathetic engagement, as Smith (1995) stresses that: "alignment is distinct from our evaluation of the character" (p. 188). This further clarifies that alignment has to do with information, not evaluation. However, alignment does produce a platform for sympathetic or antipathetic responses, because being aligned with a character

opens up the possibility for such engagement. (Smith, 1995, pp. 83, 105, 142-143, 146, 151, 174-175, 187-188).

Smith argues that allegiance has to do with our moral evaluation of characters. According to Smith (1995), if we have: “reliable access to the character’s state of mind, and understand the context of the character’s actions” (p. 84), we can evaluate the character based on this information. As such, allegiance depends on the information gathered in the alignment step. He further points out that allegiance has a cognitive and affective dimension. For example, we might categorize a hypothetical action against a character as unjust or unfortunate, which in turn can produce a feeling of pity for that character. Smith (1995) also argues that: “spectators construct moral structures, in which characters are organized and ranked in a system of preference.” (p. 84). In other words, we evaluate characters based on our own morality, but we also evaluate characters in relation to other characters within the diegesis. For example, character (x) has morally desirable traits, character (y) has less of these traits. In my moral structure, character (x) is preferable and more likely to elicit my sympathy. It follows that we ally ourselves with the characters that occupy the top ranks of our moral structures. Allegiance thus refers to the spectator’s moral evaluation and moral structuring of characters, but it also entails moral orientation (the film’s own moral structure). Character actions for example, can and usually do guide us towards certain judgements. How does the character behave towards others? Kindness towards others for example, factors into our moral evaluation. Smith is also careful to point out that our positive or negative evaluation of actions and characters, hinges upon the assumption that actions have relatively stable moral “valences” (intrinsic goodness or badness). This can be understood in terms of our external real-world evaluations, or within the “co-text” of the film (the context within the film and/or the internal values of the film). (Smith, 1995, pp. 84-85, 188-190, 194-195).

2.1.2. Margrethe Bruun Vaage: Embodied Empathy

In her doctoral thesis, Vaage sets out to clarify the concept of empathy, to rid empathy of the notion of total fusion with characters, and to propose an integrative account of empathy that encompasses several views on the function of this emotional response. Ultimately, Vaage argues for the importance of empathy in character engagement, by showing the numerous functions that empathy has for the spectator. This is, however, not the task of this paper. What I will focus on in her dissertation, is the phenomenological and neuroscientific strand in

her account that results in what Vaage calls “embodied empathy”, and what function embodied empathy has for the spectator of fiction film. (Vaage, 2008, pp. 30-32).

Vaage points to the philosophy of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, for a phenomenological account of empathy. According to Vaage, they argue that we have affective access to the bodily states of others, and that we can sense these states by watching the emotional expressions of others. Furthermore, a part of our understanding of our own feelings comes from seeing the expressions of those feelings in others. As such, we develop our understanding of ourselves in constant interplay with others, and this results in a basic and embodied type of knowledge about the other. Vaage further points out that this sensing of the other is pre-reflective, and that it is prior to imaginative engagement. Before we need to imagine what someone else is thinking then, we know a lot about her/his emotional and bodily state. Vaage strengthens this argument by pointing to Rizzolatti and Gallese’s neuroscientific discovery of mirror neurons in the brain. These neurons are activated when we look at someone else performing an action, and the neurons are activated similarly to how they would have activated had we done the action ourselves. Simply by looking at others then, we are activated similarly neurologically, and this also extends to emotional experiences expressed through facial expressions. In this way, we partly experience the emotions of others, and the movement of others can activate our motor system in a similar fashion. This neurological explanation supports the phenomenological account of empathy, as they both result in a pre-reflective embodied type of knowledge, or what Vaage comes to call embodied empathy. What is interesting here is that our basis for understanding others, according to this phenomenological position, is usually rooted in feeling the emotional state of others, not thinking or imagining. It can therefore be said that we can understand characters through a shared feeling prior to any contextual understanding. As I have eluded to earlier, Vaage calls this embodied empathy, but she’s careful to point out that this is related to emotional contagion, which is not empathy (more on this in the reflections segment). Ultimately, Vaage uses this finding to argue that empathy is not restricted to central imagining, as it is prior to any imaginative engagement. According to Vaage, in the same way we use embodied empathy to understand others in real life, we also use it to understand characters in fiction film. Here Vaage points to mimicry, automatic feedback, mirror neurons and face-based emotion recognition research. With mimicry, we can get a feeling of another person’s state through automatic feedback from our own facial muscles. With face-based emotion recognition, she points to Goldman’s research on deficits in neurological structures. The

salient point in this research is that people who are unable to experience a particular emotion, are also unable to recognize the same emotion in others. Suffice it to say here, that embodied empathy has a solid foundation in phenomenology and neuroscientific research. (Vaage, 2008, pp. 44-48, 51-52, 57, 63, 67-68).

Vaage goes on to argue that there are (broadly speaking) two types of films that elicit two different kinds of empathy, namely embodied empathy and imaginative empathy. She links what she calls the “focalization view on empathy” to mainstream films, and the “restricted knowledge view on empathy” to dedramatized films. The focalization view entails theoretical concepts by Murray Smith, Carl Plantinga and Edward Branigan. In Smith’s account, the point-of-view structure in combination with the narrative context can prompt central imagination. The point-of-view structure entails not only p-o-v from the character’s perspective, but also a preliminary shot of the character, the p-o-v, then the reaction shot. Importance is placed on the reaction shot here, as it can provide the spectator with the character’s emotional reaction (subjective access). Vaage (2008) argues that: “In this view, narrative access to the character’s experience is likely to trigger the spectator to imagine what his experience is like, aided by the automatic affective feelings given by empathic mimicry” (p. 150). In Plantinga’s account, there is a tendency to use close-ups in fiction film to elicit empathic responses. Vaage here points out that for Plantinga, when we watch an emotional face, we can come to feel as the character feels through automatic mechanisms (mimicry and automatic feedback), but that narrative context is important for close-ups to have this type of effect. I won’t touch on Branigan’s account here, but the point is that the focalization view entails filmic devices (p-o-v structures, close-ups, subjective narration) that can elicit the feeling of experiencing what the character is experiencing. Vaage further points out that empathy encompasses both a process of understanding (subconscious), and an emotional output (conscious). With embodied empathy then, we can catch onto the affective state of the other and experience this as understanding the other’s state, and/or as an emotional output where we experience this as a shared feeling. (Vaage, 2008, pp. 149-150, 156-157).

Vaage links embodied empathy to mainstream films because they often seek to make the spectator feel the same way as the character at dramatic peaks, through stylistic means. Here she points to Greg M. Smith’s theory of mood cues and emotional markers, and argues that mainstream film is filled with such cues and markers. Cues and markers are here understood as textual cues that seek to elicit emotions. Furthermore, Vaage argues that embodied empathy in mainstream film can be linked to the concept of attraction. Vaage points to Linda

Williams's term body genres, a term referring to horror, melodrama and pornography, wherein the success of these genres are largely dependent on the amount of bodily engagement they elicit. Vaage thus argues that embodied empathy can in itself be an attraction, and that mainstream films usually contain attraction scenes. For example, Vaage labels Plantinga's scene of empathy, where the camera dwells on a character in close-up, as attraction scenes that seek to elicit embodied empathy. A final interesting point Vaage highlights is Zillman's disposition theory of emotions, which claims that we usually empathize with characters that we sympathize with. In other words, it's easier to engage empathically with characters that have morally desirable traits (as in Smith's account of moral evaluation). (Vaage, 2008, pp. 158, 160-161, 164-166, 196-197).

In the conclusion of Vaage's doctoral thesis, she summarizes the functions that different types of empathy has for the spectator. Vaage (2008) points out that: "Embodied empathy has an important function in evoking the character's ongoing bodily and affective states in the spectator – this is important for understanding, attraction and motivation." (p. 254). Vaage also argues that because embodied empathy is common to most spectators, it's effects are more predictable when compared to imaginative empathy. The attraction scenes we encounter in mainstream films then, evoke similar feelings in most spectators, and this can be understood as the purpose of these scenes. (Vaage, 2008, p. 254). Secondly, Vaage points out that by separating the process of understanding, from the spectator's own emotional output, one type of emotional response (empathy), can lead to another type of response (sympathy). For example, the pre-reflective understanding of a character's emotional state (embodied empathic understanding), can lead to a sympathetic emotional output (pity). (Vaage, 2008, p. 242).

2.1.3. Balázs & Plantinga: The Close-Up

My use and understanding of the close-up has its roots in the writings of the early film theoretician Balázs, and it has later been refined by Plantinga and Vaage. Balázs was fascinated by the close-ups ability to show the hidden life of things, and the expressive capacity of the human face. In essence, he argued that the combination of close-ups and facial expressions could tell us more about a character's emotions and thoughts, than words ever could. At least, it could do so in a more expressive (visually) and emotionally impacting way. For Balász, it was as if we had been given access to the soul. (Balázs, 1952, pp. 273, 275, 279-281).

We find a more modern understanding of the close-up, in Plantinga's scene of empathy. Plantinga (1999) argues that: "Many films feature a kind of scene in which the pace of the narrative momentarily slows and the interior emotional experience of a favored character becomes the locus of attention." (p. 239). For Plantinga, dwelling on the emotional face of the character here, is not only meant to communicate the emotional state of the character, but also to elicit empathic responses. Plantinga points out that this can be accomplished through affective mimicry, facial feedback, and emotional contagion (close to what Vaage argues). Among the techniques available to the filmmaker, Plantinga lists attention, duration, allegiance, narrative context and affective congruence as the filmmaker's tools to elicit empathy. Attention entails focusing on the character's facial expressions (close-ups, p-o-v structures, shallow focus). Duration has to do with how long the camera dwells on the emotional expression (do we get enough time to catch onto the emotion?). P-o-v structures are also a consideration here, given that the expression can be returned to multiple times. Additionally, being allied to a character increases the likelihood of empathic responses (similar to the disposition theory of emotions, that Vaage highlighted), and the narrative context aids our interpretation of the expression. Lastly, affective congruence entails a compatibility between different elements (film style, context, character engagement) in the film. (Plantinga, 1999, pp. 239-240, 249-253). As I have shown earlier, Vaage calls the scene of empathy an attraction scene.

2.2. Analysis

2.2.1. Utøya 22. Juli: Formal elements, Film Style & Alignment

Argument 1: In *Utøya 22. Juli*, formal elements coalesce into a film style that produces a unique alignment with the main protagonist Kaja. The unique alignment gives us a sense of "what it is like" to be in this situation, and gives us a greater platform for sympathetic and empathic engagement with Kaja, than with any other character.

In *Utøya 22. Juli*, almost the entire film is a one-take (2:50-1:25:38), which means that there are no cuts in this period of the film (except for the hidden ones). The start of this one-take begins with a view of a forested area (02:51-03:30). We can hear diegetic off-screen sounds of birds singing and chatter between people. Shortly after, Kaja walks into the frame and stops in the centre of the image, framed and focused on (shallow focus) in a medium close-up. From this moment onwards, we are spatio-temporally attached to Kaja until she dies towards the end of the film (03:23-1:23:50). In the following sequence (02:51-16:45), the

hand-held camera follows and focuses on Kaja as she interacts with other youths on the island. The framing of Kaja fluctuates between medium shots (MS), medium close-ups (MCU) and close-ups (CU), while the camera is positioned either closely behind her or in front of her. Through Kaja's dialogues in the sequence, we understand that they've just been informed of the government quarter bombing in Oslo (03:56-04:10, 04:50-05:20, 07:20-10:18, 10:52-11:15) and that they're worried about the bombing (04:50-05:20, 12:26-12:50, 13:00-15:14). We're also introduced to Kaja's sister Emilie (Elli Rhiannon Müller Osbourne), and Kaja's friends: Kristine (Ingeborg Enes), Issa (Sorosh Sadat), Petter (Brede Fristad), Oda (Jenny Svennevig), Caroline (Ada Eide) and Magnus (Aleksander Holmen). We can infer that they're at the summer camp to discuss politics (16:10-16:20), and in general, to have a good time (05:00-05:10, 07:20-10:05, 10:45-16:50). Because of the strict use of the one-take, the hand-held camera continually moves with Kaja from location to location throughout the film. As such, we observe the diegesis as Kaja's companion, and from a similar spatio-temporal vantage point. Additionally, there are no cuts to p-o-v structures in the film, but the cinematography does produce a similar effect (more on this later).

In the first hideout scene (17:40-20:50), the camera alternates between framing Kaja in MCUs and CUs, panning to the door leading outside, and panning to the other youths in the hideout. Framed in a MCU, Kaja has a bewildered and worried facial expression, and she asks Caroline: "Caroline, what's going on?" (17:42-18:08). Shortly after, the camera moves into a CU of Kaja, as she looks around her with the same expression. We can hear someone crying "Help me, No! No!" off-screen, accompanied by three loud gunshots. The camera frantically pans to the door and others in the hideout (while we hear screams), before panning back to Kaja, who has placed her hands in a defensive posture, covering her ears (18:10-18:25). Kaja's expression is full of confusion and fear. Shortly after, Kaja asks Caroline if she can go and find her sister (19:04-19:19), and then asks Petter if he knows where Emilie is (19:30-19:40). Afterwards, we can see the youths huddled together, as another gunshot off-screen produces a mass twitch reaction from the youths, while the camera rapidly pans to a CU of Kaja, and moves out to a MCU of her (19:40-19:47). Two additional gunshots produce the same mass twitch reaction, accompanied by screams and heavy breathing, with Kaja framed in the centre, as she lets out a fearful sigh. In the second hideout scene (21:50-36:00), the camera continually frames the youths in MCUs and CUs, with Kaja in the foreground. We also see that the camera repeatedly frames Kaja in CUs, then pans to what she's looking at, then pans back to Kaja (23:42-30:00). In this way, the filmmaker guides our attention to,

and prioritizes Kaja's emotional expressions and reactions over the others. Kaja once again asks the other youths if they know where Emilie is, says that she needs to find her, and calls Emilie (22:55-23:12, 23:20-23:26, 24:26-26:30). Suffice it to say here, that the emphasis on CUs can be seen throughout the film (42:30-45:25, 53:20-56:50, 1:17:15-1:19:05).

The point I'm making here is that through our spatio-temporal attachment to Kaja, we're given a great deal of subjective access to her. Her facial and bodily expressions reveal her emotions (confusion, concern and fear), and her dialogues reveal that she's worried about her sister. Additionally, because of the one-take, there are no establishing shots of the island, and no cross-cuts to other events or perspectives on the event. As such, we rarely have more (or less) information than Kaja, about what's going on inside the diegesis. This partly produces a unique alignment with her, where we continually experience the surrounding events with the same amount of information as her, and from a similar spatio-temporal vantage point. In a sense, we're trapped with her. The emphasis on CUs that guide our attention to her emotional state, and Kaja telling other characters (and us) explicitly what she's thinking about (her sister), provides a great deal of subjective access (she's a transparent character). The filmmaker thus draws our attention to, and prioritizes Kaja's interior state, while placing us experientially close to her experience of the event.

This close experiential bond is further amplified by elements of cinematography, sound and *mise-en-scène* throughout the film. For example: When something catches Kaja's attention off-screen (sounds, objects) she looks in the direction of the sound/object, then the camera pans/tilts/tracks to what she's looking at, then pans/tilts/tracks back to Kaja's facial expression (04:54-05:14, 18:16-18:25, 23:43-24:22, 48:08-48:16, 49:03-49:48). Given the no-cuts nature of the one-take, this camera movement (rapid pan/tilt/track to Kaja's object of attention, and back to Kaja for the reaction shot) mimics the focalization effect of the p-o-v structure, by drawing our attention to what Kaja is looking at, and how it affects her.

Additionally, the hand-held camera movements are often frantic and stress-inducing, and this is especially salient when accompanied by diegetic sounds of screams and gunfire off-screen (18:15-18:23, 21:58-22:10, 41:50-42:40, 57:52-58:10). At several points we see youths running in different directions in the *mise-en-scène*, accompanied by the same sounds, underscoring the confusing and chaotic nature of the event (20:50-22:02, 42:20-42:30, 46:32-46:40, 1:06:11-1:06:50). Are they running towards or away from the threat? Does this mean that the killer is close by? Additionally, we come to share Kaja's uncertainty about what she sees in a more direct manner. Is this the killer walking outside Kaja's tent (40:30-41:30)? Or

is this the killer in the forest (49:24-50:00)? Kaja doesn't know, and because of the close experiential bond, neither do we. The close experiential bond further aids the unique alignment with a sense of "what it is like" to be in this situation.

Another important factor is that the hand-held camera often acts as an embodied and invisible character. When Kaja sits down or lies down, the camera sits down or lies down with her (17:58-18:14, 21:55-22:25). In a sense, the camera (and the audience) is also hiding in these hideout scenes. This is further supplemented by the camera "peeking" out of the hideouts, behind fallen branches (24:06-24:20, 44:54-45:00, 49:24-49:34). Peeking, by any stretch of the imagination, is a very human- and/or animal-like behaviour. By peeking, the camera suggests that it's also in danger (narrative context – off-screen gunshots, screams, uncertainty about who/where the killer is). When Kaja runs, the camera (and the audience) runs with her (20:52-21:45, 36:00-36:50, 41:50-42:30, 57:52-58:40). Secondly, the rapid camera movements can also be understood as mimicking a person's twitch reactions to the off-screen sounds/objects within the diegesis (18:16-18:25, 23:26-23:40, 42:20-42:30). The camera movements in these examples resemble a quick turn of the head, as if a person is searching for the origin of the sound/object/threat. This also adds another layer to the frantic and stress-inducing quality of the camera movements. To tie it all up, the one-take provides seamless perceptual and aural continuity of time and space throughout the film, as if we're continually watching the events unfold from a single source that's affected by the surrounding events. When taken together, these elements result in a "camera character". No one interacts with the camera character, but the character is always there, frantically turning its head, hiding, peeking, running and reacting to the surrounding events. In so doing, the filmmaker seeks to draw us into the diegesis, by implicitly saying: This is "what it is like" to be in this situation. From our observer position, we understand that the camera character is not us, but we do watch the events unfold from its perspective, and its behaviour can be stress-inducing. This feeds into the close experiential bond we have with Kaja, and the resulting unique alignment.

To summarize, in *Utøya 22. Juli*, the use of the one-take, emphasis on close-ups and emotional expressions, combined elements of cinematography, sound and mise-en-scène, and the camera character, coalesce into a film style that produces a unique alignment with Kaja. We're almost exclusively spatio-temporally attached to her throughout the entire film, we're given ample amounts of subjective access to her, and we continually experience the surrounding events with the same amount of information as her. Because of the close experiential bond, the unique alignment gives us a sense of "what it is like" to be in this

situation. Most importantly, the unique alignment provides a greater platform for sympathetic and empathic engagement with Kaja, than with any other character. With this in mind, I will now argue that the filmmaker seeks to elicit our emotional responses to a high degree.

2.2.2. *Utøya 22. Juli: Sympathy & Embodied Empathy*

Argument 2: The unique alignment with Kaja reveals a set of morally desirable traits, through subjective access and her character actions. With these traits and the narrative context in mind, the film's moral orientation guides us toward sympathetic engagement with Kaja. This is further amplified by several attraction scenes that are aimed at eliciting sympathetic and embodied empathic responses. Because of this, I argue that one of the key attractions of the film as a whole, is to sympathize and empathize with Kaja.

In *Utøya 22. Juli*, the goal of Kaja is two-fold. On the one hand, it's to survive, and in the other, it's to locate Emilie. As I have already argued, in the first and second hideout scenes (18:00-20:48, 22:00-36:05), the camera continually dwells on Kaja's emotional expressions by framing her in CUs, and by mimicking p-o-v structures. Her expressions range from confusion and concern, to fear and sadness. We can understand these expressions as reactions to the diegetic sounds of screams and gunshots off-screen, but we also understand them through automatic mechanisms (mirror neurons, mimicry, automatic feedback and face-based emotion recognition). We understand that Kaja fears for her life and wants to survive, but that she also wants to find and keep Emilie safe. Although these goals are not mutually exclusive, Kaja's decision to search for Emilie leads her away from shelter, away from her friends, out into the open, and into seemingly dangerous situations (35:52-36:35, 39:32-41:35, 46:50-50:00, 1:19:05-1:23:50). Kaja thus exhibits altruistic behaviour, even in the face of danger. She wants to help Emilie, even though she could just hide. This is a morally desirable trait with a relatively stable and positive moral valence.

While searching for Emilie, Kaja also decides to help other youths along the way (37:24-39:30, 45:52-56:55). She asks the young boy Tobias (Magnus Moen) to come with her, or to run and hide. Kaja gently strokes Tobias's hair, and convinces him that his brother would have wanted him to hide (38:38-39:30). When Kaja finds the wounded girl in the forest, Kaja decides to stay and help her (46:50-). She uses her hoodie to try to stop the bleeding from the girl's wound (47:02-48:20). Meanwhile, the off-screen sounds of screams and gunshots are a constant reminder of the unknown threat (48:06-48:35). Kaja looks in different directions, searching for the possible location of the threat, and the camera does the same (mimicking the

p-o-v structure). The wounded girl looks terrified, but Kaja takes her hand and tells her that everything is going to be fine (48:36-49:02). When the girl says she's cold, Kaja wraps her body around the girl to warm her (50:03-50:30). The shot fluctuates between MCUs and CUs in large portions of the scene (48:38-56:50), emphasizing the emotional faces of Kaja and the girl. While the girl slowly dies in Kaja's arms (52:36-54:22), we see Kaja's emotional distress increase. Framed in a CU, Kaja begs the girl to wake up, and starts to cry while hugging the girl tight to her body (53:30-55:12). When the girl's mobile phone starts to vibrate (55:12-56:50), Kaja picks it up and starts crying again. Here we see Kaja clasping the dead girl's hand tight while she cries, and it's revealed to us that it's the dead girl's mother who's calling. The last part of this scene is a clear attraction scene that focuses our attention on Kaja's emotional experience, but the point I am making here is that these scenes solidify Kaja's altruistic tendency by showing us that she's a sympathetic person. Kaja cares for the well-being of others, and she's kind and brave. Given the circumstances, her actions come across as heroic. We're not shown any other characters perform these character actions, so comparing her moral traits to others would in all likelihood place Kaja high in the spectator's moral structure. Thus the film's moral orientation guides us toward sympathetic engagement with Kaja, while the emphasis on CUs guides us toward a high degree of sympathy and embodied empathy.

I write "to a high degree", because the film is densely packed with similar attraction scenes that dwell on Kaja's emotional facial expression in MCUs, CUs, and by mimicking the p-o-v structure. For example: When Kaja is unable to find Emilie in their tent, she runs out into the woods and hides behind a tree (42:00-45:25). In this scene, Kaja calls her mother with a frightened and sad facial expression (43:05-). She's framed in a MCU, with her face in the centre of the image. We can hear a scream followed by two gunshots off-screen, while the camera dwells on Kaja. After the second gunshot, we can hear the faint sound of Kaja's mother crying on the phone. Upon hearing her voice, Kaja starts crying profusely. She tells her mother that she can't find Emilie, but that she will keep trying to find her (-45:25). The MCU focuses our attention on Kaja's emotional expression (sadness and fear). With Kaja's moral traits and the narrative context in mind, the filmmaker invites us to feel sympathy (hope, sorrow and pity) for her. This is also aided by embodied empathy. Dwelling on Kaja's emotional expression, invites us to catch onto her affective state (sadness and fear). This can result in a pre-reflective understanding of Kaja's affective state, or as a consciously felt and shared affective state. In the latter case, the audience can come to feel aspects of what Kaja is

feeling. This shared affective state can produce a sense of “what it feels like” to be in this situation. Furthermore, this feeling fits very well with the close experiential bond I have argued for earlier. “What it feels like” feeds into “what it is like”. Thus the attraction scenes aid our experience of what it is like to be in this situation. In either case of embodied empathy then, we come to understand aspects of Kaja’s emotional state, and this can motivate us to engage in her fate, aids our sympathy for her, and is an attraction in itself. Additionally, by taking Plantinga’s account into consideration, the MCU focuses our attention on her emotional expression for the entire duration of the scene (43:05-45:25). If we have allied ourselves with Kaja, this also increases the likelihood of our empathic response. We know that Kaja is searching for her sister, and that someone is shooting people on the island (narrative context), which aids our interpretation of her expressions. Meanwhile, there is a clear compatibility between different elements throughout the film. The stress-inducing movements of the camera character, coupled with the narrative context, and our engagement with the emotionally transparent Kaja, results in affective congruency. Most importantly, Kaja’s emotional experience is the centre of attention. This is an attraction scene.

As I have argued earlier, the first two hideout scenes (17:40-20:48, 22:00-36:05), and the wounded girl scene (53:30-55:12), also emphasize Kaja’s emotional experience. These attraction scenes are aimed at eliciting sympathy and embodied empathy. They elicit both because, on the one hand, we are more likely to be empathically engaged with a character we care about, while in the other, pre-reflectively understanding Kaja’s state, can lead to an emotional output of sympathy. As such, these two emotional responses usually build on each other. Although I could point to a number of other scenes, suffice it to say here, that the filmmaker continually invites our emotional responses to a high degree. Our sympathetic engagement with Kaja can therefore culminate in a constant sense of dread, where we fear for her well-being throughout the film. Along the story path, we’re continually invited to feel hope, sorrow and pity for her. Alongside these sympathetic responses, embodied empathic responses can make us feel a shared state of confusion, fear, and sorrow with Kaja. This shared state also aids our sympathy for her. As such, I will argue that one of the key attractions of the film as a whole, is to sympathize and empathize with Kaja. This is, of course, my interpretation of the film, but this is reinforced by the close experiential bond the audience has with her. When Kaja dies at the end of the film (1:22:50-1:23:50), we’re not left with any positive resolution to Kaja’s heroic journey, but that’s precisely the point. Here the audience can be left just as emotionally devastated as Kaja has been in several scenes in the

film (53:30-55:12, 1:21:55-1:23:50). We're not supposed to feel joy; we're supposed to feel sorrow. This is "what it is like" to experience this event.

2.2.3. Reflections: Historic Tragedy, Sympathy & Empathy

In the closing text (1:25:55-1:27:45), we can see that many people were killed and gravely injured in the attacks. We also see that the story and the characters are fictional, but that the film is based on detailed descriptions of the real-world event, given by survivors. This has implications for my analysis of the film, because many of us were emotionally invested in the event before we ever saw a depiction of it on film. How does one make a film about a historic tragedy like this? Is there a right way to do it, so that no one will be offended? It's unlikely.

Brinch, Gundersen, Bekken, Rustad and Sørensen argue that a typical reason that fiction film depictions of historic tragedies are criticized, is because these types of movies do not differ sufficiently from conventional feature films in their depictions of reality. (Brinch, Gundersen, Bekken, Rustad & Sørensen, 2016, p. 96). They point out that movies are usually considered to be entertainment, and that filmmakers inevitably use film techniques and style, like the Hollywood-style. Typical Hollywood techniques and traits in historic-films involve suspense building, realistic storytelling and style (continuity/invisible editing, omniscient p-o-v), and a sense of optimism. Additionally, Hollywood historic-films usually centre the narrative around one heroic character that the audience can identify with, and this can take the focus away from the victims. On a more positive note, Brinch and the rest point to the historian Bryan Rommel-Ruiz, who argues that humans have a need to understand the past and find meaning in it. He points out that the tragic historic film can help us process the event by revisiting and confronting it together. That we're (in a sense) given an opportunity to experience what the event was like, which can lead to a form of catharsis. (Brinch et al., 2016, pp. 96-97, 99, 103, 108, 116-117).

I'm not going to argue for or against the "correctness" of Poppe's depiction of the event here. However, we can see that the film does centre the event around Kaja (the hero), and guides our emotional engagement in relation to her. In doing this though, we're placed experientially close to a victim (although fictional) throughout the entire film, thereby letting us experience what it could have been like to be on the island, from a victim's perspective. For the many of us that were (and still are) emotionally invested in the event, the film gives us an opportunity to confront a tragic part of our history together. As I have argued, the camera character, close experiential bond, and emotional engagement with Kaja, produces a

sense of what it was like to experience the event. It could be argued that the filmmaker's intent is to give us a deeper sympathetic and empathic bond with the victims of the real event, by placing us experientially close to a fictional victim. This can produce a form of catharsis and/or solidarity that stretches beyond the boundaries of the fiction film, and into reality. This can also partly explain my experience at the cinema, which I eluded to in the introduction. Once again, this is my interpretation of the filmmaker's intent.

Another important reflection here, has to do with the theory I have used. Both Smith and Vaage have gone to great lengths to clarify and systematically explain these emotional responses. The theories are fairly updated (1995, 2008), and they repeatedly refer to other theoreticians (Carroll, Currie, Choi, Plantinga etc.) that write about character engagement. Because of their emphasis on sympathy (Smith) and empathy (Vaage), I elected to use them as the theoretical focal point of this paper. I also do this because these emotional responses deserve equal footing, and they usually travel in pairs and build on each other, as Vaage argues (Vaage, 2008, pp. 246-247).

I have found no objections to Smith's structure of sympathy, but Vaage discusses a number of Carroll's objections to empathy in her doctoral thesis. Namely: "The observer objection" (we respond acentrally, because of our observer position), "The incongruence objection" (difference in knowledge, objects of emotion, and desires between characters and spectators leads to incongruent emotions), and lastly "The redundancy objection" (there's no need to empathize with a character in order to understand her). (Vaage, 2008, pp. 186-187, 188, 193). Although I would gladly discuss these objections here, none of them are used against embodied empathy. They're used against imaginative empathy (higher-level simulation). This analysis focuses on embodied empathy because of the high degree of subjective access to Kaja, and the attraction scenes. The focus on Kaja's interior state invites embodied empathic engagement to a much higher degree than imaginative empathic engagement. As I have eluded to in the theoretical context, imaginative empathy is much more common in dedramatized films. Vaage points to Jinhee Choi's account of central imagination here, which emphasizes the degree of knowledge we have about the character. If we have less information about the interior state of the character (less subjective access), it becomes more important to imagine the character's experiences if we want to make sense of the story. Dedramatized films usually minimize the use of close-ups and employ muted acting styles, and in this way reduce or block empathic feelings. (Vaage, 2008, pp. 153-155). This is clearly not the case in *Utøya 22. Juli*. Although it's entirely possible for the spectator to empathically imagine what

Kaja is experiencing, the plethora of close-ups and her emotional transparency makes it easy to catch onto her affective state, and leaves little for the imagination. However, I am by no means arguing that every spectator should or must feel embodied empathy with Kaja. I am simply arguing that the film seeks to elicit this emotional response to a high degree.

Finally, to accept embodied empathy as empathy, it has to be separated from emotional contagion. With emotional contagion, we don't know why we feel the way we feel, or that the feeling originates from a shared state with another. If we're not aware of this, then it's not empathy, as empathy entails either a pre-reflective understanding of another's state, or a consciously felt shared state. As Vaage argues, it's problematic to distinguish the pre-reflective side of embodied empathy from emotional contagion, because understanding the other's state does sound like a very reflective process. However, Vaage argues that there's a directedness in pre-reflective empathy, towards the other. With emotional contagion, there's no such directedness. (Vaage, 2008, 245-246). When we watch Kaja's emotional expressions then, we can pre-reflectively understand her emotional state, because while we catch onto her feelings, our experience is directed towards her.

3. Conclusion

In the introduction I asked the following question: How does the filmmaker (Poppe) combine formal elements to elicit our sympathetic and empathic engagement with Kaja in *Utøya 22.*

Juli?

In my analysis I have presented two arguments that, when taken together, aim to answer this question. In the first argument, I have argued that formal elements coalesce into a film style that produces a unique alignment with the main protagonist Kaja. Here I point out that the use of the one-take, emphasis on close-ups and emotional expressions, combined elements of cinematography, sound and mise-en-scène, and the camera character, coalesce into a film style that produces this unique alignment. We're almost exclusively spatio-temporally attached to her throughout the entire film, we're given ample amounts of subjective access to her, and we continually experience the surrounding events with the same amount of information as her. Because of this close experiential bond, the alignment gives us a sense of "what it is like" to be in this situation. Most importantly, the unique alignment gives us a greater platform for sympathetic and empathic engagement with Kaja, than with any other character.

In the second argument, I have argued that the unique alignment with Kaja reveals a set of morally desirable traits, through subjective access and her character actions. Here I point out that Kaja exhibits altruistic behaviour, that she cares about the well-being of others, and that she is kind and brave. These are morally desirable traits with relatively stable and positive moral valences. With these traits and the narrative context in mind, the film's moral orientation guides us toward sympathetic engagement with Kaja. This is further amplified by several attraction scenes that are aimed at eliciting sympathetic and embodied empathic responses. Here I point to different scenes that emphasize Kaja's emotional experience, by dwelling on her facial expressions in MCUs, CUs, and by mimicking the p-o-v structure. If we come to feel aspects of Kaja's emotional state, this can give us a sense of "what it feels like" to be in this situation. This feeling feeds into "what it is like" to be in this situation. The purpose of these scenes is to elicit both emotional responses, because on the one hand, we're more likely to be empathically engaged with a character we care about, while in the other, pre-reflectively understanding Kaja's state, can lead to an emotional output of sympathy. As such, these two emotional responses usually build on each other. Because of these attraction scenes, I argue that the filmmaker continually invites our emotional responses to a high degree, and that one of the key attractions of the film as a whole, is to sympathize and empathize with Kaja.

In the reflections segment, I examine the film's relation to the real-world historic tragedy. Here I point out that we're placed experientially close to a fictional victim of the event, and that the film let's us experience what it could have been like to be on the island, from a victim's perspective. It could be argued that the filmmaker's intent is to give us a deeper sympathetic and empathic bond with the victims of the real event, by placing us experientially close to a fictional victim. This can produce a form of catharsis and/or solidarity that stretches beyond the boundaries of the fiction film, and into reality. Secondly, I discuss some aspects of the theory I have used. Here I discuss why I have used embodied empathy in the analysis, and not imaginative empathy. Finally, I discuss the difference between embodied empathy and emotional contagion.

4. Reference List

Film list

Utøya 22. juli (Poppe, 2018)

Literature list

Smith, M. (1995). *Engaging Characters: Fiction, Emotion, and the Cinema*. New York: Oxford University Press Inc.

Vaage, M. B. (2008). *Seeing is Feeling: The Function of Empathy for the Spectator of Fiction Film* (Doctoral thesis). University of Oslo, Oslo.

Balázs, B. (1952). Theory of the Film. In L. Braudy & M. Cohen (Eds.), *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings* (7th ed., p. 273-281). New York: Oxford University Press Inc.

Plantinga, C. (1999). The Scene of Empathy and the Human Face on Film. In C. Plantinga & G. M. Smith (Eds.), *Passionate Views: Film, Cognition, and Emotion* (p. 239-255). Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Brinch, S. & Gundersen, H. & Bekken, G. H. & Rustad, J. & Sørensen, T. (2016). *Forestillinger om fortid. Historisk fiksjon i film og fjernsyn*. Oslo: Scandinavian Academic Press.

