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The Uncanniness of Intermediality. Joanna Hogg's Eerily Self-Reflexive Cinema

Ágnes Pethő
Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania (Cluj-Napoca, Romania)
E-mail: petho.agnes@kv.sapientia.ro
ORCID ID: 0000-0002-7506-2404

Abstract. The article argues for the relevance of the concept of the uncanny for a nuanced approach of intermediality. It identifies specific areas where the uncanniness of intermediality appears and examines Joanna Hogg's three autobiographically inspired films, *The Souvenir* (2019)*, The Souvenir Part II* (2021)*, and The Eternal Daughter* (2022) from this point of view. The analysis does not offer a psychoanalytic reading of these films but focuses on aesthetic configurations that enable the affective performativity of intermediality in conjunction with particular strategies of reflexivity, and unravels the ways in which, ultimately, all these films speak about the uncanny, mutually haunting relationship between art and life. Blurring the line between fiction and nonfiction, Hogg depicts the paradoxical nature of (post)trauma and the emotional turmoil of mourning feeding into artistic creativity. *The Souvenir* films revolve around the loss of a lover in her youth and weave together different styles and resonances across art history and many mediums. They reveal memory, imagination and palpable reality folding over in an uncanny and aestheticized construction of space and time. *The Eternal Daughter* presents a scenario of caring for her dying mother, and brings to the fore the tropes of the haunted house, ghosts and doubles, which were latent figures of the earlier films as well.[1]

Keywords: intermediality, uncanny, affective metalepsis, Joanna Hogg, reflexivity.

"Haunted places are the only ones people can live in."
(Michel de Certeau 2011, 108)

Intermediality and the Uncanny

From a phenomenological point of view, the performativity of intermediality hinges on the perception of in-betweenness. Intermediality always involves

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the perception of one medium not in itself but in relation with other mediums: mediums incorporating, reflecting others, mediums morphing into others, or even more strangely, appearing as if being suspended in a state of liminality and ambiguity. Sensing this in-betweenness is something that unsettles the viewer in a way that can be very hard to define, leading to sensations that may actually drift into the territory of the uncanny.

In many ways this affinity between the concepts of the uncanny and intermediality is uncanny indeed. Echoing keywords recurring in all definitions of intermediality, Nicholas Royle writes in his comprehensive book on the uncanny that it "has to do with strangeness of framing and borders, the experience of liminality" (2003, 2). This idea goes back to Ernst Jentsch, who closely associated the uncanny with "the feeling of uncertainty" ([1906] 1997, 9) involving the oscillation between what is known and unknown, between the animate and inanimate, alive and dead, natural and artificial. Sigmund Freud, arguing partly against Jentsch, approached the uncanny from the direction of Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling's definition as "the name for everything that ought to have remained secret and hidden but has come to light" ([1919] 1955, 224), and explored the connotations of the polysemy of the German word *unheimlich* (the negation of *heimlich* / "homely," but also meaning "secret," "locked away," and "inscrutable"). He emphasized its occurrence as the return of repressed memories that feel strangely familiar. Accordingly, Royle notes that the uncanny may appear as "a peculiar commingling of the familiar and unfamiliar. It can take the form of something familiar unexpectedly arising in a strange and unfamiliar context, or of something strange and unfamiliar unexpectedly arising in a familiar context. It can consist in a sense of homeliness uprooted, the revelation of something unhomely at the heart of hearth and home" (2003, 1). In this latter sense (though not directly connected to Freud's ideas), it became central to the philosophy of Martin Heidegger, who identified the perception of one's essential unhomeliness in the world as the main characteristic of modern life. He considered that the uncanny is not just a momentary feeling traversing our existence, but "from an existential-ontological point of view, the 'not-at-home' must be conceived as the more primordial phenomenon" ([1927] 1996, 177) of being thrown into the world.

Following Heidegger, the idea of uncanny reverberates through much of postmodern philosophy and cultural studies concerned with questioning the distinction between reality and fiction (Cixous 1976), the various aspects of "the troubled interface between history and memory" (Jay 1995, 27) as well as

thinking in terms of a "hauntology" instead of ontology and of the essential spectrality of all mediums (Derrida [1993] 1994, 63), exploring the "uncanniness of the ordinary" (Cavell 1988), or the architecture of unhomely urban spaces (Vidler 2000), and so on.

All these major discourses of the uncanny deal with issues that could be discussed in connection with intermediality, yet there has been surprisingly little research into their potential productivity concerning the scholarship on intermediality.[2] We might also be deterred from pursuing this by several meta-theoretical essays which have pointed out that beginning from the 1990s (Jay 1995) the uncanny has turned into a "homeless concept" (Masschelein 2003) adopted by so many strands in contemporary theories of culture that it "becomes an insidious, all-pervasive 'passe-partout' word to address virtually any topic," a word that "affects and haunts everything" (Masschelein 2011, 2). Nevertheless, uncannily, intermediality might actually be one of the most relevant areas of aesthetic and media phenomena where this "unhomely" concept is most at home.

There are several specific areas where the intersection of intermediality with the concept of the uncanny may prove especially germane. I will outline merely some of these briefly below.

a) Intermediality produces the sensation of mediums being dislocated, of being out of place (e.g. in cinema, instead of the accustomed experience of moving images on the screen, we may see an eerie resemblance with painting, a page filled with writing, a space of theatre, dance or installation art, a series of photographs, a collage of textures, a computer screen, and so on). In these apparent displacements we may have the impression of something familiar (*déjà vu*) returning in an unfamiliar frame. This may feel like a repressed form that resurfaces (for example, the "photographic" or the "graphic unconscious"[3] within the film), "an 'otherness' or an 'interworld' that is suddenly revealed to us but resists total unravelling" (Pethő 2020, 185).[4] Or we may feel that a more or less subversive intrusion has taken place, as the other medium, another art form

2 A notable exception is Hajnal Király's book on Manoel de Oliveira's films (2022), which was launched during the *Uncanny Intermediality* workshop organized at the Centre for Cinematic Intermediality and Visual Culture of the Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania (20–21 October 2022). The workshop itself was a step intended towards filling this gap in the scholarship on intermediality by initiating a debate on the possible intersections between intermediality and the uncanny. Most of the essays published in volume 24, 2023 of the journal *Acta Universitatis Sapientiae, Film and Media Studies* have been written following this event.

3 See Ropars-Wuilleumier's (1982) famous analysis of the instances of writing and poetry in Jean-Luc Godard's *Breathless* (*A bout de souffle*, 1960).

4 These quotations are from an essay (Pethő 2020) in which I discussed the uncanny effects of cinematic images resembling dioramas, combining effects of stillness and motion, 2D and 3D.

disrupts our sense of familiarity with the cinematic flow of images, often leading to a puzzled reaction from the audience.[5] This may resemble and therefore reflect on the way "locked away" memories or fantasies re-emerge and the way traumas are processed, creating an uncanny fold between past and present.

b) Conspicuous intermediality always constructs a fragmented view of the world (e.g. in documentary and essay films)[6] and an unhomely fictional world in the case of narrative cinema. It constructs a heterogeneous spatial mixture consisting of an intermedialized cinematic space marked by the emphatic presence of other mediums, one that is built of architectural, theatrical, painterly, or cinematic elements in the film and for the film,[7] in a manner that can feel unnatural and strange. When this is made even more complex by adopting fragments of familiar, real or fictional places already infused with personal and cultural significance and emotional value,[8] this may bring about an ambiguity whether we are looking at something real or imaginary, leaving the viewer with a sense of uncanny liminality.

c) The "uncertainty" that Jentsch described is a key element of the intermingled sensations of intermediality, in which mediums are reframed, transposed or imitated, often in a *trompe l'oeil* manner, and where quite often the ambivalence in the perception of mediums (e.g. a picturesque shot looking literally like a picture) is doubled by the fluctuation between the awareness of beholding art (a lifeless representation, an inanimate product of technology) and looking at life itself. Thus, intermedial techniques may interfere with the "transparency" of the images and the illusion of reality in cinema on a scale that ranges from an almost

5 Radu Jude's experiments with the use of photographs instead of filmed images in *The Dead Nation* (*Țara moartă*, 2017) or *The Exit of the Trains* (*Ieşirea trenurilor din gară*, 2020) are good examples of provoking such a reaction from viewers who consider that the slideshow-like films presented in a cinema are not really films at all.

6 This is the case not only in the type of intermediality when we have a visible collage of mediums, but also, for example, in the prolonged long takes and photofilmic (or painterly) tableau shots of slow cinema, in which we are always invited to watch a part of the visible world sliced out by the frame of the shot for a very long time before moving on to contemplate yet another fragment. This fragmentation is to a certain extent the reason why such films lend themselves so easily to a transposition onto the form of multiscreen installation art.

7 Examples may include Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant* (*Die bitteren Tränen der Petra von Kant*, 1972) using a stage-like set with Nicolas Poussin's giant painting looming in the background, Michelangelo Antonioni's spaces featuring intrusive architectural elements of urban spaces becoming abstract and strange (as a reflection of existentialist angst) through cinematic framing and de-framing, Lars von Trier's background projections in *Europa* (1990), or the more extreme, minimalist theatrical set of *Dogville* (2003).

8 Pedro Almodóvar's installation-like set in *The Human Voice* (2020) filled with his personal objects and artworks from his home produces such a mixture of a gaudily artificial and uncannily personal space.

imperceptible, uncanny tilt of the natural towards the artificial to a complete shift towards the extremely stylized. The self-reflexive revelation of the processes of multiple mediation (showing, for example, that this is a film being made with actors on a sound stage using specifically designed scenery and props) does not remove the feeling of uncertainty but often reveals an uncanny interpenetration of art and life and cultivates an ambiguity between affective immersion and aesthetic distance.[9]

All of this does not mean that intermediality always necessarily conveys impressions of uncanniness (it may also create quite pleasurable forms of beauty, for example), but merely that, facilitated by its particular phenomenology and enhanced by certain aesthetic configurations, intermediality has the potential to appear as something uncanny. Looking at the emergence of the uncanny through intermediality, however, may always bring insights into the ways in which an intermedial aesthetic may still appear affective, poetical or unsettling, capable of highlighting the experience of in-betweenness in our times defined by the familiarity and ubiquity of hypermediacy and media hybridity.

Trying not to overexpand the elasticity of the term by keeping in mind the cluster of ideas sketched above, this essay argues in this way for the relevance of the uncanny for a nuanced approach of intermediality by examining the aesthetic strategies through which uncanniness and intermediality become associated in the cinema of Joanna Hogg. The reason Hogg's films prompt such an association is that they have created a unique stylistic template, which mystifies the viewer with its contradictory effects. They combine rigorously composed tableau images with improvised dialogues, provoking a contemplation of pictures and, simultaneously, an identification with situations presented in a natural, relatable manner, creating in this way an unresolved tension between emotional engagement and distantiation. Her work invites therefore theoretical concepts and approaches that dwell on these tensions.

Inspired by her own life, her three interconnected films refine this template through a pronounced intermedialization, a multiplication of various kinds of images, and a metafictionality with many twists. *The Souvenir* (2019) and *The Souvenir: Part II* (2021) reflect on the shocking death of her lover at the start of her coming of age as an artist, while *The Eternal Daughter* (2022) addresses the anxieties of the mature filmmaker regarding the imminent death of her mother. In each case, love and loss materialize in a world of ghosts through a sophisticated

9 This was the case of von Trier's *Dogville* and Almodóvar's *The Human Voice*, too, mentioned earlier.

use of intermediality.[10] Hogg depicts feelings of mourning and painful memories feeding into her own artistic creativity, presenting how imagination and reality fold over in a therapeutic self-reflexivity. In what follows, I propose to unravel: a) the uncanny construction of a liminal, intermedial space together with the emergence of equally uncanny temporal folds within a narrative of trauma and remembrance; b) the manifestations of an uncanny, affective metalepsis, inviting us to rethink "affective incongruity" (Plantinga 2010) on many levels; c) the strange relationship between art and life thematized through strategies of reflexivity and doubling as well as through the metaleptic gesture of entering pictures.

The Architecture of an Intermedial Space and the Uncanny Folds of Time

In one of her most memorable installation works, Agnès Varda built a house repurposing the celluloid film stock of her unsuccessful movie, *The Creatures* (*Les Créatures*, 1966), in order to transform a painful memory of failure into a positive act of artistic creation.[11] The significance of this gesture of transformation was later reinforced by her autobiographical essay film, *The Beaches of Agnès* (*Les plages d'Agnès*, 2008), which included the artwork in the final scene. Here, as a conclusion to the recollection of her life's journey, we see Varda standing in this small cabin made of translucent filmstrips furnished with a pile of film-reel metal boxes, confessing that it makes her feel like she lives in cinema, and that cinema "is her home." In Hogg's autobiographical films there are many parallels with Varda's gesture of recycling her own film as "building material" for a new work and as a space of self-reflection epitomizing the process through which she rethinks all her joys, failures and tragedies as subjects of her art.[12] In dealing with a her

10 Acknowledging this feature of her latest works, the retrospective of her films organized by the Pompidou Centre in Paris, from 16 to 20 March in 2023, was titled *Histoires de fantômes* (*Ghost Stories*).

11 There were in fact two versions of this installation. The first was titled *The Cabin of Failure* (*La Cabane de l'échec*) and was exhibited at the Fondation Cartier in 2006, then Varda simplified it and renamed it as *The Cabin of Cinema* (*Cabane du cinéma*) for the Biennale de Lyon (2009–2010), thus asserting more emphatically her rejection of failure and her idea of reusing the outmoded medium of film for a new artwork as an homage to cinema.

12 The film used for Varda's celluloid hut, *The Creatures*, has many parallels with Joanna Hogg's *Souvenir* films. Although appearing within a very different context, the ideas and the fragmented, hybrid style (alternating black-and-white and colour-filtered images) have many similarities. The film is about a writer and has a convoluted science fiction plot about the way in which ideas take shape in art. It also involves an uncanny chess game in which people are transformed into mechanical puppets moved around on a chessboard as an allegory both of the human condition in modern times and of the writer's manipulation of the characters he

own traumatic memories (and including pictures from an abandoned film project) in *The Souvenir* films, Joanna Hogg creates, in the same way, an ambivalently "homely" cinematic world using her own archival images and personal objects that, nevertheless, strikes the viewer in many ways as strangely artificial.

The Souvenir recounts her early days as a film student when she had a complicated love affair with an older man (named in the film as Anthony), who was arrogantly seductive, secretive, and turned out to be a heroin addict, eventually dying of an overdose and thereby causing considerable shock to the young woman enthralled by him. *The Souvenir Part II* deals with the aftermath of his death, and shows the young filmmaker coping with grief and using the shocking experience as inspiration for making a film. In one of her interviews (Aguilar 2019), Hogg confessed that she began to work on her film not by writing a script but by making watercolour sketches. Watercolour became an inter-medium, or interim medium – disappearing in the process of the actual filming – meant to articulate a set of "ideas" (perhaps moods and feelings that come with memories) that would later become the movie. Its pre-cinematic use aptly foreshadowed the film's theme of vulnerability and its emphasis on visual texture instead of narrative. One might spot its traces, however, as a kind of repressed medium resurfacing in shots of blurred splashes of colour filling the screen [Fig. 1], or in the recurring soft focus photography of nature, and images of clouds. The method is also representative of the whole process of intermedial transfers that we see in the film, in which images are continuously transposed from photography, painting, and literature to cinema. Even at a later stage of the development of the film, as the cinematographer David Raedeker recalls, "there was no fixed script for *The Souvenir* – we were working with quite a loose synopsis of around 25 pages, interspersed with beautiful photographs and poems" (Mutter 2022).

The *Souvenir* conjures up memories through Hogg's personal archive of pictures and weaves them through a dense network of art references. The tragic love story is evoked by using an extremely heterogeneous texture of images, making use of her old student films, photographs, combining both analogue and digital technologies. Beside the inserts of her archival images, the *Souvenir*

invents based on his experiences. Roger Ebert likened Varda's film to Alain Resnais's *Last Year at Marienbad* (*L'année dernière à Marienbad*, 1961), and wrote that it showed "how fantasy, reality and style are simultaneously kept suspended in the mind of a creative writer," suggesting that "as people living in time we are constantly creating our lives, just as a novelist creates his story." (*https://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/les-creatures-1969*. Last accessed 17. 09. 2023.) Hogg's films also explore the theme of artistic creativity reshaping and transposing life onto art, and involves characters, which sometimes seem uncannily lifeless.

was shot just like Hogg's old footage on Super 8, 16mm and 35mm film (often slightly underexposed) and in 16mm and 35mm mode shot by various kinds of digital cameras (see Prince 2019). These different picture formats give the viewer the impression that this is a film literally made of pictures.[13] [Figs. 2–3.] Gilles Deleuze wrote that "cinema does not just present images, it surrounds them with a world" (1989, 68). Here, however, there seems to be no "world" outside these images. Space itself appears as an architecture designed to compose pictures and as an architecture composed of pictures. Both *Souvenir* films were almost entirely shot in a rented old airplane hangar in Norfolk used as a sound stage in which Joanna Hogg meticulously reconstructed the apartment she rented in London as a student, using furniture and objects she still owns. Not unlike *Last Year at Marienbad*, a movie similarly staged in an enclosed space populated by art, the flat in *The Souvenir* also features a large surface covered with mirrors, which extend and fold the space onto itself. Mirrors always erase the wall and substitute it with pictures, or more precisely, in the case of the visual arts, they break the space up into multiple picture planes. In Deleuze's words, such duplicitous, crystal-like images unite "an actual image and a virtual image to the point where they can no longer be distinguished" (1989, 335). [Figs. 4–5.]

And while the inside of the apartment appears as a hall of mirrors layering image over image, the outside is also a picture. To create the period-accurate vistas visible through the windows, Hogg's photos from back in the day were digitally stitched together and projected against transparent screens surrounding the set.[14] In this interior, in which photography is remediated to produce "a kind of ghosting of its surfaces," or transform it into a "dolls house" (Quinlivan 2020, 148), windows literally open onto other images and introduce an unobtrusive collage effect. [Figs. 6–7.] Laura Mulvey interpreted "rear-projection's clumsy visibility" as something that smuggles a kind of Brechtian distantiation effect into mainstream Hollywood films highlighting cinema's materiality in accordance with the modernist aesthetic of film, and thus creates "an unusual paradox, almost a clash of cultures, within a single sequence" (2012, 208). Hogg's artifice of *trompe l'oeil* offers a less "clumsy," and almost imperceptible, yet conscious engagement with clashes resulting from medially different layers of images, and

13 Davina Quinlivan sees "the slow and precise unspooling" (2020, 142) of a series of photographs in the introductory sequence of the film as a means to engage the viewer from the very beginning "more actively and self-critically with the image" and its "objecthood" (2020, 144).

14 See how it was made here: *https://www.thelocationguide.com/2019/09/joanna-hoggs-the-souvenir-based-at-raynham-hangars-and-shot-exclusively-in-norfolk/#*. Last accessed 17. 09. 2023.

its uncanniness can be more closely associated with occurrences in the visual arts and not in the movies shot in film studios in the Golden Age of Hollywood.[15] This way of juxtaposing photography and film much rather recalls the art historical tradition of views framed by windows or other architectural elements appearing like pictures hanging on the wall in the background of the figures [Figs. 8–9], which inspired Mark Lewis in making his single channel film installation, *Rear Projection (Molly Parker)* (2006).[16] It could also be compared with Cindy Sherman's photo series from the 1980s, entitled *Rear Screen Projections*, in which the projected backdrops consisting of ordinary street images seem to haunt the human figures in the composite pictures.

Such an intermedial space fosters ambiguities and accommodates the juxtaposition of fiction, memory and reality as the viewer registers the inherent tensions of pictorial hybridity. The minutely recreated space of Hogg's erstwhile flat is in this way visibly an uncanny replica, a space that is both real and imaginary. The mirrored wall, as well as the overlaying of photography and film, accentuate the spectrality of the space. The reconstructed flat becomes a haunted house, with figures becoming their own ghosts in the mirrors, and with characters embodying people from the past, moving around and shown through the filter of the visible technological mediation of a variety of photographic lenses.

In many ways, *The Souvenir* is also the descendant of Chris Marker's *La Jetée* (1962), consisting of individual photographs narrating a time travel made possible through a vivid emotional connection to the past. Victor Burgin wrote that Marker's film reverses the myth of Orpheus: instead of passing from light to darkness, *La Jetée*'s protagonist does the opposite, he goes to the land of the dead and finds the "object of his desire in a sunlit world of living ghosts: alive in their own time, dead in his own" (2004, 93). In *The Souvenir*, we see a similar journey with an added gender reversal of the myth: here we have a woman going back to her time with her now dead lover, inviting us on a journey to a hellish experience in the past through luminous pictures and a spectacularly intermedial art. This image-world mixing old photographs, analogue film formats with crisp

15 Her director of photography revealed in an interview that "Joanna loved the air of theatricality and artifice it created, as she likes to play with perceptions of reality in a slightly Brechtian way" (Prince 2019).

16 When this work was first exhibited at the FACT (Film Art and Creative Technology) Centre in Liverpool, its catalogue explicitly drew attention to the influence of such paintings (e.g. Hans Memling's portraits). For an analysis of Lewis's use of back projection, see Mulvey's keynote lecture delivered at the conference on *The Picturesque*, held on 25–26 October 2019, at the Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania, Cluj-Napoca, *https://youtu.be/cEtbSmpA2m0?list=PLDesrDcatwbaGiIK2Fkg3gH44hIDp6P4H*. Last accessed 17. 09. 2023.

digital frames conveys a disjointed time, where the past seems to be revived in the present, yet still preserves a ghostly quality: appearing at the same time, dead (in the eerie stillness of the photographic vistas in the windows) and alive in the dramatic scenes of the film. The old image formats emphasize the pastness of the depicted events, but the digitally shot scenes weaken this impression, especially given that the references to the 1980s through costumes are rather vague. (They were "kept as subtle as possible, nothing obvious or specific," confirms the film's cinematographer in an interview, Prince 2019). The entire production design suits both past and present with its restraint and use of spaces that might look the same as they did years ago. This contributes, along with the mixture of images, to creating a dreamlike atmosphere. In this case, we have not only the past haunting the present, but also the present evocation wiping away some of the visible marks of the past. "Encounters between humans and pictures generate affective temporalities in which specific temporal structures are consistently joined to specific emotional states," writes Benjamin Anderson (2022, 159), according to whom, melancholy (or nostalgia) derives from the realization of the separation of the past from the present, while the overlap of distinct temporalities result in an "uncanny encounter."[17] Despite tinges of melancholy in certain scenes, *The Souvenir*'s collage texture creates an affective temporality that veers towards an uncanny encounter between past and present. This becomes even more pronounced through the added metafictional levels of its sequel, *The Souvenir Part II*, as we will see in the third part of this essay.

The Eternal Daughter, which is a loosely connected sequel to the first two films, offers another strangely entwined temporal structure, folding both future and past over the present. Once again, the film addresses the trauma of losing someone we love. This time, we see Joanna Hogg's alter-ego protagonist (who was merely starting her career in *The Souvenir* films) at the same age as her at the time of making the film and the narrative reflects on the terrifying prospect of the death of her real-life mother in the not so distant future. Jacques Derrida described the emotions involved in friendship in this way: "the difference between the effective and the virtual, between mourning and its possibility, seems fragile and porous. The anguished apprehension of mourning […] insinuates itself a priori and anticipates itself; it haunts and plunges the friend, before mourning, into mourning. This apprehension weeps before the lamentation, it weeps death before death" (Derrida [1994] 2005, 14). Derrida's words apply not only to friends. Being past middle age

17 See, for example, the phenomenological description of such an "uncanny encounter" with the visibly repainted, colourized old photographs and film footage in Kamilla Simor's article (2023).

and faced with the reality of her mother's (and her own) mortality, Hogg confronts the same emotional situation with added intensity. Driven by this "apprehension of mourning," Hogg imagines in *The Eternal Daughter* affectionately caring for her frail, dying mother.[18] The film unfolds a kind of ghost story inspired by Rudyard Kipling's short story entitled *They* (1904) written following the death of his daughter, in which the fragmentary and supernatural narrative becomes the writer's way of dealing with her loss.[19] The novella, reminiscent in some ways of the literary style and painterly imagery of the Pre-Raphaelites, is accompanied by a poem, *The Return of the Children*, suggesting an eternal connection between parents and children reaching beyond the grave.

In Hogg's film, the two women and their faithful dog arrive at a country manor transformed into a hotel to spend a few days together. It is night, late autumn, trees with bare and twisting branches are enveloped in thick fog along the narrow road. The hotel is eerily empty, with long hallways and dark staircases dimly lit by a bluish-green light, with no other guests in sight. [Figs. 10–12.] The sound of wind, the creaks in the old house blend with notes from Béla Bartók's music for strings and percussion repeated with different instruments. In the course of the film, we learn that the manor used to belong to the mother's family and by the end, it turns out that the mother may already be dead, and the filmmaker daughter has been talking to none other than herself, communicating with a ghost, while trying to write a screenplay, the images of which may have materialized in front of our eyes. *The Eternal Daughter* presents an immersive, multisensory space visibly borrowed from Gothic fiction and horror films. It is a space haunted by the past (by the painful memories of the mother revealed in the dialogues), by the present anxieties of the daughter regarding the future, as well as by the future itself (the death of the mother), which – we realize – is either imminent or has already happened in the film, in a disconcerting fold of time. The direct invocation of the haunted house trope appears both as a means for visual stylization that elevates the story into abstraction and universality, and as a powerfully symbolic image of the soul populated by Hogg's most personal "ghosts." At the same time, it becomes a self-reflexive metaphor for Hogg's fascination with atmospheric space and architecture seen according to Gaston Bachelard's concept of a "poetics of

18 Although Hogg's mother was alive at the time the film was shot, sadly she died when they were editing it (see: Sims 2022), transforming the "apprehension of mourning" into actual mourning. Thus, the film does not merely foreshadow what is going to happen but it also reflects on what happened in real life.

19 In a direct reference to Kipling's story, Hogg shows us the book Julie is reading in a close-up with the title and text clearly visible on the page.

space" ([1958] 1994) as "a vessel of memory and feeling" (Williams 2014) that became a hallmark of all her previous films.[20]

Thus, by creating something comparable to Baroque *trompe l'oeil* in the rear projections of *The Souvenir* films, by (re)using various kinds of images to build an intermedial space, and by heavily relying on genre clichés in the process of forging an ambivalently sensuous pictorial language to communicate personal experiences, Hogg also effectively scrutinizes the relationship between fiction and autobiography, the role of mediation in an artistic expression that remains at its core, despite all its "borrowed" elements, deeply personal. In what follows, I propose to further unravel this uncanny duality manifest in the viewer's oscillation between emotional distance and immersion that Hogg induces across many layers of the films.

Oscillations between Empathy and Abstraction

Although each of the different types of images in *The Souvenir* films was deliberately chosen to fulfil "a different emotional function," as the film's cinematographer revealed in an interview (Prince 2019), the various formats did not only serve as inflections of the pictorial form intended to match the emotions of the characters, to create mood, and to confer affective intensities to the scenes, the various image formats also "brought a variety of textures to the look" (Prince 2019). This carefully crafted "look" of the films (with the ensuing hybrid, intermedial space and entangled temporality) engages alternating positions of spectatorship in a process that we could regard in terms of an affective metalepsis, i.e. a shift between viewpoints with different affective affordances. This "look" foregrounds either the haptic-sensorial or the optical-abstract quality of the images, facilitating in turn the viewer's empathy or creating an aesthetic distance. This duality may remind us of the typology of the art historian, Wilhelm Worringer, who, at the beginning of the 20th century, distinguished between the art of empathy and the art of abstraction. Thinking in terms of a psychology of style, he wrote that "whereas

20 See the "poetic" use of the holiday villas of *Unrelated* (2007) and *Archipelago* (2010) accommodating entangled human relationships, or the depiction of a modernist building as the main character alongside the two artists who live, work, and dream in this space, using and literally embracing it in *Exhibition* (2013). In a short film commissioned by the Pompidou Centre in Paris in 2023, Hogg confesses that she always becomes attached to places: "they become who I am" – she says. (The film – later identified with the title, *Présages* – was originally produced as part of a series of video confessions made by artists answering the question: *Où en êtes-vous?/ Where Are You?* See: *Où en êtes-vous Joanna Hogg? https://youtu.be/8A9Hv1ieAdk*. Last accessed 17. 09. 2023.)

the precondition for the urge to empathy is a happy pantheistic relationship of confidence between man and the phenomena of the external world, the urge to abstraction is the outcome of a great inner unrest" (Worringer [1908] 1997, 15). Supporting this idea, intermediality appears in Hogg's films as a strategy through which cinema absorbs abstracted forms from other arts as a means to convey a traumatic experience, retaining all the complexities and ambivalences of this experience. At the same time, however, her films also demonstrate Worringer's idea that sometimes a strong impulse to abstraction "becomes a lively impulse to empathy" ([1912] 1920, 38), in which, "it is not a question […] of a harmonious commingling of two opposing tendencies, but of an unclear and to a certain degree, uncanny amalgamation of them" ([1912] 1920, 47). This also corresponds – using Freudian terms – to an intertwining of *cathexis* (investing pictures and objects with emotional intensity) and *decathexis* (a withdrawal, an emotional detachment). These films offer such "uncanny amalgamations" not only through old and new image forms but also through the many art references and parallels enabling both empathy and abstraction, emotional investment and withdrawal.

The title of the film, *The Souvenir*, borrowed in many languages from the French word "souvenir" (meaning "memory" or "to remember") signifies "an item of sentimental value, to remember a person, an event or location," and is a clear indication of its major theme connected to a specific memory. It is also the title of a Jean-Honoré Fragonard painting, *The Souvenir* (c. 1776–1778), a physical art object reproduced in the films, and an image which allows us to connect emotionally to Julie, the fictional version of the young Joanna Hogg. Fragonard's small painting shows Jean-Jacques Rousseau's eponymous protagonist of his sentimental novel, *Julie, or the New Heloise* (*Julie ou la nouvelle Héloïse*, 1761), in a scene in which, having just received a letter from her lover, the enamoured young woman carves his name into the bark of a tree. It is this painting that her lover took Hogg to see in a luxurious art collection, and that he later gave to her in the form of a postcard, the same way we see it in the film [Fig. 13]. The picture is thus a real-life, tangible and emotionally invested souvenir for Hogg attached to events re-enacted in the film, while, on a symbolic level, appearing as an intermedial *mise-en-abyme* reflecting on the film's topic, it may also remind us that the whole film can be seen as a gesture of "engraving" affectionate memories into pictorial form. At a time when real English castles feature as backdrops for historical romances, or when set designs meticulously reconstruct the past in popular TV series which entertain through their mastery of illusion, Hogg's *Souvenir* seems to undermine the authenticity of her own autobiographical

account through all kinds of subtle forms of artifice and fictionalization. Instead of using the actual Wallace Collection, for example, despite the emphasis on the significance of this location, we see the reproduction of the Fragonard painting displayed in a recognizably different place (Holkham Hall), perceived in this way as a site of fictional storytelling. The style of Fragonard's painting, nevertheless, resonates intensely with the scenes showing the lovers in the film, indicating both a high degree of self-conscious artistry and a deep connection with the painting transgressing the fictional context created in the film. Julie appears repeatedly in pink garments [Fig. 14], and her infatuation with Anthony is rendered suggestively by images, which emphasize what Michael Fried identified as the key elements of Rococo, "intimacy, sensuousness and decoration" (1980, 71). The antique French bed (owned by Hogg in real life) that we see in her room ornately framing her figure [Fig. 15] acts as a further connection to Fragonard, some of whose paintings display in such decorative settings explicitly and frivolously erotic scenes. [Figs. 16–17.] The way the camera shows partially in soft focus the panting, rosy-cheeked Julie while making love, immerses the viewer into a haptic, cinematic equivalent of this Rococo sensuousness [Fig. 18].

Anthony is brought back to life through associations with similar characters in art. As the brooding, mysterious dark man, he is a clear descendant of the type of hero embodied by Mr. Rochester from Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), Jane Austen's arrogant Mr. Darcy from *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), or Lord Byron himself (see Anthony's long Romantic tailcoat embellished with silver buttons that he wears quite anachronistically in Fig. 14, as well as his turban in another scene). He dresses Julie to match his own fantasy in a Pygmalion-like fashion just as Alfred Hitchcock's leading man transformed the woman played by Kim Novak in *Vertigo* (1958), and this manipulative side of him is shaded even darker by ominous quotations from Béla Bartók's opera, *Bluebeard's Castle* (1911) in the soundtrack. There is a dreamlike trip to Venice with Julie dressed in a grey two-piece suit resembling Kim Novak's. The sumptuous décor of a dark palazzo where they stay, Julie's gorgeous evening gown sweeping up the stairs to the La Fenice opera house evokes the famous set of Visconti's *Senso* (1954), a film in which a man exploited a woman who was likewise blindly infatuated with him.

At the same time, rather incongruously, certain scenes remind us of the distancing effects of Michelangelo Antonioni's style, with figures enframed and separated by doorways, spaces built of stark, geometrical forms, lines and flat surfaces that we often behold in abstraction after the characters have already left. The repeated opening and closing of the shining metallic lift doors outside Julie's flat looks like

the mechanical movement of the aperture of a giant camera shutter around the characters who are in this way literally entering or leaving the picture [Fig. 19].

The artificial, diorama-like space of the apartment in scenes in which light floods and oversaturates the room emphasizes further the quality of pictureness for the viewer who may find that the images of these spaces look like Jeff Wall's light boxes, illuminated from within [Fig. 20]. They also highlight the same apparent paradox that Wall's photograph, *Adrian Walker, Artist. Drawing from a Specimen in a Laboratory in the Dept. of Anatomy at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver* (1992) presented for Michael Fried (2008, 37–43), namely the juxtaposition of what he famously called the realistic mode of "absorption" with elements of "theatricality" in the staged picture the subject of which is aware of being displayed as an object to be looked at by the viewer. Hogg dwells on the tension between these two modes, through exaggerating the elements of artificiality while also insisting on filming the characters in absorptive poses, that is, deeply immersed in what they are doing, and even defiantly turning away from the camera which does not offer a counter-shot or join their points of view, thereby clearly preserving an impenetrable self-containment of the pictures. [Figs. 7, 20.]

These loosely connected "painterly vignettes" which create a highly fragmented, elliptic narrative through a "rhetoric of omission" (Buckland 2022, 2) in the film have puzzled many viewers and critics. There are major events that we are not allowed to see, we witness some conversations between characters, but scenes and dialogues break off abruptly. Warren Buckland has examined more closely Hogg's narrative techniques, and has identified in *The Souvenir* "the specter of the cinematic narrator, a hidden or covert narrative agent outside the storyworld but embedded in the textual-discursive level that ultimately narrates the story" (2022, 2). In his view, the "specter" Hogg creates is a kind of impersonal (not anthropomorphic) cinematic narrator, "a ubiquitous, underlying, implicit, abstract (non-spatiotemporal) entity" (Buckland 2022, 3) which is clearly at odds with the autobiographical content of the film, and separates the implicit narrator and the real author. "Hogg depicts Julie from the outside, mainly detaching herself from Julie's point of view," in a manner that is "merely photographic," thus, frustrating the viewer who would have liked to know more about Julie's state of mind, remarks the critic, Richard Brody (2019). In the same vein, Adrian Martin notes that "Hogg asks us to float, to drift through the images," and sees in this the influence of Chantal Akerman, as "Hogg captures the endearing, everyday 'flatness' of things" (2022).

Furthermore, Honor Swinton Byrne portrays Julie in a manner that places her performance in-between acting and non-acting. Hogg harnesses the full potential

of this duality. Teaming her up with the professional actor, Tom Burke as Anthony, their on-screen relationship aptly foregrounds Julie's naïveté through Swinton Byrne's lack of experience, revealing at times, "more uncontrolled and therefore honest gestures," as Miguel Gaggiotti (2023, 221) writes in a detailed analysis. The camera is both "a relentless observer exposing the performer's awkwardness with merciless precision" and "feels like a confidant that offers Julie company and attention" (Gagiotti 2023, 223). Thus, Swinton Byrne does not revive the past of Joanna Hogg's life in a polished performance, but re-enacts it in a strange mixture between sincerity and self-consciousness. The empathy with the characters who reveal little about themselves in the disconnected scenes and elicit no particular sympathy through their situation of privilege is substituted with the possibility of identification with real frictions, silences and private gestures resurfacing through the unscripted dialogues. The unreliability of memory to access this traumatic past is also effectively bypassed and replaced by the authenticity of the present-day improvisation of the dialogues between the actors/non-actors in the film. Ultimately, however, it is the manifold use of intermediality that fleshes out the characters to a certain degree through the wide array of inter-art associations as mentioned before and enables the viewer to perceive them in an affective environment through the different picture forms.

At the end of *The Souvenir* we have yet another intermedial intervention, a quotation of a poem by Christina Rossetti (*Song*: W*hen I Am Dead, My Dearest*, 1848) that creates the most touching moment for the viewer. We see Julie working on her film school project, and as we listen to a young actress reciting Rossetti's verses, the camera singles out Julie in a Caravaggesque high contrast of light and darkness. She turns to the camera, and looks straight into the lens, her fixed stare becoming a conduit for the emotions flowing through the poem. The lines in which, by conjuring up a vivid image of nature, a dead lover urges the one who mourns to "be the green grass above me / with showers and dewdrops wet," to go on living instead of grieving, echo far beyond the end of the first film across *The Souvenir: Part II*. Just to remind us, in this second film, immediately after we see Julie returning to her empty flat, Hogg cuts in a sequence in black-and-white with an actress reciting a fragment of the poem looking straight into the camera. [Fig. 21.] *Part II* actually begins with brightly lit images of petals gently fluttering in the breeze, and the repeated inserts of soft-focus shots of flowers, berries and leafs, which foreground their photographic texture and static enframing in shots detached from the narrative, as well as the airy, atmospheric long takes of nature in Julie's walk across the grassy, wildflower meadow (as opposed to

the theatricality of the scenes in the apartment and in the film sets) seem to paraphrase Rossetti's poetic imagery. Nature's exuberance becomes in the sequel to *The Souvenir* an uncanny sign of the haunting memory of Anthony's death.[21] [Fig. 22.] The poignant resonance of this poem carried from one film to another is typical for Hogg's method of engaging the viewer emotionally through something "outside" cinema, through the invocation of the other arts. This invocation of poetry (just like that of the old image forms) happens in this case much in the spirit of the idea articulated by Alain Badiou, who believed that cinema offers "a retrospective nostalgia for the time when real arts existed" (2023, 19).

The "outside" of cinema is drawn into the film also through the protagonist in another way. Julie emerges as a multiplied double for Joanna Hogg: a fictional character (enriched by all the possible reminiscences of painting, literature, photography and film), who at the same time appears as herself, Honor Swinton Byrne, or, more likely, merely her own double as an actor/non-actor. In addition, through the widely available external reflexive discourse on these films (i.e. the many interviews with the director, cast and crew) most people are aware that this is the real-life daughter of Hogg's close friend, Tilda Swinton. This makes her a less believable stand-in for the young Hogg (as compared to having been embodied perhaps by an unknown professional actress), but nevertheless makes her an authentic representative of Hogg's personal world, of her own life after her doomed romance with Anthony. Her inclusion is therefore also a subtle reminder of the retrospective viewpoint over the events presented in the film. This manifold liminality integral to Julie's figure in the film aligns with Hogg's overall strategies of self-reflexivity in which she insistently probes the ontological boundary between art and life.

"This Is Not a Film." The Strange Loops of Joanna Hogg's Reflexivity

The relationship between art and life is addressed most challengingly by a series of images repeated and reinterpreted in *The Souvenir*. In yet another correspondence with Chris Marker's *La Jetée*, in which a man is haunted by an image the true meaning of which is revealed only in the end, the film includes the variation of

21 In his review of *The Souvenir: Part II*, Adrian Martin does not connect these images of nature to Rossetti's poem, but observes how they seem to be detached from the film's concrete narrative temporality. According to him, Hogg goes against the convention of using such shots as "punctuating sequences to mark the passage of time," and "makes it impossible to tell how long anything takes in this story" (2022).

a picturesque shot that remains somewhat enigmatic until the very end when its origin is finally revealed. The same tableau, a kind of moving photograph of a landscape and sky, captured in different weather conditions, framed in a planimetric composition, appears three times accompanied by Julie's voice over reading from what we assume are Anthony's letters to her. [Fig. 23.] The image is like a canvas for the pictorial rendering of their emotions, repainted as their relationship evolves to mirror their inner turmoil. It is both an image of absence, a view unfolding through recollection (and, as such, a marker of death) and a symbolic image sealing the connection between the protagonists. We perceive it as an imaginary landscape belonging to the inner world of the characters with no concrete reference in the diegetic world. Its true uncanniness, however, emerges quite unexpectedly in the last scene, when we see the doors of the huge aircraft hangar slowly sliding open in a way that resembles the opening of an eye, and revealing that this is in fact not a subjective vision but concrete reality, i.e. a glimpse of countryside outside the film set. [Fig. 24.] Thus the fictional film set gives way to the actual set where *The Souvenir* was filmed, and in a metaleptic gesture, Julie steps out into the "real" world outside the hangar. The slice of the countryside in the open doorway is already familiar to us from the image that "haunted" the film in the manner of *La Jetée*. The scene is also similar to the famous doorway shot from John Ford's *The Searchers* (1956) that is repeated in many variations throughout that film becoming an emblem of the threshold between civilization and nature, life and death, known and unknown, order and chaos.[22] Hogg's ending inflects the same visual motif through the contrast of the tiny figure standing in the huge opening into a majestic, almost operatic scene. While the picturesque images we saw earlier seem to occur in a flow-of-consciousness manner, the framed landscape in the final shot corresponds more to Roland Barthes's Brechtian understanding of the tableau which he describes as "a pure cut-out segment with clearly defined edges, irreversible and incorruptible; everything that surrounds it is banished into nothingness, remains unnamed, while everything that it admits within its field is promoted into essence, into light, into view" (1977, 70). Such a tableau is intellectual, Barthes writes, "it has something to say" (1977, 70). In this case, balancing passion with intellect, the image of the opening of the door (suggesting an awakening), along with the image "cut out" of the narrative, challenges the distinction between fiction and reality. The memory

22 *The Searchers* presents a highly disturbing journey into chaos to bring back a woman from a fate deemed worse than death by the protagonist, and just like in this film, most of the traumatic events happen off screen, while scenes unfold against a breathtakingly picturesque landscape.

of the landscape tableaux (and the comparison with the iconic image from *The Searchers* in case it occurs to us) reinforces our perception that Julie does not only step out into the "real world" here, she also steps into another picture.

The image itself is the reversal of the photos projected in the windows [Figs. 6–7], which were standing in for reality: here the enframing of reality takes the place of the picture, and points out not a threshold to step over, but the possibility of doublings, reversals and folds. This final moment is emblematic for Hogg's cinema, in which life and art are not viewed on different ontological planes, but in a strange state of comingling. If the first *Souvenir* film is about the traumatic memory of her lover's death abstracted through intermediality, *Part II,* in which a film is made about the events of the first film, is a more direct and complex thematization of auto-fiction. The third film, *The Eternal Daughter*, addresses again the intertwining of fiction and reality in a more disguised self-reflexivity, through its ghost story twist suggesting the possibility of watching an imaginary movie unfolding from the script that the middle-aged Julie is writing in the film, this time about the fear of losing her mother.

Traditionally, when viewers are invited to watch a film being made in front of their eyes, there is an illusion of reality around the embedded fiction. We see the concrete world in which the filmmakers work. The artificial construction of art is presented in the context of what appears to be reality. Hogg's metacinema offers no such clear duality in any of these films. Her method is similar to René Magritte's canvases [Fig. 25.] in which reality and representation can be reversed and merged within a continuous uncanny fold. In *The Souvenir: Part II* in the scene in which Julie comes in through the door of the airport hangar used as a sound stage, she does not only resume her film school activities, she literally steps back into a multitude of pictures. Entering this space, she walks by a series of mirrors scattered around the set, her figure being immediately multiplied by the reflections in the mirrors, only to arrive in front of a giant painted background filling the frame. The reflections of Julie in this hall of mirrors, reminiscent of the famous scene in Orson Welles's *The Lady from Shanghai* (1947), signal the multiplicities embodied by the actor/non-actor/fictional character that were already present in *The Souvenir*. Furthermore, the scene alludes to the *mise-en-abyme*-type repetitions, which create a vortex-like structure in this second film.

Julie's film in *Part II* effectively remakes all the major events in the first movie, she directs young actors to re-enact what we saw before, suggesting that the first film was the real life equivalent of what is now being remade as fiction in the second. [Fig. 26.] Nevertheless, beside the reconstruction of Julie's apartment

(which itself reproduced Hogg's own place as a student in the first film) as a film set, when she is not working on her film, we also find Julie living in the same artificial space with the *trompe l'oeil* rear projections. We see variations of parts of the first film on two narrative levels, both as a film within the film (directed by Julie with her film school colleagues) and in Julie's private life, as she attempts to start new relationships. See, for example, the scene of her making love in the same ornate bed in which we saw her with Anthony, only this time instead of the charming atmosphere of Rococo erotica, and her rosy, blushing face in close-up, the room is dark, the sex is rough and there is talk of menstrual blood making the scene in every way the opposite of the seductive experience from the previous film. In a strange loop, the last scene in *Part II* actually reproduces the beginning of *The Souvenir*, with the party of friends in the dimly lit apartment and with Julie talking to a tall dark man exactly the same way she met Anthony. In the very last images, we see not Julie's but apparently Joanna Hogg's film crew outside the walls of the apartment built on the set, and hear the director's final instruction of "cut," wrapping up within her movie the world of filmmaking surrounding Julie's life as well as Julie's own film in a Russian doll-like fashion. Whereas the first film centres on the elusive Anthony, the second film focuses through this *mise-en-abyme* construction, metalepsis and doublings on the enigma of Julie as Joanna Hogg's double caught in-between life and art (clearly suggested by the introductory multiplications of her figure in the mirrors).

The eerie doublings continue in *The Eternal Daughter*, by presenting Julie as a middle-aged woman and filmmaker, embodied this time, by Tilda Swinton, who played her mother in *The Souvenir* films, and who has a double role here, portraying in this film both Julie and her aging mother. Her skillful acting ensures that we perceive the full uncanniness of doubling, of seeing two people in conversation, but at the same time, the breaking down of the boundaries of the self through the assumed, internalized gestures of the other. [Fig. 27.] Beyond the elements of grief horror, the film deals in this way with not only apprehension and death (of one's own observed in the inevitable finitude of the life of one's parent) but also with the deeply intimate and uncanny identification, the exchanges or ghostly hauntings taking place between mothers and daughters, that one realizes especially in a retrospective self-analysis. Hogg sets up an uncanny symmetry in the mother's painful memory of going through a miscarriage and the daughter's fear of losing her mother as well as in the way in which the mother worries about the future of the daughter who is childless, but who, in a reversal of roles, cares for her as if she were her child. Furthermore, there is an unsettling impression

of uncanniness in the seamless fusion between the familiarity of the situation and emotions (the memory of spending a few days together with one's mother in a hotel and the intimacy of both real and imagined conversations) and the distancing effect of the perceived artistic contrivances. In the same way as we can see the haunted manor as a metaphor for all the emotionally charged spaces in Hogg's films, we may find this doubling symptomatic for the uncanniness of the merger between memory and imagination, as well as between strangeness and familiarity that we see at the heart of Hogg's autofictional cinema. Nicholas Royle writes that according to Freud the uncanny "has to do with a sense of ourselves as double, split, at odds with ourselves," and adds that "it is impossible to think about the uncanny without this involving a sense of what is autobiographical, self-centred, based in one's own experience" as well as "a sense of ghostliness, a sense of strangeness given to dissolving all assurances about the identity of a self," concluding that "the uncanny is thus perhaps the most and least subjective experience, the most and least autobiographical 'event'" (2003, 16).

This ghostliness of identities in transcoding personal experience into art appears the strongest in the screening of Julie's graduation movie in *The Souvenir: Part II*. Beginning with the painted and animated image of a striking (Rococo) pink curtain (resembling a vulva) that reminds us of René Magritte's characteristic curtains [Fig. 28], this film within the film is titled, like the first movie, *The Souvenir*. However, despite suggesting with the title written in the same typeface a strange loop connecting this film to the first *Souvenir* film, it should be called perhaps: "This Is Not a Film." Firstly, because this is clearly not the film we saw being rehearsed and shot (which attempted to recreate and reflect on the film that Hogg actually did make, i.e. *The Souvenir*), but an entirely different, eerie and theatrical, surrealist dream summary of the first film [Fig. 29], signalled from the very beginning through the symbolism of the curtains. Secondly, what we see is, paradoxically, a short film that could have been made in the past, but was not (as it recalls the style of Hogg's first film that she did make, but not on the subject of *The Souvenir*), and therefore it appears as the product of a present-day reflection, of an affective time travel.[23] As such, it is yet another manifold amalgamation of fiction and reality. It is a self-pastiche of Hogg's first short film made in 1986, titled *Caprice* featuring a young Tilda Swinton (credited at the time as Matilda Swinton) absorbed by the fake glamour

23 The credit sequence of this graduation film nested inside *The Souvenir: Part II* reveals for the first time that Julie's family name is Harte, indicating perhaps through the homophony with "heart" that this is an alter-ego character with whom the author embarks on an emotional, self-reflective journey.

of a women's magazine. In the original film, Swinton steps into an enchanted world through the magazine's giant cover image and passes through sets unfolding something like the *Alice in Wonderland* of a modern woman whose image is being remodelled by fashion, advertisements and the movies. In the fictional graduation movie from *The Souvenir: Part II*, Swinton's real-life daughter slides her hand into a magnified version of Fragonard's painting, *The Souvenir*, and enters another cartoonish world that imitates in many ways the style of *Caprice* while representing key moments of Julie and Anthony's story and hinting at some of Hogg's key cinematic influences. [Fig. 30.] Julie's red shoes that magically lift her in the air and transport her into the realm of fantasy resemble not only Dorothy's ruby slippers from Victor Fleming's *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), but also remind us of Hogg's old favourite, the tragic story from *The Red Shoes* (1948) directed by Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger, in which the titular shoes symbolize the fatal attraction of art for a young ballet dancer who is torn between her love for a young man and her passion for dancing. Unlike Powell and Pressburger's heroine, however, who cannot reconcile life and art, Hogg shows us through the surreal sequence of Julie stepping into the picture, and walking into a heavily stylized world, the way life finds its way into art.

According to Adrian Martin's astute observation, the fictional graduation film runs for exactly eight and a half minutes, and could therefore be a "cryptic homage to Fellini" (2022). Seeing it as such a gesture of cinematic homage might be appropriate as Hogg indeed revisits the same questions regarding the connection of life and art in a dreamlike final synthesis and in a multiple *mise-en-abyme* structure that distinguished Federico Fellini's modernist masterpiece. The series of painterly and theatrical tableaux that Julie passes through offer not only a summary of *The Souvenir* film, but also foreground the contrast between the search for emotional involvement and the eerie effect of artificiality which define Hogg's affectively intermedial cinema. Julie's leap into the painting is emblematic for this cinema in which a conspicuous tableau composition becomes a place of entry into a pictorial space opening up in-between different arts and, at the same time, an uncanny passage between life and art.

Short Conclusion. Hogg's Intermediality and the Homeliness of the Uncanny

In the three films discussed here, *The Souvenir*: *Part I* and *II*, as well as *The Eternal Daughter*, Joanna Hogg delves into her "locked away" traumatic memories and

fears. The films unravel a densely layered multimedial "fabric" using a variety of image forms, and references to literature, painting, music and films through which Hogg continuously draws both on her experiences of life and on her own experiences of the arts, suggesting their inseparability. Bringing the often hidden "impurity" of cinema to center stage in this way supports Alain Badiou's idea that cinema does not start with a void to be filled like Stéphane Mallarmé's famous blank page, on the contrary, it always struggles with "the infinity of the visible, the infinity of the sensible, the infinity of the other arts" (Badiou 2013, 227).

The collage effect of mediums and the fragmented, vignette style narrative blends the impression of the real and the imaginary, and unfurls temporal juxtapositions of past and present. It also offers a puzzling blend of the personal and the conceptual, in which the immersion into the evoked, recognizable reality on screen, into the subjective space of memory (or fantasy) and the empathy with the characters is both facilitated through certain techniques (e.g. through improvised dialogues, atmospheric use of *mise-en-scène* or pictorial styles, etc.) and thwarted by the perception of an artificial constructedness, which induces aesthetic distance. The uncanny doublings, the *mise-en-abyme* structure and recurrence of scenes or images only highlight this ambivalence.

One of key issues about art that is directly addressed in *The Souvenir* in the discussions around Julie's plans for making a film about Sunderland is the question of authenticity. Abandoning this early project about a poor, working class environment for an extremely stylized, surreal movie, however, does not simply mean that Julie (and accordingly, Hogg) has merely swapped "Ken Loach for Ken Russell" (Martin 2022). The short film within the film offers a reflection on the emotional "souvenirs" of Hogg's youth from the point of view of a much more mature artist who conceives these films to sketch her own portrait of an artist in the making by embracing the seemingly antithetical qualities of the distancing, objectifying as well as the confessional or healing potential of art. The films suggest that authenticity in art is not contingent on realism or political commitment but on the manner in which a creative artist ultimately recognizes that regardless of style, art is not a mere imitation of, or an intellectual reflection on life, but a part of life. For an artist, art and life are in many ways inseparably and indeed uncannily interlinked.

In *The Souvenir* films, Hogg creates a cinematic space replicating meaningful venues from her past by using personal objects invested with affective value and snippets of her past frozen into pictures. In *The Eternal Daughter* she imbues a typical location for her own family background with a sense of unease and strange

familiarity through motifs and stylistic effects of Gothic fiction and films. The auto-fictional narratives of all these films unfold within artificially created spaces haunted by memories and by a variety of artistic mediums. Nevertheless, as Michel de Certeau reminds us in his book on the everyday practices of appropriating space, we need to acknowledge that "haunted places are the only ones people can live in" alongside the "many different spirits hidden there in silence" (2011, 108). In this sense, Hogg merely amplifies this ghostly composite nature of our lived environments. Furthermore, Hogg's self-reflexive cinema may often seem unwelcomingly fragmented, disconnected and abstract, but by way of unravelling multiple (and multiply mediated) layers of fiction and reality to bring her own world's hidden "spirits" to light and come to terms with them, it also gestures towards what Heidegger described as the "counter-turning" (*Gegenwendigkeit*) of the uncanny in which "the departure from the homely […] turns counter to itself and becomes a way of seeking and attaining the homely" (Whity 2021, 790). Hogg daringly experiments with intermediality enhancing narrative techniques and motifs that infuse her art with uncanniness and does not mitigate its inherent tensions in order to draw attention to the mutual hauntedness of life and art.

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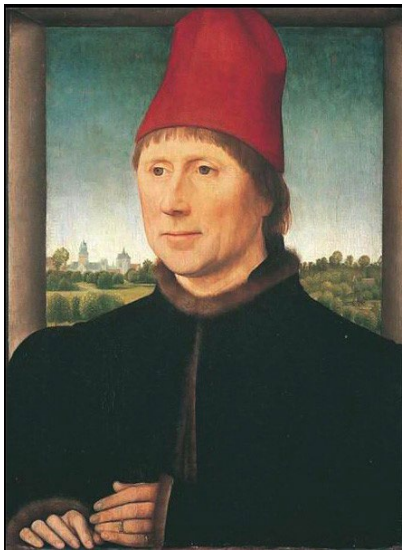


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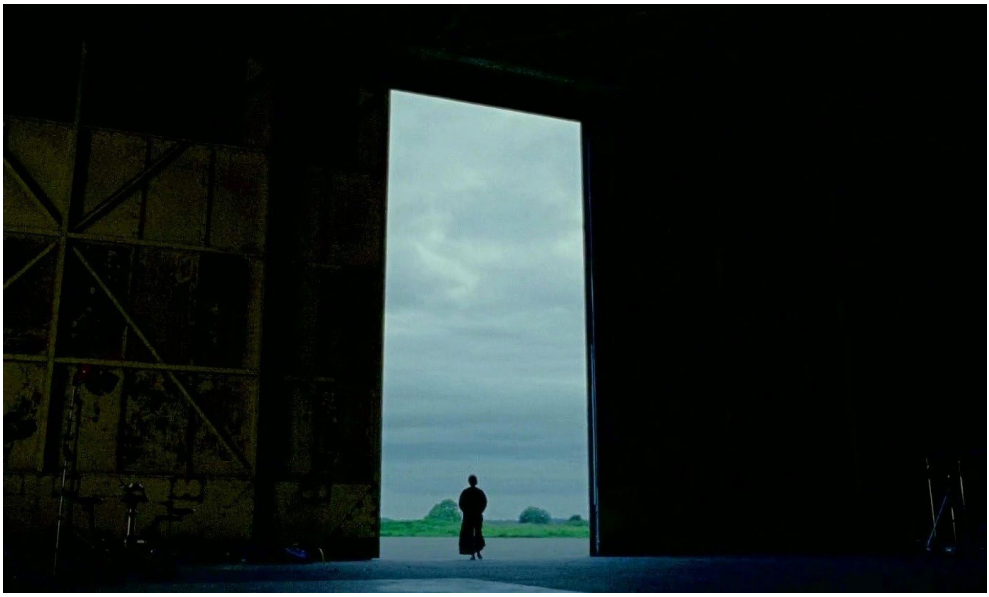
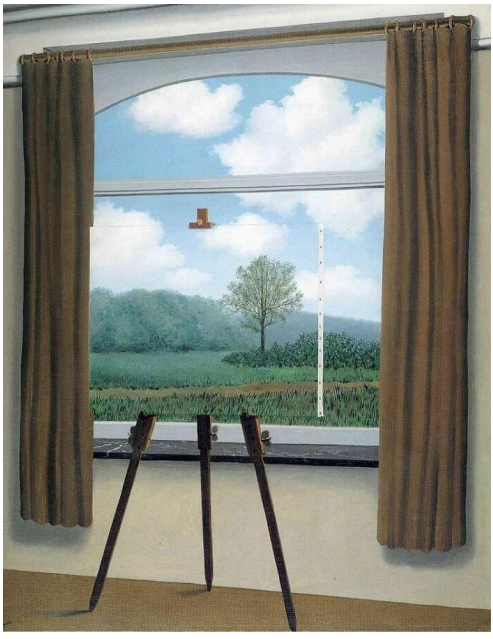


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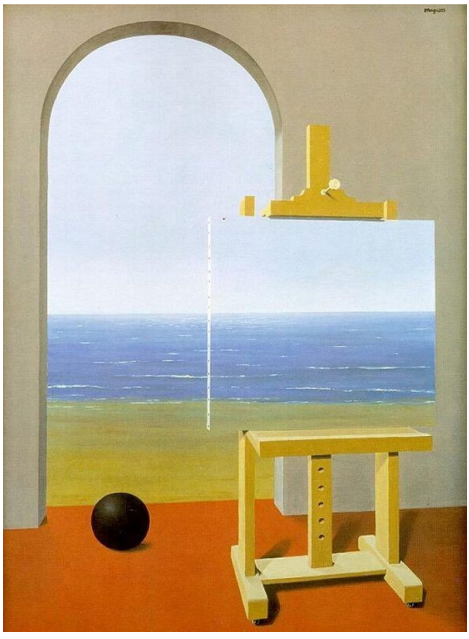


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