

Being a Woman in the 1950s and the 1960s: Women and Everyday Life in *Ginger and Rosa*

Ezgi Sertalp

Hacettepe University, Ankara, Turkey

The present study aims to focus on the relationship between gender and everyday life and reflect on the meanings of being a woman in the 1950s and the 1960s over Sally Potter's film *Ginger and Rosa* (2012a). The 1950s and the 1960s are marked with significant changes and transformations in terms of the social statuses and everyday lives of women in many countries all around the world. Women began to question their gendered roles and performances, resist "doing gender" and speak out "the problem that has no name" in these years, which would then evolve into the second-wave feminist movement—a significant historical period in women's history. Therefore, an analysis of this specific period is considered significant to understand the relationship between gender and everyday life. Thus, the present study first addresses the relationship between gender and everyday life in general terms, discussing the social construction of gender and how we are taught to do gender through socialization. Then, it examines women's practices, performances, relationships, conflicts, and resistances in their everyday lives throughout the 1950s and the 1960s over the film *Ginger and Rosa*. Considering the historical, social, and political developments at the time, this study tries to explore significant issues within feminist studies such as the relationship between mothers and daughters, and female friendship/sisterhood through the characters in the film, and comprehend what it meant to be a young girl, a woman, a wife, and a mother in both private and public spheres in these years based upon the director's own experiences and memories.

Keywords: gender, everyday life, womanhood, socialization, women's movement

"The Everydayness of Gender"¹: Being a Woman and/or a Man in Everyday Life

In order to acknowledge and discuss the relationship between gender and everyday life, it is first important to underline what is meant and referred by gender. The concept "sex" which is used to indicate the biological differences between men and women is not enough to express and represent different femininities and masculinities within the society and to explain the characteristics and qualifications that both shape and are shaped within the everyday lives of individuals. That is why, along with feminism, the concept "gender" is used instead, as femininity and masculinity are cultural constructions and thus change in accordance with the historical and social contexts they are constructed within. The distinction between sex and gender is significant in that it stresses that femininity and masculinity are not innate and immutable characteristics but identities built and shaped by the society. This means that the acts and deeds of individuals living within a certain society

Ezgi Sertalp, Ph.D. candidate, research assistant, Department of Radio-TV and Cinema, Faculty of Communication, Hacettepe University, Ankara, Turkey.

¹ Holmes, 2009, p. 4.

define their identities, who they are, via certain social manners and rules of that particular society. Thus, social structures and values work as strict and restrictive factors telling women and men who they are and *how* they should live.

This perspective clearly indicates the relationship between gender and everyday life. The social norms, values, and institutions determining and regulating the everyday lives of individuals shape their identities and personalities as well, and thus “gender” them (Holmes, 2009, p. 2). Nevertheless, the biological characteristics attributed to *sex* should not be ignored when it comes to gender. The distinction between sex and gender has brought along many discussions, and, in time, it has become clear that the relationship between gender and everyday life cannot be discussed without mentioning sexed bodies of women and men. Therefore, people’s identities and performances in their everyday lives both reflect their relationships with their bodies and determine the construction of their genders through these relationships. This means that whether an individual has a female or male body is not the sole factor determining their identities and actions in their everyday lives. Apart from that (and of course, still related to this), what being a woman or a man means in a certain society at a certain historical period, which social definitions, expectations, and performances determine femininity and masculinity, and what dominant thoughts and ideas are regarding *how* to be a woman and a man, all affect and shape the existence of individuals.

We see that many things we do and perform during our everyday lives are directly related to our gender and gendered bodies. Everything from our clothes to our attitudes and behaviors are not only related to whether we are women or men, but also confirm and maintain the definitions and representations of women and men within the society. Besides our appearance and overall attitudes and behaviors, how and why we exist (or not exist) the way we do in every area of the society is also closely related to our gender. How a woman or a man should behave at home, school, work or in her/his leisure time and/or how s/he is expected to talk to her/his friends, family members, children or bosses cannot be considered outside the definitions of women and men of that particular society. Those who act and behave outside this set of *social expectations* face the danger of being excluded from the society and are forced to live within pre-determined norms and values. Called as the marginal/other in the society, these people are considered to threaten the peace, harmony, and safety of the society, which is founded on the firm judgement that there are *naturally* two types of people: feminine women and masculine men (Garfinkel, 1967).

The structures and foundations of a society have a profound effect on the *gendering* of individuals as women and men. This means that gender is learnt, experienced, and constantly maintained. Holmes suggests that certain structures and institutions such as family, education system, and the mass media are “key agents of socialization” and play a significant role in teaching people how to be a woman and a man (2009, p. 36). Suggesting that gender is socially constructed indicates that people are not only gendered within the above-mentioned given social rules, norms, and structures but also born into this established system and, so to say, forced to experience and perform certain behaviors in order to comply with their gender-based roles. In his book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1956), sociologist Erving Goffman likens the social life to a drama and individuals to actors playing parts in it. Examining people’s interactions in their everyday lives, Goffman (1956, p. 31) calls all the performances and roles people display as “social selves”, one for every occasion, any period of time, and each person or groups of persons interacted with; and explains “social self” via William James’ words:

... we may practically say that he has as many different social selves as there are distinct groups of persons about whose opinion he cares. He generally shows a different side of himself to each of these different groups. Many a youth who is demure enough before his parents and teachers, swears and swaggers like a pirate among his "tough" young friends. We do not show ourselves to our children as to our club companions, to our customers as to the labourers we employ, to our own masters and employers as to our intimate friends. (James as cited in Goffman, 1956, p. 31)

The excerpted paragraph above might seem so simple and ordinary, but, in fact, the examples from everyday life are significant in that they show people build their selves and different identities through *too casual* moments and interactions. Goffman (1956) stresses the importance of gender in the performances and roles of individuals and says that the social life is lived according to masculine and feminine scripts. His argument that everyday life is built upon feminine and masculine performances and roles indicates that gender is not an arbitrary category but a vital construction for the maintenance of both everyday life and the communication and interaction required within that everyday life.

Although significant for drawing attention to gendered interactions, performances and roles in everyday life, Goffman's arguments also brought along various criticisms and discussions (Garfinkel, 1967; Kessler & McKenna, 1985). Criticisms often focused on the supposedly conscious and deliberate nature of performances and roles, and, especially when it comes to gender, the importance of the social factors. One of the most striking criticisms to Goffman was Judith Butler's statement (1990/2010) that gender cannot be reduced to mere performances and constructs us as thinking and acting subjects as a whole. According to Butler (1990/2010), gender is a social construction that builds the reality in which people live their lives. Individuals are defined as women or men based on whether they have female or male bodies at birth, and this gender label determines how they will live, how they will be treated, what they can do, and how they should act. Therefore, Butler's main criticism is that gender should be acknowledged as a general way of conceiving/perceiving the world that constructs individuals as women and men, rather than mere conscious actions. Though they differ and conflict at some points, all these discussions are significant in that they seem to share a common ground: Gender is something that one constantly learns, experiences, and performs throughout her/his life. Therefore, in the next chapter of this study, the relationship between gender and everyday life will be examined focusing on women and their everyday practices, struggles, and performances of femininity.

Teaching Women Womanhood: "Be the Woman of Your House, the Mother of Your Children!"

The history of feminism does not date back so long. Towards the end of the 18th century, Mary Wollstonecraft wrote *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1796), which has been acknowledged as the primary resource in women's studies even to this day, in an effort to stand up against the restrictions imposed upon women to stay at home and away from the public sphere and politics (Holmes, 2009, p. 22)². Although we still have a long way to go, it would not be wrong to say we've made a significant progress in our relationship with both each other as women and men and with the society we live in, considering all the movements for gender equality, the developments and improvements regarding gender in everyday life and the academic studies and researches in the field especially since the 1960s. We have already named what Betty Friedan called "the problem that has no name" in *The Feminine Mystique* (1963/2001) where she addressed the constraints and

² There are a few feminist resources written before the 18th century; however, Wollstonecraft's book is accepted as the first major work of feminist theory in history (Donovan, 2006, p. 17).

distraints of the women living in the America of the 1950s and the 1960s. Moreover, we have fought and still fight many battles and fights for achieving gender equality in both private and public spheres within our everyday lives. Yet even today, we still witness the binary nature of sex within the foundations of the society and experience the advantages and/or disadvantages of being a woman or a man. As the focus of this study will be on the 1950s and the 1960s, it is not possible to mention the history of women's social statuses and movements in detail here. However, before discussing the 1950s and the 1960s in particular, it would be useful to reflect on *learning to be a woman* in general.

“One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman”, says Simone de Beauvoir in her book *The Second Sex*, and continues: “No biological, psychical or economic destiny defines the figure that the human female takes on in society; it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine” (1949/1956, p. 273). Claiming that girls and boys go through the same cognitive and physical phases and show the same developmental characteristics to a certain age, Beauvoir argues that, unfortunately, this does not stop the discriminatory attitudes and behaviors of parents and the society, and girls and boys are gendered through different acts and conditions:

If, well before puberty and sometimes even from early infancy, she seems to us to be already sexually determined, this is not because mysterious instincts directly doom her to passivity, coquetry, maternity; it is because the influence of others upon the child is a factor almost from the start, and thus she is indoctrinated with her vocation from her early years. (Beauvoir, 1949/1956, pp. 273-274)

Beauvoir suggests that girls are thought to be different from boys, and treated as such, using the concepts of both psychoanalysis and existentialist philosophy. According to her, the child who tries to exist as a whole separating from the mother becomes alienated from her/his own body (Lacan's mirror phase theory). This “sense of abandonment”, in Beauvoir's account, results in certain behaviours in children such as trying to attract the attention of adults and making performances in this regard. Girls experience all these processes at a slower pace while boys have to go through harder and harsher times. What is at stake here is the fact that girls are separated from their mothers much more slowly, are shown affection and care more than boys, and are dressed up and almost played with like dolls paves the way for their emotional, fragile, and naïve characters in the future. On the other hand, boys are gradually deprived of affection and kisses, are preferred to play outside rather than staying at home with their mothers, and are brought up with certain impositions such as “boys don't cry”, which causes them to go through different growth processes than girls. They are coded as the strong and tough men of the future even when they are only little children (Beauvoir, 1949/1956, pp. 274-276). Similarly, Beauvoir argues that coding the penis of a boy as an indicator of his manhood, a source of pride and displaying it as a showpiece is also a significant part of the same gendering process. The genital of a girl is by no means an interest for neither the mother nor anyone around her; it receives “no reverence or tenderness” at all;

in a sense she has no sex organ. She does not experience this absence as a lack; evidently her body is, for her, quite complete; but she finds herself situated in the world differently from the boy; and a constellation of factors can transform this difference, in her eyes, into an inferiority. (1949/1956, p. 277)

Moreover, while girls are constantly interfered, restrained, and told how to get dressed, where to go, and what to do, boys are consciously set free to do as they please; and girls are held responsible from the household chores whereas boys are particularly kept from doing them. Thus, according to Beauvoir, “a vicious circle is formed” (1949/1956, pp. 284-285). Girls who do not have the necessary equipment to discover and make sense

of the world eventually cannot get to know who they are and build their identities. Oakley (1985), too, argues that this socialization within the family is quite significant in teaching girls and boys to act *properly* according to their gender, as how they are treated differently in family has a great effect on the future behaviours and characters of the children. What Beauvoir calls the *gendering process* brings to mind Butler's conceptualization "the girling of the girl" in her book *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (1993, p. 7). According to her, children who are declared girls at birth become a part of a social discourse and structure surrounding that sex throughout their lives. That is, their sex determines and defines their existence as a whole upon this earth. One of Butler's (1993) most significant and innovative contribution to gender and identity discussions is her claim that one in fact has the power to interfere this gendering process.

The phenomenon "teaching women womanhood" which has been briefly explained in light of the concepts and ideas of Beauvoir and Butler above starts to unfold in the 1950s and the 1960s. These years correspond to a significant period in the history of women's struggle for equality when important steps were taken towards changing women's statuses and roles in both their everyday lives and the society, which would then evolve into the second wave feminism movement especially at the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s. The 1950s and the 1960s welcomed many significant developments and transformations for women in many countries around the world. Following the First World War, women started to gain important social and political rights in the 1920s and the 1930s, feminist movement began to rise and women finally got out of their houses. During the Second World War, they started to take over the positions of men at working places. However, in the post-war period, all these developments came to a stop and deteriorated when the belief that women belong inside, and not outside, prevailed once again especially among the middle class. This was partly due to the Freudian argument linking sex to anatomy, which was spreading among the American middle class. According to this argument, being a woman or a man determines their social statuses and their power and value in accordance with the opposite sex: "Anatomy is destiny" (Donovan, 2006, p. 115) says Freud. This biologically determined belief means that women should live and act *like a woman*, and men *like a man*, according to their sexes (e.g., their anatomies!), and women should not compete with men for they could easily be called deviants and assumed to have pathological tendencies. This Freudian idea attributing a subordinate position to women and, according to the feminists of the time, clearly looking down on them forms the basis of what Betty Friedan described as the "feminine mystic" (Donovan, 2006, pp. 114-130).

Although the "feminine mystic" described the mental and social statuses of women in America in the 1950s and the 1960s, it was not only the American women that confronted the "problem that has no name". Circumstances were quite similar for women all around the world during these post-war times, and Britain was no exception. Spencer remarks:

It would be unwise to consider late 1950s [British] society without examining the way in which the infrastructure of that society contained assumptions of, and prescriptions for, adult gender roles. These assumptions in turn affected the creation of adult identity in terms of an individual's expectation of their future life pattern. (2005, p. 23)

Being a perfect wife and mother was the prerequisite of being a woman, and women were constantly told how to act, be feminine—i.e., "ladylike" (Holmes, 2009, p. 34), win and keep their men, and take care of their children and houses. Their roles were pre-determined by the society to live up to the ideal woman image. Girls were expected to marry not long after school, and, even if they were to work, it had to be only until they got married. Married women were not welcome to work, because they belonged inside, taking care of their

husbands, children, and the house. Due to the 1944 Education Act, children were sent to grammar, technical or secondary schools at the age of 11³, and, as the society was highly based on the class division, most of them attended the secondary schools and left at the age of 15 with no proper education or qualification (Quinault, 2001). In fact, the society's expectations and prescriptions for adult gender roles could be seen in the education system, too, as all the girls attending grammar and secondary schools were also given a "domestic science education" (Spencer, 2005, p. 51) where they learnt "cookery, household management, darning, sewing and even how to iron a shirt properly" (Castelow, n.d.). Higher education was clearly not an option for the majority of women, as education, career, and politics were men's areas and were not included in the ideal woman definition.

Even though women slowly began to work, this was only seen as a part time job besides their *real* jobs, i.e., being housewives. The Beveridge Report published in 1942 in order to establish a welfare state and an equal society played a part in women's employment in post-war Britain. However, the Report was quite controversial in that it described domesticity as women's *natural* role, unpaid *job*, and lifelong duty.

The Report clearly presented "women" as a universal grouping irrespective of class. Any woman falling outside the category of dependent "housewife" was designated a "problem": "There was also the problem of the woman whose marriage ceased, not through the death of her husband but through divorce, separation or desertion". The idea of citizenship was a recurrent theme in the rhetoric of the welfare state, but it was a gendered citizenship in which women's private roles, as wives and mothers, were also the most significant part of their role as public citizens. (Spencer, 2005, p. 24)

Although the Report was highly criticized due to its strict definitions of gender roles and duties, some feminists and researchers also stated that it paved the way for higher employment opportunities for women. Indeed, to an extent this might be true because "[t]here was a growing awareness that women's wartime entry into the workforce was not a temporary aberration" (Spencer, 2005, p. 83). And, not surprisingly, women were feeling a great uneasiness and dissatisfaction with their positions within the society towards the end of the 1950s. They were not happy with themselves and their lives, and soon began to question and talk about "the problem that has no name" with each other, finally giving way to discussing what the problem actually was.

The moment when women first started to think about and accept this undefinable emptiness and despair they were feeling and realized that they were not alone marks quite a significant turning point in the history of women's struggle. Women started to say "I" and search for their true selves and other possibilities of existence. In the 1960s, when the problem was finally named, women gradually left behind their thoughts that they should feel ashamed for their distress and they would be excluded from the society should they talk about their problems. Sally Potter, the director of the film *Ginger and Rosa* (2012a), says that she was a teenager during the social developments of the 1960s. The daughter of atheist and anarchist parents—"outsiders" she says, Potter says she grew up constantly questioning life (Fowler, 2009, p. 127), which, together with the social consciousness she had and the historical circumstances she was in, eventually affected her personality, identity, and her future works. The film *Ginger and Rosa* analyzed in the following chapter especially carries significant traces of the period during which the director was a teenager, and questions what it meant to be a girl, a woman, a wife, and a mother in the 1960s based on her personal experiences.

³ The 11+ system in education was considered "the first step on the road to adulthood, (...) a turning point" (Spencer, 2005, p. 167).

“I’ll Explode If I Say It!”: The Silent Scream of a Girl in the 1960s

Ginger and Rosa opens with an image of the atomic bomb dropped on the city of Hiroshima in 1945, followed by an image of two women holding hands giving birth to the protagonists of the film Ginger (Elle Fanning) and Rosa (Alice Englert). We then see a brief scene of the two little girls swinging hand in hand and their mothers standing arm in arm by their side, and the film directly cuts to the year 1962 when Ginger and Rosa are now 17-year old young girls. The film then continues with various narratives of the relationships between the two girls and the girls and their mothers within the social and historical context of the time. *Ginger and Rosa* addresses the 1960s, a period when the Cold War was escalating, significant changes occurred regarding women’s social rights and roles, and the effects of the social movement known as the Sexual Revolution became visible. Especially 1962 was a year of fear due to the Cuban Missile Crisis between the USA and the Soviet Union, which caused great panic among people who had to live with the dreadful thought that there might be an explosion any time and their lives could come to an end. This social and political atmosphere forms the background of the film. The protagonists are two very close friends Ginger and Rosa who, on one hand, rebel against their parents and want to grow up quickly to become women, and, on the other hand, fear of growing into adults and carrying life’s burden. Throughout the film, we watch the transformation of the two girls’ friendship. The film discusses various narratives such as womanhood, motherhood, mother-daughter relationships, fear of growing up and fear of death, all surrounding this friendship.

Ginger is a young girl who questions life and tries to find out who she is and what she wants in life. Thanks to the social and political atmosphere she lives in, Ginger starts to reflect on big issues, take an interest in politics, and actively participate in marches and protests on the streets and political meetings. She mostly occupies herself with *serious* thoughts and matters rather than the *girly* stuff that is expected from a girl at her age, and she wants to be a poet when she grows up. We watch Ginger, a calm and quite character, express her thoughts and feelings through her poetries throughout the film. Her poetries are usually about the nuclear crisis and death that occupy her mind day and night; yet she sometimes pours her inner world in lines. Rosa, on the contrary, is interested in boys and wants to discover her sexuality and femininity. She does not care about social and political matters; she just wants to *live her life*. Both Ginger and Rosa constantly conflict with their mothers, who are housewives that gave up their own lives for the sake of their families, and if there is one thing that the girls agree about their future, it is that they do not want to be like their mothers.

At this point, it is possible to say that Ginger has an awareness and consciousness ahead of her time as a young woman. Whereas women were just realizing and talking about the “problem that has no name” at the beginning of the 1960s, Ginger actively participates in marches and protests as a female activist with a social and political consciousness and writes poetries about these matters. In her book *The Feminine Mystique* (1963/2001, p. 32), Betty Friedan says that in the 1950s and at the beginning of the 1960s, women “were taught to pity the neurotic, unfeminine, unhappy women who wanted to be poets or physicist or presidents”, which clearly reveals that women who wanted to exist in such areas that obviously belonged to men could not possibly be considered women in those years. A *real* woman never chases career, education, and politics, as these are “the independence and the opportunities that the old-fashioned feminists fought for” (Friedan, 1963/2001, p. 32). The following dialogue between Ginger and Rosa at the beginning of the film gives the audience some clue regarding the characters:

Rosa: (Holding an issue of "Girl", a weekly comic magazine for girls) It says here that a girl's most important possession is her bubbly personality.

Ginger: Interesting. Do you think Simone de Beauvoir has a bubbly personality?

Rosa: Who?

Ginger: That French writer. She is an existentialist.

Rosa: Maybe she hasn't read *Girl*. Says here that boys don't like girls who are too serious.

Ginger: Oh. Well even so... Did I tell you that I decided to be a poet?

Rosa: I thought you were already.

This dialogue introduces the audience to the different characters and interests of the girls. Ginger's reference to Simone de Beauvoir, a well-known French writer of the time and an important figure in feminist theory, can be considered a salute to the feminist character of the director Sally Potter (and hence Ginger, which will be mentioned later).

Like their characters, we can say that the girls have different relationships with the world they live in. We do not see Ginger's social and political awareness in Rosa. Although she might seem breaking the norms by hanging out with boys and acting as she pleases and, just like Ginger, does not want to end up like her mother, this is more likely an act of disdain for and rebel against her mother, who has been stuck at home, abandoned by her husband, and does nothing but complains all the time, rather than social consciousness. When Ginger's father leaves home *once again*, the two girls talk in the park. Rosa says "Our mothers are pathetic. They don't believe in anything. [Ginger: Or do anything, that's the point.] Except moaning about stuff. (...) It's no wonder they can't keep their men". This brings to mind the "feminine mystic", according to which women should make an effort to win over and keep men. So Rosa's claim that she does not want to be like her mother is not reflected in her actions. Moreover, later in the film, we will watch Rosa have an affair with Ginger's Casanova father Roland (Alessandro Nivola)⁴, which will eventually bring her to a position she has avoided all her life, in her mother's shoes. Although this affair harms the relationship between the two girls, they still strive to maintain their friendship; and in one of their meetings, Ginger says to Rosa "Just wait. He'll dump you, too, when you're old". And Rosa replies that he will not as she is pregnant of his child. This also reminds the audience of the "feminine mystic", for Rosa believes that her pregnancy will keep them together forever (whereas the audience already know from Rosa's own words that her father left home when she was a little girl); and Ginger, on the other hand, struggles in life thinking things do not turn out like that in *real life*. Ginger's confrontation with Rosa in this matter can be read as an effort to understand her own mother. Throughout the film, we see her thoughts and feelings towards her mother change, and this scene marks an important moment in this change.

Ginger's relationship with her mother sheds light on one of the main elements of the women's movement gaining strength towards the end of the 1960s: the mother-daughter relationship. Ginger's mother Natalie (Christina Hendricks) married Roland when she was just a child, and took on the responsibilities of being a wife and mother even though she was still unaware of the world and who she was. Compromising her identity

⁴ Although Roland appears as an activist and a radical who deeply believes in "autonomous thought, personal truth and freedom of action" and lives all his life by these three principles standing up against the authority and breaking the rules, we can see that his actions and behaviors do not go beyond the so called *definitions and norms* of masculinity and "masculine men". Always hanging out with his female students who are at Ginger's age under the name of "breaking the rules", the audience watch Roland as he follows the patriarchal patterns of being a man. Saying "I've spent my entire life fighting against tyranny. Not only the tyranny of the government but also the tyranny of the 'shoulds' and 'oughts' of the so called normal family life", Roland continues the same "so called normal family life" with Rosa later on, like the time we see her cooking for him and standing waiting for an appreciation and approval, just like Natalie used to do before.

and her own life, Natalie tried to fulfill her *feminine duties and roles*, and in time, was driven into great despair and depression. However, we later learn that Natalie actually wanted to receive education and enjoyed playing accordion, singing, and painting, but she had to give up on all these when she gave birth to Ginger. Unhappy with herself and her life, Natalie's greatest concern is that her daughter would do the same mistakes that she did when she was a teenager and live an unhappy life. This is why Natalie tries to restrain and control Ginger all the time and teach her the requirements and responsibilities of being a woman in order to prepare her for life. What Natalie calls mistake is getting married at an early age without knowing anything about domesticity, marriage, and being an adult. Thus, she constantly gets angry with Ginger for spending too much time playing around with Rosa. The discussion Natalie has with Ginger upon going to her school to ask them to assign her daughter with more "domestic science" courses is important in signifying the mother-daughter relationships of the time. We hear Natalie say: "When I had you I was a teenager. A teenager! I didn't know how to boil a bloody egg. (...) I just don't want you to struggle like I did". And Ginger gives a quite striking answer for her time: "But I'm never going to have any babies. Never! I don't want to be like you!"

Natalie and Ginger's argument brings to mind Beauvoir's words about mother-daughter relationships:

the daughter is for the mother at once her double and another person, the mother is at once overweeningly affectionate and hostile towards her daughter; she saddles her child with her own destiny: a way of proudly laying claim to her own femininity and also a way of revenging herself for it. (1949/1956, p. 285)

Beauvoir states that women were feeling a rage inside which they cannot define, describe, and understand due to the situation they were in within the society, and that this rage guided them raising their daughters. According to her, women were taught to befriend other girls, to sew, do housework and cook, and to take care of herself and be attractive (1949/1956, pp. 285-287). Girls learn, then, how a woman *should be and act* first from their mothers, the cornerstone of the family, and then from the school, two fundamental institutions of the society⁵.

Ginger's words "I don't want to be like you!" are no doubt an indicator of a way of thinking ahead of her time, and her strict attitude towards having children stems from her inner conflict against fulfilling the gender roles of the time. Ginger's attitude reminds the connection E. Ann Kaplan made between the Second Wave Feminism and motherhood:

I think (...) at that time feminism was very much a movement of daughters. (...) [F]eminism was in part a reaction against our mothers who had tried to inculcate the patriarchal "feminine" in us, much to our anger. This made it difficult for us to identify with Mothering and to look from the position of the Mother. Unwittingly, then, we repeated the patriarchal omission of the Mother. (2000a, p. 466)

Friedan also makes similar arguments regarding mother-daughter relationships: "In my generation, many of us knew that we did not want to be like our mothers, even when we loved them. We could not help but see their disappointment" (1963/2001, pp. 65-66). Friedan says that the teenage girls she spoke with also said that they did not want to be like their mothers, and, for that sake, they could not be themselves, either. And, unlike the specialists claiming that the problem stemmed from the fact that girls had the same education as boys but when they got back to the *real life*, they could not adapt to their *roles*, Friedan related the problem with girls' fear of growing up. She suggests that when girls come to an age to shape their lives, make their own decisions, and find out who they are, they avoid discovering their identities and do not want to grow up, and, thus, end up

⁵ Remember the "gendering" *nature* of the social institutions and structures shaping individuals' identities.

getting married and being a wife and mother at an early age. Friedan calls this simply as fear of growing up, and, according to her, this is a problem of identity caused by the feminine mystic (1963/2001, pp. 65-68).

Ginger and Rosa follows the traces of the untold problem that women thought they would explode if they said it in the 1950s and the 1960s, and presents the terrifying effects of the growing women's movement and the Sexual Revolution on the traditional patriarchal family structure and the relationships between people around the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. The overall theme of the Cuban Missile Crisis forms the basis of the narrative addressing the above-mentioned issues. The social and political atmosphere of the time and the everyday practices and struggles of women are shown in the film through not only the characters but also cinematographic and technical choices. The *mise-en-scène* of the film is the most striking example of this, and a significant representation of both everyday life and "the everydayness of gender" (Holmes, 2009, p. 4). Meaning "putting into the scene" in French, *mise-en-scène* expresses "the director's control over what appears in the film frame" and includes everything from setting and lighting to the costumes and behaviors and performances of the figures (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008, p. 112).

The first *mise-en-scène* contributing to the narrative in *Ginger and Rosa* is the setting and the use of spaces. Especially the kitchen is considered important in picturing Natalie as the woman of the house and emphasizing the perception of womanhood at the time, focusing on motherhood. Throughout the film, we watch Natalie cooking with her apron on, setting the table, cleaning out, or sitting tired and unhappy in her morning gown. This female image both gives significant clues regarding the women/womanhood of the time and represents the devoted mother and wife. Moreover, seeing inside Ginger's house and witnessing the everyday lives of and relationships between the family members is also an important factor in terms of the upcoming social developments and transformations considering the social and historical context of the film. As prior to the 1950s, it was unlikely that the audience is given the chance to be welcome in the houses and everyday lives of the characters in films. Thus, calling *Ginger and Rosa* a new kind of "kitchen-sink drama"⁶, critic and poet Sophie Mayer says "It seems very familiar to us now, but at the time it was a huge shock to depict people in their kitchens. [...] There was no consciousness in film of that kind of domestic life" (Potter, 2013). There was, also, no social consciousness regarding the dynamics and power relationships within everyday domestic life. Therefore, as audiences our involvement in the houses, everyday lives and private spaces of the characters in *Ginger and Rosa* might be read as an introduction to the social and political atmosphere that was about to change and the women's movement on the horizon towards the 1960s.

The second element of *mise-en-scène* in the film is lighting. Not long after she moves to her father's house, Ginger finds out that Rosa and her father are having an affair. She cannot take seeing Rosa near her father all the time, and one day she knocks on her mother's door. Walking into the house with Ginger through the eyes of the camera, the audience sees inside the house, which was always dark and gloomy until that moment, in light colors this time, shining bright with daylight. The closed curtains are now open, and there sits a canvas and paintings in front of the bright window. We understand that Natalie has finally started to paint again, just like

⁶ "Kitchen-sink drama" is a cultural movement in drama, television, cinema, art, and literature emerged in England towards the end of the 1950s and continued in the 1960s. Aiming to show the domestic conditions of the working class to the audience/reader, the movement tried to shed light on the social and political problems of the time from a socio-realistic perspective. The cultural products of the time were quite realistic and rough compared to previous periods. Therefore, the movement was considered to develop parallel to the British New Wave in the UK and the French New Wave in France in cinema in the 1950s and the 1960s. This indicates that the social and historical context on which the present study is based is a significant historical process where major changes and transformations were observed worldwide.

she used to do before she got married and had children. The change inside the house, one of the main spaces within the film, is striking. This conscious use of lighting and illumination tells the audience that Natalie, now free of the burdens and responsibilities imposed on her as a woman, gets the chance to turn to herself, be herself, and finally be happy; and that maybe, nothing would ever be the same again. Therefore, through *mise-en-scène*, it is possible to express the changes in both characters' moods and the narrative as in temporal and spatial differences. Just like the director Federico Fellini says, “[l]ight is everything. It expresses ideology, emotion, colour, depth, style. It can efface, narrate, describe” (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008, p. 126).

Another important aspect of *mise-en-scène* is costumes and make-up. The most important example in *Ginger and Rosa* is Ginger's clothes. As we have discussed earlier, acting ahead of the *definitions and roles of woman/hood* of the time, Ginger usually wears jeans, baggy sweaters, jumpers, and oversized coats and does not care about her appearance (as she should have!). This is most likely one of her strategies of resistance and opposition to the dominant definitions and roles regarding women. In *The Feminine Mystique*, Friedan says:

One woman told me that she gave up her job in television to become “just a housewife” because her husband suddenly decided his troubles in his own profession were caused by her failure to “play the feminine role”, she was trying to “compete” with him; she wanted “to wear the pants”. (1963/2001, p. 245)

This and many similar examples Friedan gives show that women are never welcome to wear pants, interfere with “men's businesses” and be present and active in “men's areas” and, in fact, in any area within the society outside the house, and this makes men extremely uncomfortable. Behind this uneasiness and insecurity lies the belief that women's involvement in every aspect of the society would shake its foundations. In the film, we notice that Rosa, who at the beginning wears the same clothes as Ginger, changes the way she gets dressed towards the end of the film to attract Ginger's father. Rosa begins to be more feminine, do her hair differently, and wear make-up, which, as a woman, brings her closer to the expectations and norms of the society.

All the above-described elements of *mise-en-scène* indicate that *Ginger and Rosa* tries to depict women's everyday practices and struggles of a certain historical and social period on both a narrative and visual basis. The director Sally Potter explains why she chose the 1960s for the film as follows:

It was a transition, real transition period. Between the postwar fifties—domesticity, people happy to be alive after the Second World War, wanting to build a home, make a family, make a nest. Women were pushed back into the home after having been active in the Second World War. It was a big Doris Day moment for women, which didn't suit all women. And for men, I think many were deeply traumatized by war in one way or another, men were like life at any cost. So I think quite a confusing transition in that regard. But 1962 is very much before the sixties as we think of it. Before the explosions and before the liberation movements before the music and the political revolution. And it was at the height of the Cold War. (...) It was so many things happening at once without a sort of language or kind of moral or ethical code, or even ways of thinking about what was happening. A lot of confusion. A tough time for girls to grow up. Tough. (Potter, 2012b)

All these uncertainties and developments caused people to feel insecure and anxious regarding the future, and the threat of a nuclear war led them to live in fear. The opening scene of the Hiroshima atomic bomb in 1945 and the following images of the lives of the characters could be considered a reference to both the actual threat of a nuclear bomb in the film and the metaphoric bombs to be dropped in the lives of the characters towards the end of the film. The fear and threat of a possible explosion that might end people's lives seems to be only the visible part of much deeper personal problems and fears: The fear of death is used as a symbolic indicator of the fears lying deep inside Ginger's soul.

Having high social awareness and responsibility for a girl at her age, Ginger is interested in social and political issues, not *girly* matters. Ginger drags Rosa to secret political meetings and participates in marches and protests with her mother's friends. The scene in which Ginger's fears surface is when the narrative unfolds for the audience, and we come to understand the meanings behind the words "I'll explode if I say it!" repeated throughout the film. Trying hard to sink in the affair of Rosa and her father, Ginger turns in on herself even more and abandons herself to streets, political marches and protests. What at first begins as the fear of losing her best friend and her father upon Rosa's betrayal turns into the fear that the world will come to an end as she lives with this truth that she cannot understand or tell anyone. Because if Ginger tells what she knows out loud, her world will come crashing down, everything she knows will disappear, the order will be broken, and the relationships will never be the same again. Therefore, Ginger keeps the affair as a secret and tries to act normal to everyone including Rosa, her father, and her mother. However, this *act of normal* does not last long and causes great traumas in Ginger. Finding out about Rosa's pregnancy causes Ginger's buried trauma to surface. In one of the protests she attends, Ginger is taken into custody, where a doctor diagnoses her with depression. So her mother and her friends try to find out what the problem is, and Ginger hardly manages to say "I'll explode if I say it!" in tears; and at that moment, the audience understand that the explosion she has been talking about all along is the explosion inside her. "We're all going to die!" cries Ginger, and understanding that she is not talking about the nuclear war, Bella (Annette Benning) asks her what she really means. Finally, Ginger tells them Roland has been sleeping with Rosa, and the dreaded bomb drops. Panicking so much of what she has just said, Ginger says "I've got to get onto the streets... the leaflets... don't you understand? The world might be about to end", and the audience acknowledges that Ginger has been trying to cover her own trauma by saying they should be doing something otherwise they would all die.

It is quite understandable that Ginger has difficulty in understanding, accepting, and speaking of the affair of her father and her friend and associates it with death considering the patriarchal family structure and pre-determined gender roles of the time. This, indeed, tears down the "feminine mystic" and undermines the clearly determined concepts and values such as womanhood, manhood, and family, all of which form the very basis of the society. Similar to Julia Kristeva's remarks on women who are estranged from the male language and suffer as they speak (Kaplan, 2000b, p. 93), Ginger also believes that she will suffer if she speaks and remains silent. However, that she finally manages to break her silence and talk at the end of the film might be read as a clue of the upcoming women's movement and sexual revolution. Maybe in this story that begins with an explosion, it is possible to assume that Ginger leads the way for future developments as a young girl who does not fit into the pre-defined roles and eventually causes another explosion. This explosion not only solves Ginger's inner trauma but also reveals the problem and sets an example for others suffering from it.

We watch Ginger confront and understand her mother and, in time, be by her side. Ginger's return to her mother might as well be a development that would change the saying "I never want to be like my mother!" and transform the conventional thoughts regarding motherhood and mother-daughter relationship. At this point, E. Ann Kaplan's words might shed light on Ginger's return to her mother, stressing feminists' one-sided relationships with their mothers in the 1960s: "we were unable to see that the mother was as much a victim of patriarchy as ourselves [feminists], constructed as she is by a whole series of discourses, including the psychoanalytic, the political, and the economic" (2000b, p. 173). The film closes with Ginger's final lines she writes in her notebook at the hospital's waiting room where Natalie was admitted upon her suicide attempt when she finds out Rosa's pregnancy:

We had a dream...	Then we shall meet again.
That we would always be best friends.	And I will say...
When we were born,	I loved you, Rosa.
For some, it was the end.	Don't you see?
Now...	But we're different.
It seems there may not be tomorrow.	You dream of everlasting love.
But despite the horror... and the sorrow,	Not me.
I love our world.	Because what really matters...
I want us all to live.	Is to live.
Now Rosa...	And if we do,
You've asked me to forgive.	There will be nothing to forgive.
One day... if mom survives this bitter night,	But I'll forgive you anyway. (Potter, 2012a)

Her mother's suicide attempt forces Ginger to face her fear of losing her. Ever since she finds out about the affair, Ginger starts seeing her mother from a different perspective and slowly understanding her. The change in the way she sees her mother is in fact part of her story of growing up. And this confrontation will lead to many others in life, and, eventually, to a promising future. As her final lines show what really matters is being alive, and if her mother lives and Ginger could be with her, only then Ginger would forgive Rosa and step into a life away from the "feminine mystic".

For girls at the age of 16-17 (Ginger and Rosa in the film), Sally Potter says "they both have the needs of a child and the aspirations of an adult and in a social setting, where there aren't too many rules or boundaries where there's a lot of freedom, Yet there's also a real cost to that freedom". Potter states that she chose to tell the story from the perspective of a young girl through the relationships of both the two girls and the girls and their mothers as she has a particular interest in young girl's transition to adulthood. Having a feminist background, she suggests that these relationships are extremely significant in the developments, identity constructions, and lives of women. Once a young girl herself, Potter says she had close friendships like Ginger and Rosa and recalls that female friendships were considered insignificant in those times: "These are serious, big relationships in which girls discover their beliefs about God and politics and how to shrink your jeans and all the important things. And they're passionate relationships" (Potter, 2012b).

It would not be wrong to assume that *Ginger and Rosa* cannot be analyzed without addressing Sally Potter's character and personality, and the focus of the story is women's narratives and the relationship between women. The film could be read as a multi-layered narrative consisting of stories about being a young girl, being a woman, and being a mother. Trying to communicate different states of womanhood within everyday life from the adolescence of Ginger and Rosa and their relationships with their mothers to the mothers' positions and roles both inside the house and in the society, Potter wants to build a narrative to draw attention to gender roles from the perspective of a woman. The film emphasizes the importance of female friendships and relationships and not staying silent, talking and acting in shaping the identities of women and determining their positions and roles within the society.

Instead of a Conclusion

Ginger and Rosa bears many traces of the director Sally Potter's personality, identity, and life. In fact, many audience and critics agree that the film includes autobiographical elements. Potter, too, states that the story is not completely autobiographical, but "[e]very story to some degree has to draw on personal experience"

(Potter, 2012c). The most striking example in the film is the character Ginger, who resembles significantly the young Potter when she was a teenager. Born in 1949 and almost at the same age as Ginger in 1962 during the Cuban Missile Crisis, Potter reveals that she clearly remembers those times. She grew up witnessing the effects of the Hiroshima atomic bomb and personally attended the marches and protests that Ginger attends in 1962. Potter remembers that people were completely horrified; she herself was thinking that the world might come to an end, and it was a terrifying period of time. Moreover, it is rather meaningful and beyond mere visual concern that Potter asked Elle Fanning, the actress playing Ginger, to dye her hair red just like herself. And, though in the film Ginger and Rosa were two young girls at the age of 17, Elle Fanning was only 13 at the time, Potter's age in the year 1962. Potter wants to draw attention to the relationship between the personal and the political⁷ and associate the everyday crises and challenges to global crises and problems which might sometimes seem so far away but, in fact, they are not. Potter claims that there are parallels between people's fears and concerns in the past and today. She says the primary feeling in such crises is desperation, and due to that, "there's a universalism to the story" (Potter, 2012d).

Sally Potter addresses many issues that we today are conscious and have an awareness of in *Ginger and Rosa* that takes place in the 1960s and shot today. As a feminist woman, Potter wanted to focus on domestic everyday life and family relationships, and women's positions in the house and the society through Ginger's mother. Potter surely did not ignore the fact that women were unaware that the feminist movement was going to begin real soon in 1962. In an interview on this matter, Potter says:

When my mother died in 2010, I remembered—in a way, painfully—the struggles of her and the women of her generation, and experienced them as ... silent partners in the beginning of the time of change in the 1960s. Women, who, in many ways, were sacrificed for that change. (Potter, 2013)

This social awareness of Potter is highly visible in *Ginger and Rosa*, and the director pays homage to all the women who suffered, struggled, and resisted by dedicating the film to her mother in the end credits saying "In loving memory of Caroline Potter, 1930-2010".

References

- Bora, A. (1995). *KadınlarveErkeklerHakkındaBildiğinizBirkaçŞey*. Ankara: T.C. BaşbakanlıkKadınınStatüsüveSorunlarıGenelMüdürlüğü.
- Bordwell, D., & Thompson, K. (2008). *Film art: An introduction* (8th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Butler, J. (1990/2010). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. Routledge: New York.
- Butler, J. (1993). *Bodies that matter: On the discursive limits of "Sex"*. New York: Routledge.
- Castelow, E. (n.d.). The 1950s housewife. *Historic UK*. Retrieved June 2020, from <https://www.historic-uk.com/CultureUK/The-1950s-Housewife/>
- De Beauvoir, S. (1949/1956). *The second sex*. London: Jonathan Cape.
- Donovan, J. (2006). *Feminist theory: The intellectual traditions* (3rd ed.). New York: Continuum.
- Fowler, C. (2009). *Sally Potter*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Friedan, B. (1963/2001). *The feminine mystique*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company.

⁷ "The personal is political" was the slogan of the student movements and the second wave feminism to emphasize the relationship between personal experiences and bigger social and political structures towards the end of the 1960s. The slogan later became popular with Carol Hanisch's article with the same title ("*The Personal Is Political*") written in 1970, and then came to be used as the slogan of all women's movements in time. "Women's liberation movement revealed the overwhelming condition of each and every woman, which they considered their 'personal problems' even though they suffered from it, in their everyday lives; therefore, the most significant success of the movement was to show that these 'personal' problems were in fact subjects of political struggle. This is what the slogan 'The personal is political' is exactly about. To turn the pain, the fear and rage into politics..." (Bora, 1995, p. 83).

- Garfinkel, H. (1967). *Studies in ethnomethodology*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc.
- Goffman, E. (1956). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Social Sciences Research Center.
- Holmes, M. (2009). *Gender and everyday life*. London: Routledge.
- Kaplan, E. A. (2000b). *Women and film*. London: Routledge.
- Kaplan, E. A. (Ed.). (2000a). *Feminism and film*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kessler, S. J., & McKenna, W. (1985). *Gender: An ethnomethodological approach*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Oakley, A. (1985). *Sex, gender and society*. Hampshire: Gower Publishing Company Limited.
- Potter, S. (2012b, September 13). TIFF: Interview with Sally Potter—writer and director of *Ginger and Rosa*. (W. A. Hollywood, Interviewer). *IndieWire*. Retrieved November 25, 2016, from <http://www.indiewire.com/2012/09/tiff-interview-with-sally-potter-writer-and-director-of-ginger-and-rosa-2-210676/>
- Potter, S. (2012c, October 4). Sally Potter: “I dreamed about the nuclear threat most nights”. (C. Shoard, Interviewer). *The Guardian*. Retrieved November 25, 2016, from <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2012/oct/04/sally-potter-nuclear-threat-ginger-rosa>
- Potter, S. (2012d, September 12). Sally Potter on her new film “Ginger & Rosa” and her adoration for actors. (B. J. Renninger, Interviewer). *IndieWire*. Retrieved November 25, 2016, from <http://www.indiewire.com/2012/09/sally-potter-on-her-new-film-ginger-rosa-and-her-adoration-for-actors-45037/>
- Potter, S. (2013, April 7). “Ginger and Rosa”: A study of women’s relationships. (P. Dowell, Interviewer). Retrieved November 25, 2016, from <http://www.npr.org/2013/04/07/176358479/ginger-and-rosa-a-study-of-womens-relationships>
- Potter, S. (Director). (2012a). *Ginger and Rosa [motion picture]*.
- Quinault, R. (2001, April). Britain in 1950. *History Today*. Retrieved June 2020, from <http://www.historytoday.com/roland-quinault/britain-1950>
- Spencer, S. (2005). *Gender, work and education in Britain in the 1950s*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Wollstonecraft, M. (1796). *A vindication of the rights of women: With strictures of political and moral subjects* (3rd ed.). London: J. Jonhson.