

## **Turning into my Mother: ageing and the ambivalent experience of family resemblance**

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Family resemblances can have a haunting and potent presence in our lives, yet they are remarkably little researched. People can be deeply moved, fascinated or troubled by a striking resemblance in appearance or character. Resemblances can seem magical and uncanny, capricious (skipping a generation), surprising (popping up unexpectedly), fleeting (appearing in a brief gesture), or inexorable (inevitable, even when they are resisted or denied). The negotiation of resemblance – who is said to take after whom, by whom, and the meaning this has – is a result of the relational dynamics of personal life, and can signify kinship, relational identity and belonging as well as alterity, exclusion and individuality. Resemblances are usually perceived with reference to, but also go beyond, physical and visual appearance both in their manifestations and in what they are thought to signify.

In this presentation I shall consider some of the ways in which processes of ageing and family resemblance are connected in people's everyday experiences, as well as how we might understand the potency and significance of experiences of resemblance at key moments in the life course. In making my arguments, I shall draw on data from an ESRC study of 'Living Resemblances', as well as some more literary evocations of resemblance and ageing.

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