



## PREVIEW

# The Eternal Daughter

+ Q&A with writer-director Joanna Hogg and actor Tilda Swinton

### The Eternal Daughter

A film by: Joanna Hogg  
©: Eternal Daughter Productions Limited,  
British Broadcasting Corporation  
An Element Pictures production  
In association with: JWH Films  
Presented by: A24, BBC Film  
Executive Producers: Rose Garnett,  
Martin Scorsese  
Produced by: Emma Norton, Andrew Lowe,  
Joanna Hogg  
Co-producer: Eimhear McMahon  
Location Managers: Alex Tridimas, Faye Newton  
Post-production Supervisor: Deborah Harding  
1st Assistant Director: Paolo Guglielmotti  
Script Supervisor: Sara J. Doughty  
Casting Director: Olivia Scott-Webb  
A film by: Joanna Hogg  
Director of Photography: Ed Rutherford  
Visual Effects: Ghost VFX  
Special Effects Supervisor: Scott MacIntyre  
Editor: Helle Le Fevre  
Production Designer: Stéphane Collonge  
Art Director: Byron Broadbent  
Costume Designer: Grace Snell  
Hair & Make-up Designer: Siobhán Harper-Ryan  
Key Hair & Make-up/Prosthetic Application:  
Alice Jones  
Prosthetics Make-up Designer: Mark Coulier  
Production Sound Mixer: David Giles  
Re-recording Mixer: Jovan Ajder  
Supervising Sound Editor: Jovan Ajder  
Cast  
Tilda Swinton (*Julie, Rosalind*)  
Joseph Mydell (*Bill*)  
Carly-Sophia Davies (*receptionist*)  
Louis (*Louis*)  
August Joshi (*taxi driver*)  
Crispin Buxton (*cousin*)  
UK 2022  
96 mins  
Digital

A BFI release

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**SIGHT AND SOUND**

Joanna Hogg is interested in how we are shaped by the rooms we occupy. The starkest example is *Exhibition* (2014), set in the unique home that architect James Melvin designed with so many nooks and crannies that a strained couple are able to live together apart. Her most recent films – *The Souvenir* and *The Souvenir Part II* – reveal this preoccupation through the fastidious recreation of the Kensington flat where Hogg spent her early adulthood, going so far as to bring in old furniture to decorate the bedroom of her fictional alter ego, Julie. The ethos seems to be: if she builds it, the film will come.

The setting this time around is a creepy hotel in the Welsh countryside. The opening shows a path flanked by trees, shrouded in a snowy pea-souper, until the yellow beams of a black cab illuminate the scene. In the passenger seats are not one but two Tilda Swintons. One has orange hair and is middle-aged; the other has lighter hair and is elderly. They are driven to a grand Gothic hotel, all stone lions and geometric hedges, where the wind whistles and branches rattle at the windows. Is Joanna Hogg making a ghost story?

Long before showing her hand, she introduces us to the building and its occupants using customary long and stilted takes. At the front desk is a young Welsh lady (Carly-Sophia Davies) who is magnificently uninterested in the art of customer service; a passive-aggressive conversation between her and Tilda the younger runs uncomfortably long. The younger Tilda is intent on acquiring a particular room on the first floor for her and her mother. Clues regarding the significance of this hotel are dropped sparingly into the narrative, ratcheting up a sense of mystery; Hogg withholds basic information about her characters, forcing us to focus on the hotel itself as the younger Tilda roams its corridors at night, fascinated and very alone, with each sound magnified. The *Mary Celeste* vibes are palpable – until Tilda discovers a kindly confidant in the form of the bereaved nightwatchman (Joseph Mydell).

Sharp observational riffs on the ridiculous codes of polite society are paired with genre flourishes. A round make-up mirror contains the receptionist's face as she does her make-up – then it tilts to the side and we see Tilda watching from the top of the stairs. It's a blackly comic reveal that draws attention to the tension between the two women through horror movie grammar.

It is casually revealed that middle-aged Tilda is Julie, while elderly Tilda is Ros, marking an explicit link to the *Souvenir* films, where the mother and daughter have the same names. Ros lived a chunk of her life in this building and Julie is eager to record the memories sparked by returning together. Tilda acting opposite Tilda is bewitching, to the point that this potentially jarring casting stops feeling like a gimmick almost immediately. Her two characters end up as distinct people, and the fact that they have the same face proves a clever way to convey their closeness.

Perhaps the most affecting scene takes place when a ravenous Julie, enthusiastically browsing the hotel's limited menu, is stopped in her tracks by Ros saying she won't eat. "I'm not hungry if you don't have hunger," Julie tells her mother, echoing the scene in *The Souvenir Part II* where Julie asks how her mum felt on taking a tragic phone call and Ros responds, "I felt through you." Hogg closes a loop here, presenting the mother-daughter relationship as one of identity-effacing empathy. Another film in competition at the Venice Film Festival, Alice Diop's *Saint Omer*, ends with a speech about how mother-daughter cells merge in the womb. Diop and Hogg form a consensus across their two films: this bond involves transference.

## INTERNAL REFLECTIONS: THE FILMS OF JOANNA HOGG

### Unrelated

Mon 16 Oct 20:35; Sat 25 Nov 18:10

### Exhibition

Thu 19 Oct 18:10; Wed 29 Nov 20:50

### Archipelago

Thu 19 Oct 20:30; Sun 26 Nov 15:00

### The Souvenir

Fri 27 Oct 20:30; Thu 30 Nov 18:10

### The Souvenir: Part II

Sat 28 Oct 20:30; Thu 30 Nov 20:40

### Short Films

Sun 29 Oct 18:10; Tue 28 Nov 20:45

## JOANNA HOGG: INFLUENCES

### Criss Cross

Tue 17 Oct 20:40; Sun 26 Nov 18:40

### Suspicion

Wed 18 Oct 20:45; Sat 21 Oct 18:20

### The Exiles + Bunker Hill 1956

Thu 19 Oct 18:20; Tue 24 Oct 20:40

### Lady in the Dark

Fri 20 Oct 18:10; Sat 11 Nov 12:20

### Margaret

Sat 21 Oct 20:10; Sat 4 Nov 17:30

### The Killers

Sat 28 Oct 12:30; Wed 8 Nov 20:45

### Ticket of No Return Bildnis einer Trinkerin

Sun 12 Nov 18:30; Sat 25 Nov 20:30

### Journey to Italy Viaggio in Italia

Fri 17 Nov 18:20; Tue 28 Nov 18:15

### Italianamerican + The Neighborhood + extract from My Voyage to Italy

Tue 21 Nov 20:40; Mon 27 Nov 18:20

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There are wheels within wheels in *The Eternal Daughter*, which winds down with Julie on her laptop typing up a description of the opening scene we witnessed 90 minutes earlier. As in the *Souvenir* films, Hogg has knitted into her structure questions about what making art about intimate relationships does to the way we embody them. This is a film about a mother and a daughter and memory and space; it is Hogg using the voluptuous form of a ghost story to, once again, explore the issues that afflict her restless artistic soul; it is Hogg having fun with expanding a distinct strain of playful humour, making a nod to one of the most famous mysteries in the cinema canon as she names a room after a dying man's last word, 'Rosebud'.

Sophie Monks Kaufman, *Sight and Sound*, 14 September 2022

Written during the first Covid lockdown in 2020 and shot at an eerily empty Soughton Hall in Wales during the second lockdown, Joanna Hogg's sixth feature film, *The Eternal Daughter*, is an impressive haunted house tale, in which memories and ghosts seep into each other in uncanny and ultimately very moving ways.

The film sits comfortably within the genre – there are spectral sounds at night and wispy fogs shrouding the garden – but it is also recognisably a Joanna Hogg film: expect some of the usual exquisitely awkward meals, painful one-sided phone calls, and unstated family tensions and trauma. It revisits the characters of Julie the filmmaker and her mother Rosalind from the two parts of *The Souvenir* (2019/2021) but works as a standalone film.

'For the first spark of an idea, I tend to go to literature,' says Joanna Hogg. 'It's not about watching something and thinking, "I want to make something like this." It's more about the idea. It might not even be a whole story – just a sentence from a book can take hold... and become something else as I work on a scenario. So far, with the six films I've made, the jumping-off point has often been a novel or a short story.'

In *The Eternal Daughter*, Julie is seen reading Rudyard Kipling's 'They'. This story was a touchstone for the film, and I was lucky to have it recommended to me by Martin Scorsese, who has worked as executive producer on my last three films. He brilliantly picked it out because he had an intuitive sense of where I wanted to go with *The Eternal Daughter*. I've never been moved to tears by a ghost story before. It's especially moving when you realise Kipling wrote it soon after he had lost his young daughter Josephine [to pneumonia]. The story is filled with this pervasive sadness. I was moved but also frightened by it. It helped structure the film, but it's strange how influences find their way into your head and then into the work: it was the mood of the house in it, and the sense that you're not sure where the story is going, what the status of reality is in it, but you're haunted by it.

While I was writing, I read many ghost stories: M.R. James's 'A Warning to the Curious', Algernon Blackwood's 'The Man Whom the Trees Loved', Walter de la Mare's 'Seaton's Aunt', Edith Wharton's 'All Souls'. The list goes on. I was steering clear of Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw* and the Jack Clayton adaptation, *The Innocents* [1961], because I remembered it so strongly from seeing it as a child – and many times since. However, Jovan Ajder, the wonderful sound designer of my films, watched and carefully listened to *The Innocents* and something of it is surely in our film.

Joanna Hogg interviewed by Roger Luckhurst, *Sight and Sound*, December 2023