**Article title:**

**Nieminen, M. 2018. Regulated and liberated bodies of schoolgirls in a Finnish short film from the 1950s. Paedagogica Historica. International Journal of the History of Education 54 (1-2), 96–113.**

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## Regulated and liberated bodies of schoolgirls in a Finnish short film from the 1950s

**Abstract**

This article focuses on the bodies of schoolgirls as visualised and represented in a short film of Finnish secondary schools for girls in the 1950s. The film, *Oma tyttökouluni* (*My own girls' school*) was released in 1957 and was screened in cinemas in advance of feature films. Although the short film was made in a documentary style, it also includes some filmic elements of a fictionalized narrative. This article explores the representations of schoolgirls' bodies in the visual narrative of the film and examines how the imagery is interwoven with the social contexts and atmosphere of the 1950s and the tradition of Finnish short film production. The paper discusses how the filmic elements create an image of the everyday life in schools and the visualised bodies of the schoolgirls. It examines how the representations of female bodies and girlhood in the school context in the short film construct the imagery of middle class values, acceptable appearances and manners. In addition, the film depicts the sites where the female bodies were liberated from the choreography of schooling and the normative rules and routines of the school. The paper argues that the harmonious style of the film lacks contradictions and contains the ideological connotations and middle class values of the Finnish post-war secondary schooling that girls received.

**Keywords:** body, films, schoolgirls, grammar schools, gender

Title: *Oma tyttökouluni* (*My own girls' school*)
Release: 1957, 10.05 minutes, black and white
Director: Mikko Niskanen
Producer: Suomen Filmiteollisuus (SF) (The Finnish Film Industry)
Release format: Short film, screened in cinemas in advance of feature films
Current availability: The whole short film production of Suomen Filmiteollisuus (The Finnish Film Industry) is owned by Yleisradio (Finnish Broadcasting Company, YLE)[1]; the short film *Oma tyttökouluni* (*My own girls' school*) is available to the public in the open access archive Ylen Elävä arkisto: http://yle.fi/aihe/artikkeli/2013/05/30/helsinkilaisten-tyttokoulujen-arkea-1957

[1] Jari Sedergren and Ilkka Kippola, *Dokumentin utopiat. Suomalaisen dokumentti- ja lyhytelokuvan historia 1944–1989* (Helsinki: SKS, 2015), 39.

## Introduction

Peter Cunningham notes that films concerning education demonstrate how education and schooling are wished to be represented and portrayed.[2] This article concerns a Finnish short film produced in 1957 and its visual narration of a Finnish secondary schools for girls. As Paul Warmington, Angelo Van Gorp and Ian Grosvenor argue, school documentaries can be utilised both as a source of information and as an object of research concentrating on the representational and technical features of the film[3]. The Finnish short film, *Oma tyttökouluni* (*My own girls' school*), creates a scene of crowded staircases and full classrooms, telling the story of the secondary education[4] of the Finnish baby boom generation. At the same time, the film visualises the daily activities in the schools and the lively bodies of schoolgirls hurrying to school and their classes, sitting in the classrooms, praying, doing gymnastics, cooking, sewing, learning first aid skills, dancing and celebrating. The narration of the film has the structure of a drama: it begins in the school's courtyard, where the ring of the bell is calling the pupils to start the day. The schools, their pupils and teachers and schoolwork are introduced through the visualisation of different school subjects, and the flow of the scenes leads up to an outdoor shot where the senior pupils are participating in their school-leaving party.

Like Peter Cunningham, Josephine May argues, by studying films that feature educational sites and subjects, historians of education are able to glean important insights into the ways in which education has been represented in the past.[5] The Finnish girls' school film visualises the known and, at the same time, produces both a more concrete and an almost romanticised image of the girls' schools of the 1950s. For example, it represents how science or art was taught in practice and what classrooms looked like, but conceals the tensions and pressures that secondary education was facing at that time[6]. Furthermore, films – documentary or fiction – and other visual sources can open up new perspectives to help understand the visual images of the schoolchild, and it could be discussed what sort of functional features they

[2] See Peter Cunningham, "Moving Images: Propaganda Film and British Education 1940–45," *Paedagogica Historica* 36, no. 1 (2000): 289–406.
[3] Paul Warmington, Angelo Van Gorp and Ian Grosvenor, "Education in Motion: Uses of Documentary Film in Educational Research," *Paedagogica Historica* 47, no. 4 (2011): 457–72.
[4] Secondary education is here referring to Finnish grammar schools.
[5] Josephine May, "A Field of Desire: Visions of Education in selected Australian Silent Films," *Paedagogica Historica* 46, no. 5 (2010): 623–37.
[6] The tensions and pressures in the Finnish secondary education of the 1950s: see Kyösti Kiuasmaa, *Oppikoulu 1880–1980* (Oulu: Kustannusosakeyhtiö Pohjoinen, 1982), 398–400, 402–5.

employ in a particular context.[7] This article will explore the representations of the bodies of the schoolgirls in the visual narrative of the short film and examine how the created imagery is interwoven with the social contexts and atmosphere of that period and the tradition of Finnish short film production. In addition, it will discuss how the girlhood is represented and visualised in the film.

## The short film: *My own girls' school*

The analysed short film, *My own girls' school* (*Oma tyttökouluni*), was released in 1957 during the period when producing short films and showing them at cinemas was very popular in Finland (1933–1964) owing to the legislation reducing the tax for feature films when presented after short films. The tax reduction was granted to every cinema when it presented educational and scientific short films before the main, long feature films which the audience had come to see. The audience was obliged to watch short films classified as scientific, educational or art films and which were 200–600 metres long (200 meters equals a running time of 7 minutes). The aim of the legislation was to support the national film production and increase the use of movies for educational and cultural purposes.[8]

As one of the films under this tax reduction plan, the girls' school film was intended for a public audience. Paul Warmington, Angelo Van Gorp and Ian Grosvenor note that the reception of the film is also a key contextual issue.[9] The records display that in 1957, each Finnish long feature film reached around 177,000 spectators.[10] Unfortunately, there are no specifically and detail records how the short film was received by the cinemagoers.[11] The director of the film, Mikko Niskanen, began his career in the 1950s, later becoming one of the most famous Finnish film directors of the 1960s and 1970s.[12] Besides short and

[7] Warmington, Van Gorp and Grosvenor, "Education in Motion," 457–72; Catherine Burke and Helena Ribeiro de Castro, "The School Photograph: Portraiture and the Art of Assembling the Body of the Schoolchild," *History of Education* 36, no. 2 (2007): 213–16; Catherine Burke, "Editorial," *History of Education* 36, no. 2 (2007): 165–71, Geert Thyssen, "Visualizing Discipline of the Body in a German Open-Air School (1923–1939): Retrospection and Introspection," *History of Education* 36, no. 2 (2007): 247–64.
[8] Sedergren and Kippola, *Dokumentin utopiat*, 11–16.
[9] Warmington, Van Gorp and Grosvenor, "Education in Motion," 467.
[10] Sedergren and Kippola, *Dokumentin utopiat*, 34.
[11] Cf. Bruno Vanobbergen, Ian Grosvenor and Frank Simon, "Jean Vigo's Zéro de conduite and the Spaces of Revolt," *Paedagogica Historica* 50, no. 4 (2014): 443–59. See also Warmington, Van Gorp and Grosvenor, "Education in Motion," 467.
[12] Niskanen's first long feature film (Pojat[Boys]) was rewarded as the best Finnish film of the year 1962 and he also got an award for the best director. The film is characterized as one of the best debut films in the Finnish film production of all times. See Kari Uusitalo, *Suomen Hollywood on kuollut. Kotimaisen filmin ahdinkovuodet 1956–1963* (Helsinki: Suomen elokuvasäätiö, 1981), 263–64.

documentary films, he directed long feature films and worked as an actor and manuscript writer. During his later successful career, he was even conferred the title of professor and was in his documentary films able to utilise his close relationship with President Urho Kekkonen.[13] The girls' school film belonged to his early projects, when he was working with Suomen Filmiteollisuus (The Finnish Film Industry), one of the largest Finnish film companies producing mainly long feature films. The focus of the company is detectable from statistics: During 1956–1963, Suomen Filmiteollisuus (The Finnish Film Industry) introduced less than 150 short films compared with Suomi-Filmi's (The Finnish Film Company) over 730 short films. Whereas in the long feature film market, Suomen Filmiteollisuus (The Finnish Film Industry) covered over half of all Finnish movies supplied to the cinemas.[14] The girls' school film was part of those rare short film productions made in the late 1950s by Suomen Filmiteollisuus (The Finnish Film Industry).[15]

The opening credits mention that the film was shot in the secondary schools of Helsinki. One of the schools in the film can be identified clearly as Tyttönormaalilyseo[16] in Helsinki. Like all other girls' schools, the schooling lasted nine years (6 + 3), which was one year longer than co-educational schools, and the pupils were 9–20 years of age. Otherwise, the girls' schools resembled co-educational schools; for example, their curriculum was close to the co-educational lyceums' ones. Nevertheless, Tyttönormaalilyseo had one unusual characteristic: it functioned at the same time as a teacher training school.[17]

The short film cannot be described solely as a school documentary film, although it represents a Finnish secondary school for girls in authentic school surroundings in the capital city of Helsinki.[18] The short film tradition and filmic elements hinting at the practices of

[13] Sedergren and Kippola, *Dokumentin utopiat*, 419–20; Sakari Toiviainen, *Tuska ja hurmio. Mikko Niskanen ja hänen elokuvansa* (Helsinki: SKS, 1999), 271.
[14] Sedergren and Kippola, *Dokumentin utopiat*, 38–39. In 1957, Finnish film companies produced altogether 21 new long feature films of which Suomen Filmiteollisuus (The Finnish Film Industry) made thirteen. Kari Uusitalo, *Suomalaisen elokuvan vuosikymmenet. Johdatus kotimaisen elokuvan ja elokuva-alan historiaan 1896–1963* (Helsinki: Otava, 1965), 256–58.
[15] In 1963, the CEO of Suomen Filmiteollisuus (The Finnish Film Industry) sold the company's feature films and short films to Yleisradio that still owns the rights to the short films. Uusitalo, *Suomalaisen elokuvan vuosikymmenet*, 23, 67; Sedergren and Kippola, *Dokumentin utopiat*, 39.
[16] The history of Tyttönormaalilyseo can be traced to the school's establishing year 1869. The girls' school was altered in 1969 as coeducational and in 1974 it changed its name to The Second Teacher Training School of Helsinki University. Tyttönormaalilyseo can be characterized as a school for elite and middle-class girls.
[17] The Annual Report of Tyttönormaalilyseo 1956–1957. D5 Db:10–17. The Archive of Helsingin yhteisnormaalilyseo; Liisa Ketonen, *Suomen tyttöoppikoulut itsenäisyyden aikana peruskoulujärjestelmään siirtymiseen saakka* (Helsinki: Helsingin yliopiston kasvatustieteen laitos, 1980).
[18] Cf. Daniel Biltereyst, "Afterword: School documentaries, Childhood and New Cinema History," *Paedagogica Historica* 47, no. 4 (2011): 573–77.

Finnish long feature films give the film unique features. Nor can it be argued to be a pure propaganda film[19], despite the powerful ways of narration intending to move the audience. The natural settings are recognisable and the film does not make claims which cannot be verified by the previous research into the history of education. This does not negate the fact that the film carries the connotations of a fictionalised narrative, conveying the impression of serene and harmonious school-going and lacking any contradictions or disputes.[20] The girls' school film does not polarise issues[21] but creates the imagery of secondary education and the flowing school days in the girls' school context.

As Paul Warmington, Angelo Van Gorp and Ian Grosvenor argue, the definition of school documentaries comprises nonfiction films with a school setting and a school focus.[22] In that sense, the Finnish girls' school film creates a narration about secondary education especially in gendered surroundings. In the 1950s, the Finnish education system included two different lines after basic education, and secondary schools (single-sex or co-educational schools) differed from continuation schools which were vocationally oriented and targeted at working class children[23]. The girls' schools in the film represented secondary education targeted mainly at middle class and elite children aiming to study at university.

**The short film as a historical source and an object of study**

The technologies of production and distribution and the conventions of a genre shape the visual and visual-aural constructions of the film[24] and in the case of the girls' school film, it was strongly influenced by the filmic and cinematic techniques of the Finnish long feature film tradition. The purpose of this film was to educate and enlighten the audience, like other short films of that kind, and the narrative design of the feature films of the 1950s was heavily

[19] Cf. Angelo Van Gorp, "The Decroly School in Documentaries (1930s–1950s): Contextualising Propaganda from within," *Paedagogica Historica* 47, no. 4 (2011): 507–23.
[20] See also Jeremy Howard, "Afterword: "Screening Schoolhood"," *Paedagogica Historica* 47, no. 4 (2011): 559–65.
[21] Cf. Catharina Martins, Helena Cabeleira and Jorge Ramos do Ó, "The Other and the Same: Images of Rescue and Salvation in the Portuguese Documentary Film Children's Parks (1945)," *Paedagogica Historica* 47, no. 4 (2011): 491–505.
[22] Warmington, Van Gorp and Grosvenor, "Education in Motion," 457–72.
[23] Annukka Jauhiainen, *Työväen lasten koulutie ja nuorisokasvatuksen yhteiskunnalliset merkitykset. Kansakoulun jatko-opetuskysymys 1800-luvun lopulta 1970-luvulle* (Turku: Turun yliopisto, 2002), 283–86. The continuation schools for elementary school leavers were altered into civic schools in 1957.
[24] Warmington, Van Gorp and Grosvenor, "Education in Motion," 457–72. See also Helena Cabeleira, Catharina Martins and Martin Lawn, "Indisciplines of Inquiry: The Scottish Children's Story, Documentary Film and the Construction of the Viewer," *Paedagogica Historica* 47, no. 4 (2011): 473–90.

present. The film creates representations of female students and their bodies visualising accepted manners and appearance of middle class and constructing a romanticised imagery of an everyday life of schools.

Being filmed in the authentic surroundings of girls' schools, it offers the viewer a scene of the concrete elements of schools, such as the interiors and material artefacts of the school. The scenes are located both inside and outside the school buildings. Besides the exterior of the building, the viewer can observe the corridors, staircases, assembly hall, teachers' room, classrooms and special classrooms for gymnastics, home economics, handicraft, art and chemistry. The external shots are situated in the school yard and on the pavements. At one point, the camera even visits a private home.

Likewise, the concrete spaces and artefacts of the schools, the pupils' clothing and hairstyles can be subjects of research. For example, in school photographs, pupils were usually dressed in their Sunday best[25], but the clothing in the girls' school film resembles the more casual everyday outfits of the middle class youngsters of the 1950s than costumes for special occasions.

The tone of the film is light and bright, and it has several scenes which can be characterised as humorous or where the voiceover is joking when telling a story. The visual-aural narrative of the film is entertaining, although it has an educative undertone. The film makes an impression that the enlightening purposes of the film are neatly disguised by the filmic and cinematic techniques, creating a short film resembling the enjoyableness of long feature films. Helena Cabeleira, Catharina Martins and Martin Lawn[26] note that a documentary can be used as a technology of visual persuasion. The filmic elements of the girls' school film construct a visual narration which is easy to look at and accept. As Peter Cunningham states, the power of school documentaries is based on their ability to represent a recognisable reality[27].

When analysing films, one must carefully consider the interpretations made from the research data.[28] Helena Cabeleira, Catharina Martins and Martin Lawn argue that historians must be

[25] Sjaak Braster, Ian Grosvenor and Maria del Mar del Pozo Andreás, "Opening the Black Box of Schooling. Methods, Meanings and Mysteries," in *Black Box of Schooling: A Cultural History of the Classroom*, ed. Sjaak Braster, Ian Grosvenor and Maria del Mar del Pozo Andreás (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2011), 16.
[26] See a technology of visual persuasion Cabeleira, Martins and Lawn, "Indisciplines of Inquiry", 473–90.
[27] Cunningham, "Moving Images," 289–406.
[28] Warmington, Van Gorp and Grosvenor, "Education in Motion," 457–72.

aware that their own gaze and practices of looking are historically and culturally constructed.[29] The interpretative expectations and conventions of looking can hinder making the interpretations, and one's own gaze and practices of looking can be deceptive.[30] As Inés Dussel notes, the visual data has to be considered not only as a "pure" primary source but as the complex iconic production combining different technologies or visual genres and contexts of production and reception.[31]

The filmic characteristics of the short film (camera angle, sound, voiceover, perspective and lighting) were analysed[32] and the method included both the silent viewing of the film and the production of a complete transcript of the film's voiceover.[33] There are altogether six different voiceovers of girls in the film, and their names are listed at the beginning of the film. Because the voiceovers in the film sound like girls of the same age and because the narration is mostly in the first or fourth person, the impression for the audience is that the girls in the film are speaking personally. There are no noticeable tensions between the observational dimensions of the film and its editorial voiceovers[34]. In other words, the voiceovers support the imagery and the visualised narration of the film. Nevertheless, the voiceovers guide the viewer's gaze and attention, directing him/her to make observations about certain things which are displayed in the film. At the same time, the voiceovers give the viewer concrete interpretations or a frame for interpreting and understanding the scenes of the film. Thus, the voiceovers strengthen and create the representational dimensions of the film.

Besides the voiceovers, the director can use music as a technique to guide the viewer's attention and create associations and mental images.[35] The sound in the film includes music which is very similar to the film scores of the long feature films of the 1950s, and it resembles more classical than popular music, lacking any sounds associated with the youth, such as rock n' roll music. The music highlights the visual narration and gives a rhythm to it. Except the ringing of a school bell twice and one instance of applause, there are no other

[29] Cabeleira, Martins and Lawn, "Indisciplines of Inquiry," 473–90.
[30] Martins, Cabeleira and Ramos do Ó, "The Other and the Same," 491–505.
[31] Inés Dussel, "The Visual Turn in the History of Education: Four Comments for Historiographical Discussion," in *Rethinking the History of Education. Transnational Perspectives on Its Questions, Methods, and Knowledge*, ed. Thomas S. Popkewitz (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 32.
[32] See also Cunningham, "Moving Images," 289–406.
[33] See Paul Warmington and Ian Grosvenor, "A Very Historical Mode of Understanding: Examining Editorial and Ethnographic Relations in The Primary (2008)," *Paedagogica Historica* 47, no. 4 (2011): 543–58.
[34] See Warmington and Grosvenor, "A Very Historical Mode of Understanding," 543–58.
[35] Cabeleira, Martins and Lawn, "Indisciplines of Inquiry," 473–90; Cunningham, "Moving Images," 289–406.

usual sounds of schools[36], which emphasises the cinematic impression and gives a unique feature to the film.

The intrinsic historical level (the "when" of the film's narrative) and the extrinsic historical level (the "when" of the film's creation)[37] are the same in the girls' school film. The short film represents and portrays the girls' school context of 1957, and although the national education system per se is not visualised in the film, the film has to be read and interpreted with and against its own temporal and contextual dimensions.[38] Temporal and contextual understanding can also provide some explanations about why a film exists and why the filmmakers chose a particular topic.[39] At the end of the 1950s, the Finnish dual education system which separated the pupils – usually after the fourth grade – into secondary school pupils and continuation school pupils was facing growing difficulties.[40] Secondary schools were very popular at that time: around 38 per cent of 11-year-old children went to secondary school and in the southern areas of Finland, this figure was over 50 per cent since the beginning of the 1950s. Thus, there were challenges facing the education system, like the growing numbers of pupils owing to the baby boom.[41] The girls' school film, where the school-going is presented as rather joyful and light, could be interpreted as counteracting the difficulties of secondary schools and promoting the idea of receiving a pleasant education.

The film includes a scene which concretises the techniques of visual and filmic narration in order to create certain interpretations. In that scene, two pupils are talking to each other during the lesson while doing the written assignment, and the teacher is silencing them by flashing them an angry look. The bodily movements of the pupils and the teacher create a scene where the order and choreography of the school are restored by the teacher. Simultaneously, the choreography is contested and made humorous by the visual narration of the film. The plot of this shot, the cutting and the camera angle are chosen so that they construct a recognisable caricature of a strict teacher and also evoke the mental image of famous Finnish film character of the 1950s – the humoristic and caricatured housewife of the

[36] Catharine Burke and Ian Grosvenor, "The Hearing School: an Exploration of Sound and Listening in the Modern School," *Paedagogica Historica* 47, no. 3 (2011): 323–40.
[37] May, "A Field of Desire," 623–37.
[38] See also Warmington and Grosvenor, "A Very Historical Mode of Understanding," 543–58.
[39] Cabeleira, Martins and Lawn, "Indisciplines of Inquiry," 473–90; Warmington and Grosvenor, "A Very Historical Mode of Understanding," 543–58.
[40] Mervi Kaarninen, "Oppikoulu yhteiskunnan rakentajana," in *Valitus ja koulunpenkki. Kasvatus ja koulutus Suomessa 1960-luvulta 1960-luvulle*, ed. Anja Heikkinen and Pirkko Leino-Kaukiainen (Helsinki: SKS, 2011), 409, 425–26; Kiuasmaa, *Oppikoulu 1880–1980*, 402–5.
[41] Kaarninen, "Oppikoulu yhteiskunnan rakentajana," 409, 425–26; Kiuasmaa, *Oppikoulu 1880–1980*, 398–405.

*Pekka and Pätkä* films (Pete and Runt films)[42] – who with a firm hand, keeps a watchful eye on her wimpy and incompetent husband. The director of the short film had been a supporting actor in these very popular feature films in Finland [43] and thus knew very well how to influence the interpretations and mental images of the viewers. Even the cameraman working on the short film had previously worked on the *Pete and Runt* film productions. The resemblance between the scene in the short film and these well-known comedy films is obvious, and the humoristic connotations of the girls' school film breaks the order of the school through the filmic and visual techniques[44] which remove and cover up the conflicts and juxtapositions included in schooling and education.

The girls' school film can be compared with a Finnish feature film released in the same year – 1957 – *Kuriton sukupolvi* (*Wild generation*), which concentrates on the generation gap and displays on the screen the modern youth dancing to the beat of rock n' roll music, and even introduces humorously some elements of the youth subculture. Although the long feature film is a comedy and the youth in the feature film do not represent the real youth problem, those under the age of 16 were forbidden from seeing the film at the time. By modern contemporary standards, the film seems light and harmless, but the censors of the 1950s reviewed it as being too threatening to young people.[45]

Although the students represented in the girls' school film resembled the middle class youth of the long feature film, the short film lacks – apart from clothing and appearance – the features of the youth culture of the 1950s displayed in the feature film. In addition, the girls' school film does not emphasise or polarise the differences between generations.

In the next chapters, the girls' school film and its representations will be discussed in more detail. First, the images of the cultivated bodies of schoolgirls and the bodily images of middle class values are analysed. The next chapter will highlight how the film visualises schoolgirls' bodies in the ritualised ceremonies of schools. Furthermore, it will be argued how the film creates a visual narration of female bodies, concentrating on health and caring.

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[42] Although not being silent films, "Pete and Runt" -film characters resembled the famous comedy duo Laurel and Hardy.
[43] Toiviainen, *Tuska ja hurmio*, 43.
[44] See the technologies of production and the conventions of genre Warmington, Van Gorp and Grosvenor, "Education in Motion," 457–72.
[45] Pekka Kaarninen, "Kurittomat sukupolvet vanhoissa suomalaisissa elokuvissa," in *Nuoruuden vuosisata. Suomalaisen nuorison historia*, ed. Sinikka Aapola and Mervi Kaarninen (Helsinki: SKS, 2003), 430; Uusitalo, *Suomen Hollywood on kuollut*, 133–34.

The last chapter before the conclusion will discuss the bodily images of liberation from the normative rules of school.

**Images of cultivated bodies of schoolgirls**

The girls' school film is constructed by scenes visualising the daily activities of schools, and the emphasis is on the pupils studying the various school subjects. The imagery creates a narration where the shots fluidly move from one school subject to the next by representing the bodily images of girls studying. The postures of the girls include the common features of school-going and school routines, giving the impression of busy learning: bodies and heads bending over math or language assignments and girls eagerly participating in the activities of the different school subjects. The film stresses doing things and visualises the constantly moving bodies of the schoolgirls, and unlike stiff school photographs[46], it portrays motion and action.[47] The central focus is on the representations of diligent and hard-working girls which, at the same time, construct the imagery of the desirable behaviour for the schoolgirls of the 1950s.[48] Although a sent message concentrates on the pupils' industrious working and learning, the atmosphere of the film is not grim or tiresome but rather light and bright, and the daily working is presented as interesting and fun.

The choreography of the schooling[49] displayed in the film opens up the scenery to the manners and customs of secondary education. Filing into to the classroom when the school bell rings, occupying fixed places in the classroom, standing up when the teacher enters the room or raising a hand in order to ask permission to speak, and so on, are familiar and repetitive acts and bodily movements and gestures which create the choreography of schooling. In the secondary education context of the film, the choreography seems to give space and alternatives: no stiff lining up after the bell rings or doing things simultaneously in the classes. The filmic narration introduces choreography imitating and reproducing the rules

[46] Burke and Ribeiro de Castro, "The School Photograph," 213–16.
[47] See also Van Gorp, "The Decroly School in Documentaries (1930s–1950s)," 507–23.
[48] See Leena Koski, "Oppikoulunuoruus 1940–1950-luvuilla," in *Nuoruuden vuosisata. Suomalaisen nuorison historia*, ed. Sinikka Aapola and Mervi Kaarninen (Helsinki: SKS, 2003), 282–313.
[49] Betty Eggermont, "The Choreography of Schooling as Site of Struggle: Belgian Primary Schools, 1880–1940," *History of Education* 30, no 2 (2001): 129–40.

of the polite manners and customs of the middle class of the 1950s, where the schoolgirls curtsy to their elder (teacher) or listen when the teacher is speaking.[50]

Unlike in many other countries[51], in Finland, it is not the custom to wear a school uniform; thus, the outfits of the pupils may be diverse. The bodily images of schoolgirls in the film show the viewer the dress code of the secondary girls' schools of the 1950s, tying it to the contemporary fashion of the middle class youth. Most of the girls in the film are wearing a dress, pinafore dress or skirt together with a blouse, a cardigan or a pullover, and the impression is that they are very neat and tidy. The dresses and skirts reach below the knee, and hardly any of the girls are wearing trousers. Some of the cardigans and pullovers seem to be knitted by hand, and the created feeling is simultaneously homespun and up-to-date. The hairstyles follow the same line: fashionable permed hair and ponytails finish the suitable and proper look. The youth fashion of the 1950s is present in the film, although it lacks the features of the youth subculture[52], like tight jeans or leather jackets.

Though school uniforms were not used, the dress code of Finnish secondary schools gave guidelines for appropriate clothing and appearance. According to the chronicle of the girls' school (Tyttönormaalilyseo), the suitable and acceptable appearance at the end of the 1950s included the demands of propriety and modesty.[53] The chronicle of the school and the reminiscences of the former pupils are consistent with the visual narration of the film: the girls followed youth fashion closely and imitated it as far the rules of the school allowed.[54] The bodies of the schoolgirls in the film concretise the middle class looks, customs and habits and the girls' own desires to follow the fashion trends of the time.

In addition to the various school subjects, the cultivated bodies of the schoolgirls are presented in the film by introducing the hobbies of girls done on the school premises. When the camera is aimed at a small group of girls speaking enthusiastically in French in the school

[50] See also Koski, "Oppikoulunuoruus 1940–1950-luvuilla," 282–313.
[51] Inés Dussel, "When Appearances are Not Deceptive: A Comparative History of School Uniforms in Argentina and the United States (Nineteenth-Twentieth Centuries)," *Paedagogica Historica* 41, no 1&2 (2005): 179–95; Stephanie Spencer, "A Uniform Identity: Schoolgirl Snapshots and the Spoken Visual," *History of Education* 36, no 2 (2007): 227–46; Patricia Holland, *Picturing Childhood* (London, US: I.B.Tauris, 2004), 88.
[52] See also Vesa Puuronen, "Pihasakeista alakulttuureihin. Nuorten ryhmätoiminta Suomessa 1900-luvun jälkipuoliskolla," in *Nuoruuden vuosisata. Suomalaisen nuorison historia*, ed. Sinikka Aapola and Mervi Kaarninen, (Helsinki: SKS, 2003), 372–95; Teddy boys and girls see Holland, *Picturing Childhood*, 126–27.
[53] Laura Kolbe, "Traditio – murros – jatkuvuus?," in *Helsingin II normaalikoulun 125-vuotismatrikkeli* (Helsinki: Helsingin II normaalikoulu, 1994), 56.
[54] Leena Paatero et. al., "Keskiluokat V–VI 1957–1959," in *Meidän luokka Tyttönorssissa 1953–1962. Vuoden 1962 IX B -luokan muistelmat*, Leena Paatero, Magdalena Jaakkola, Ritva Järvenpää, Eeva Rauste-Kukkonen and Marja Sormo, (Helsinki: Kirja kerrallaan, 2012), 76–99.

library, the voiceover comments that the girls are doing recitation, arts and literature besides the activities of the assembled French club. The observational dimensions of the film and its editorial voiceover confirm each other, telling the same narration of leisure time activities of the secondary schoolgirls. The hobbies mentioned by the voiceover – recitation, arts, literature and French – evocatively draw a mental image of the cultural habits transferred to the pupils. The camera angel is chosen so that it reveals full book cabinets behind the sitting pupils learning French, and the visual narration including the close-ups of lively conversation create a feeling of a certain closeness and sense of community. Although the hobbies themselves are not tied to femininity, they carry feminine connotations, relating them to female areas and activities.

In Finland, secondary schools had their own special school culture separating their students from the pupils in basic education. Special social clubs and school banquets bound students tightly to the school, limiting time for activities outside the school.[55] The narration of the film constructs similar connotations when emphasising hobbies done on the school premises or duties controlled by the school. According to the film, a schoolgirl's whole life seems to be tied to school. Though the film includes shots outside the school buildings and of the schoolyards, it excludes the schoolgirls' lives outside of school and concentrates entirely on the school and its activities. Nevertheless, other sources reveal that girls indeed had other hobbies outside of school, such as attending the girls' club of the local parish, girl scouts and gym clubs, theatre, reading, music and doing handicrafts[56].

In general, the aim of secondary education was to educate and cultivate students[57], and the voiceover stresses these goals at the very beginning of the film, directing the viewers' observations and associations[58]:

> *Around 140,000 secondary school pupils, boys and girls, gather daily at almost 400 schools to perform those diverse activities whereby the school strives to develop and*

[55] The Annual Report of Tyttönormaalilyseo 1956–1957. D5 Db:10–17. The Archive of Helsingin yhteisnormaalilyseo; Kaarninen, "Oppikoulu yhteiskunnan rakentajana," 426–27; Koski, "Oppikoulunuoruus 1940–1950-luvuilla," 282–313.
[56] Paatero et. al., "Keskiluokat V–VI 1957–1959," 91–95.
[57] Kaarninen, "Oppikoulu yhteiskunnan rakentajana," 405–29; Koski, "Oppikoulunuoruus 1940–1950-luvuilla," 282–306.
[58] See also Cabeleira, Martins and Lawn, "Indisciplines of Inquiry," 473–90; Cunningham, "Moving Images," 289–406.

*educate children and adolescences for life and its needs. The aim is to strive for mental vitality, knowledge and skills.*[59]

The filmic narration of the secondary girls' schools creates the bodily images of healthy, lively, joyful schoolgirls who keenly and happily studied and busily took part in diverse activities and hobbies run by the school. The Finnish school culture of secondary education did not include smoking or drinking alcohol[60], and the cinematic narration emphasises the healthy habits and surroundings of the schools. The gendered nature of the girls' school is visualised in the school subjects, concentrating on female domestic duties, like handicrafts and cookery, and aesthetic subjects like arts. The cooking, painting, sewing, exercising and other bodily movements carry feminine connotations, and the bodies of the schoolgirls make visible the feminine features of schooling.

**Schoolgirls' bodies in ritualised school ceremonies**

The choreography of schooling is displayed from the very beginning of the film, when the school bell rings, signalling the pupils to hurry to class. The film's narration follows the logic of the school day, and the next scene concentrates on the well-known ritual[61] of starting the morning with prayer. In this scene, schoolgirls are gathered in a hall, where a teacher is accompanying the hymn. Serious faces, crossed hands and bowed heads are postures visualising the ritualised ceremony of praying to start the school day. The bodily postures of praying girls convey the performance of tradition and concretise the religious habits. As Émile Durkheim states, religion has significance as a collective act integrating people to be part of the society[62]. In the 1950s, nearly all Finnish citizens belonged to the Lutheran church, which previously had had tight connections to the state, and religion was one of the school subjects in secondary education[63]. In addition, the schools' educational aims were to civilise and cultivate pupils into proper citizens[64] and religious habits were seen the elements of that

[59] Translations from Finnish made by the author.
[60] Koski, " Oppikoulunuoruus 1940–1950-luvuilla," 282–306.
[61] Performance of tradition and ritualized space see Holland, *Picturing Childhood*, 87.
[62] Émile Durkheim, *Uskontoelämän alkeismuodot. Australialainen toteemijärjestelmä* (Helsinki: Tammi, 1980).
[63] Statistical yearbook of Finland 1957 (Helsinki: Central Statistical office, 1957), 29; The Annual Report of Tyttönormaalilyseo 1956–1957. D5 Db:10–17. The Archive of Helsingin yhteisnormaalilyseo.
[64] Jukka-Pekka Pietiäinen, "Yksityisoppikoulut vaurastuvassa Suomessa 1944–1977," in *Yksityisoppikoulujen historia 1872–1977*, ed. Jari Salminen, Jukka-Pekka Pietiäinen and Jouko Teperi (Helsinki: Painatuskeskus, 1995), 155–238.

process. In the film, the bodily postures of the girls visualise how religious habits became a part of the schools' ritualised practices.

The narration of the film conceals the concrete physical reality of morning praying, where some girls found the standing so tiresome that they fainted. Standing – sometimes in narrow spaces – for a long time can cause unexpected consequences when low blood pressure leads to fainting. Those occasions when a girl's body reacted to the physical and mental stress were so memorable that they were even reminisced about in the chronicle of the girls' school (Tyttönormaalilyseo). Furthermore, the straight lines of praying girls concretise the hierarchy hidden in the rituals: the positions of the girls were precisely ordered beforehand, and the places in which the girls were situated signified their status in the social order of the school.[65] The visual narration of the film does not capture this hidden social order actualised in the morning praying.

Like the praying girls, the film includes another scene which concretises the traditional ceremonies of secondary education. The scene concentrates on a special celebration day which the senior students have in their final year before matriculation exams[66]. On that day, the upper secondary school students all over the country would organise big parties for the whole school to participate in the celebrations.[67] The voiceover of the film emphasises the significance of the day:

> *At last, after years of hard working and toiling, arrives the last school day, when one moves to the springtime period of exams and matriculations exams. This day (penkinpainajaispäivä) is known to be a big celebration for the whole school. It is a celebration day for young people who have reached an important phase of their lives, and it is a celebration day for teachers, who feel that they again have reached a significant stage in their persevering work.*

In the film, the scene starts with a camera aimed at dancing girls, who have dressed in national costumes. The cheerful looks and graceful movements of the dancing bodies create an atmosphere which seems simultaneously happy and distinguished. The national dresses

[65] Kolbe, "Traditio – murros – jatkuvuus?," 57–59.
[66] The matriculation examination is a nationwide exam taken at the end of the upper secondary school.
[67] Mervi Kaarninen and Pekka Kaarninen, *Sivistyksen portti. Ylioppilastutkinnon historia* (Helsinki: Otava, 2002.); Mervi Kaarninen, "Kansakunnan toivot. Ylioppilastutkinto käännekohtana ja siirtymävaiheena," in *Nuoruuden vuosisata. Suomalaisen nuoruuden historia*, ed. Sinikka Aapola and Mervi Kaarninen (Helsinki: SKS, 2003), 314–24.

emphasise traditions and Finnish cultural habits, tying the occasion to the history of upper secondary education. Although each secondary school had its own variation for celebrating traditions, sharing the same celebration day strengthened the feeling of unity constructing the historical conventions of the culture of upper secondary schools[68].

The body postures of the dancing girls produce a scene which is familiar and carries symbolic meanings: folk dances and national dresses have a patriotic tone, and the historical traditions are concretised in them. The filmic narration emphasises feminine movements and appearances. The light and nimble feet of the girls repeat rhythmically the steps and choreographies of the dances, and the flying hems of the skirts inspire the dancers in their movements. The scene includes several different shots of dances that fluently move one after the other. Occasionally, the camera captures an audience crowding around the dance floor and taking part in the celebrations. The viewer cannot hear the actual music played on the occasion, as incidental music replaces it in the film. Nevertheless, the celebration's importance and festive nature are displayed to the viewer, and the scene visualises the ritualised ceremonies of the school.

According to the chronicle of the girls' school (Tyttönormaalilyseo), the school's own history and passing traditions to next generations were very important and highly appreciated.[69] When representing the morning praying or celebration days of the girls' school, the film concretises those ritualised moments of the school, and the pictorial narration visualises the seriousness or festive nature of those occasions when the traditions and cultural habits are passed on.

**Healthy, cared for and caring bodies of schoolgirls**

In the film, there are three different scenes which specifically concentrate on the bodily images of health and caring. The first one presents the physical education (PE) of the secondary schools for girls and the visual narration focusses on three different scenes: schoolgirls who are playing volleyball and two moments during gymnastics lessons. The

[68] Helena Saarikoski, *Kouluajan kivoin päivä. Folkloristinen tutkimus penkinpainajaisperinteestä* (Helsinki: SKS, 1994), 36–47; Kaarninen and Kaarninen, *Sivistyksen portti. Ylioppilastutkinnon historia.* The folk dance tradition in Tyttönormaalilyseo was started in 1934. See Kolbe, "Traditio – murros – jatkuvuus?," 61–62.
[69] Kolbe, "Traditio – murros – jatkuvuus?," 77–82.

voiceover guides the viewer's attention, gives meaning to the scenes and frames the interpretations:

> *When you really have struggled and done a lot of brain work, it is good to relax every now and then. A ballgame develops speed and flexibility, giving the joy of exercise which refreshes itself. Light, well-controlled movements and a straight posture are targets at which every girl should aim. The school years develop little girls into young ladies, who can take care of their health and physical condition.*

The film narrates and visualises the components of girls' post-war PE[70] in secondary education in general and stresses its aims: the physical and mental health of the citizens, their ability to work, capability to live a healthy life and to be well-balanced and resilient.[71] The representations of the girls' bodies in the film are embodiments of those aims and values. When the viewer hears how an exercise refreshes and develops physical features, speed and flexibility, she/he sees a shot where girls are enthusiastically playing volleyball. The bodily movements of the girls make an impression of enjoyable physical activity, and the bodily postures are guided by the rules and choreography of the ballgame. The next shot concentrates on a gymnastics lesson, where a group of girls is performing exercises resembling rhythmic gymnastics. In this scene, the feminine appearance and movements visualise the gendered components of PE. Simultaneous movements require coordination, flexibility and agility, and the bodies of girls create a collective series of gestures and motions. The impact is strong in the last scene, where the girls are rehearsing floor exercises of women's artistic gymnastics, whose acrobatic skill elements could be highly demanding. The representations of the bodies of the schoolgirls showcase their athletic competence and physical capability. The message of the voiceover about well-controlled movements and straight postures emphasises the visual narrative of the film. The portrayals of physical education construct imagery stressing girls looking after their own bodies and a modern health-oriented attitude towards the bodies of the schoolgirls. The representations of schooling in the film offer a different approach to the bodies of schoolgirls than the Cartesian distinction which separates the mind from the body.[72]

[70] The girls' PE in secondary education was divided in three parts: gymnastics, sports and health education.
[71] *Valtion oppikoulujen liikuntakasvatusohjelma II. Tytöt* (Helsinki: Valtioneuvoston kirjapaino, 1947.)
[72] Cf. Carrie Paechter, "Reconceptualizing the Gendered Body: Learning and Constructing Masculinities and Femininities in School," *Gender and Education* 18, no 2 (2006): 121–35.

The second scene concentrates on the schoolgirls taking part in a lesson on first aid skills and the focus is on taking care of others.[73] The girls are in touch with injured or sick bodies by fictive cases and the voiceover accompanies the filmic narration:

> *Our class had an extra lesson of the Finnish Red Cross foundation, in which we all participated eagerly. We learned in detail how to make the bed and how important cleanliness is. We were able to decide ourselves after theoretical lectures what we would do if we were to see a wound, a fracture or a burn. Many of the girls became pale when they saw a terrible leaking wound made up above an eye. It was even very hard to bind. Our teacher emphasised that a nurse should always present a happy and serving attitude towards their patient. She said that we should treat a patient as we wish to be treated. At the beginning, many patients were handled too roughly. Liisa nearly snapped in half when we first bound a bandage too tightly. Nevertheless, now we can do it nicely and properly. Anna-Kaisa acted to be sick in a very realistic way when we prepared to give her an enema. First, we measured her temperature and heartbeat, even though it was hard to find an artery.*

This part of the film represents a rather concrete and down-to-earth view of the body: learning to tend to wounds and injuries and understanding the delicate nature of the human body. The girls' school had health education as part of PE studies and extra nursing lessons continued those studies. In this scene, the schoolgirls nurse fellow students, who act as fictive patients and whose bodies have been made up to be sickly looking in order to give a more realistic impression. The healthy bodies of the schoolgirls are contrasted to the sick and injured ones, although the situations are fictional. The bodily movements of the girls doing the nursing construct a scene and atmosphere of caring, where girls are taught – besides to take care of other people – the skills of empathy and sensitivity. The seriousness of the subject is lightened by the humorous storytelling of the voiceover which confirms the educative nature of the occasion through the detailed listing of body parts and the treatments done.

[73] For example in one girls' school during the school year 1956–1957, thirty two pupils took part in lessons of home nursing arranged by the Red Cross. (Annual Report 1956–1957 of Helsingin toinen tyttökoulu. D5 Db:1–2. The Archive of Kirkkopuiston tyttökoulu.)

The third scene focussing on home nursing is filmed outside the school, located in a private home, where the schoolgirls help an elderly woman. The voiceover once again guides the visual narration:

> *We often in the evenings help sickly Aunt Hanna, who is an evacuee from Viipuri. We clean her home and help with carrying firewood and doing her shopping for her. Our great pleasure is feeding Pekka the hamster, for whom we always bring back something to eat.*

In the film, the schoolgirls nurse the patient and perform domestic duties, and the caring nature of the situation is concretised in the movements and gestures of the girls: their hands tuck in the covers and carry firewood or buckets or feed the little hamster. The scene visualises the aims of the girls' secondary education to create civilised, responsible citizens who know and act according to the ethical principles and moral virtues of good and kind people. The narration of the film informs the viewer how the secondary school students were guided towards useful and wholesome hobbies and activities. As Leena Koski argues, pupils were expected to act obediently, politely and respectfully, and to show kindness and modesty on their own time.[74]

The bodies of the schoolgirls present accepted and appreciated manners and acts towards another person, and because it is mentioned that the elderly woman is an evacuee from a town called Viipuri, the scene ties the education of the girls' schools to the national history of the Finnish nation and society. The town of Viipuri belonged to a district which Finland lost in the Second World War, and after the war, Finland took in more than 400,000 evacuees from that area[75]. The caring bodies of the girls represent not only the serving attitude of the schoolgirls but also, symbolically, the rebuilding of the nation.

**Bodily images of liberation from normative rules of school**

New pedagogical methods and teacher–student relationships gradually entered classrooms and gave space for more modern views and customs regarding how to organise teaching and what kind of interaction there would be in the classrooms.[76] Although the choreography of

[74] See Koski, " Oppikoulunuoruus 1940–1950-luvuilla," 282–306.
[75] Ilkka Virta, *Siirtoväen kansakoulukysymys sotavuosien Suomessa* (Turku: Turun yliopisto, 2001), 10.
[76] Koski, "Oppikoulunuoruus 1940–1950-luvuilla," 282–306; Kiuasmaa, *Oppikoulu 1880–1980*, 402–5.

schooling organised the schooldays, the representations of the film visualise moments where the bodies of the schoolgirls are liberated from their desks, giving opportunities for more natural bodily movements. These scenes occur during the home economics and handicraft lessons, where the essence of the subjects gives possibilities for more natural and informal bodily movements. The film illuminates how freely the girls could move in the classroom during those lessons and how their bodily movements and gestures were guided more by the rules of cooking and sewing than the usual choreography of schooling. In the film, both of these lessons seem to have a rather casual and informal atmosphere which emphasises the active movements of the girls. Busy hands stir, cut, whip or sew, stitching and weaving, creating bodily gestures that are more reminiscent of everyday activities and chores than the schools' routines. Moreover, the scenes carry feminine connotations because of the gendered nature of the school subjects.

In the film, the normative rules of the school are also questioned during the breaks between lessons. Though the choreography of the school day is constructed by the rhythmic variance of breaks and lessons, the breaks themselves give opportunities for free and unguided movements. The visual narrative of the film portrays the girls playing in the schoolyard and discussing and gesturing lively. The scene is accompanied by the voiceover:

> *A break at last. After a very exhausting class, it can become the highlight of the day. Now we have an opportunity to freely exchange ideas.*

The short glimpse of the playful girls throwing snow and cheerfully enjoying their spare time creates a scene where the normative rules of the school are diminished, giving space for alternative being. The filmic elements underline the narrative: at the beginning of the scene, the girls are rushing from classes to corridors, and the camera angle and close-ups strengthen the impressions of the bodily movements and gestures of the running girls. The scene outside the schoolyard continues the same narrative, and the observational dimensions of the film bring the viewer near the playing and chatting girls. The body gestures indicate a relaxed and easy-going moment when the pupils can distance themselves from the choreography of the classes.

The normative rules of school and the choreography of schooling are also contested in the celebrations before final exams and graduation. This farewell celebration creates both the ritual ceremonies of school and the situation where the usual customs and rules are turned upside-down. Although the celebrations are not an anomaly, they could be interpreted as

contravening the ideal everyday routines of schooling and as a rite of a reversal. Therefore, the carnivalesque features can be seen symbolically as a way to criticise the order of schooling and – at the same time – create and reconstruct that order.[77]

In the film, the carnivalesque features appear in the scene portraying the senior students' departure from school by decorated lorries – as it was custom – with self-made boards full of painted pictures and slogans. Such boards usually included humour and ambiguous texts which were not always understandable for the audience, and thus they were the embodiments of the team spirit of the class and school. The departure can be understood not only as a rite of reversal but as a rite of passage, where leaving school and ending the period of secondary education become symbolic.[78] In the film, the schoolgirls decorate lorries, climb in them and weave into the crowd on the pavements when the lorries pass by. The girls' movements carry the symbolic meanings of departure from school, transferring them to the exam period and the world outside of school. The voiceover narrates the occasion sentimentally:

> *The most visible phase is a merry lorry driving along the streets of the girls' hometown. Parents, teachers and younger school friends assemble to cheer their goodbyes, wishing from all their hearts luck for the matriculation exams. The minds of the students is at the same time full of joy and nostalgia. The school which has raised and educated them year after year will be left behind. Life in its entirety is ahead.*

## Conclusion

The analysed short film, *My own girls' school* (*Oma tyttökouluni*), was among the Finnish educative short films of the 1950s belonging to the so-called tax reduction productions, whose purpose was to support national film production and educate the wide audience of the cinemas.[79] Although the natural setting of the girls' school is recognisable in the film, it cannot be argued that the film is entirely a school documentary film.[80] The film includes visual techniques and filmic narrations which relate it to the traditions and practices of long

[77] Saarikoski, *Kouluajan kivoin päivä. Folkloristinen tutkimus penkinpainajaisperinteestä*, 143–50. See also Kaarninen and Kaarninen, *Sivistyksen portti. Ylioppilastutkinnon historia.*
[78] Saarikoski, *Kouluajan kivoin päivä. Folkloristinen tutkimus penkinpainajaisperinteestä*, 28–30.
[79] Sedergren and Kippola, *Dokumentin utopiat*, 11–16.
[80] Cf. Biltereyst, "Afterword: School documentaries, Childhood and New Cinema History," 573–77; Warmington, Van Gorp and Grosvenor, "Education in Motion," 457–72.

feature films, giving to the film a slight connotation of fictionalised and romanticised narrative. The film conveys the impression of serene and harmonious school-going, lacking any contradictions or disputes, and it does not make visible the challenges that secondary education faced in the 1950s. Nevertheless, the film cannot be classified as a propaganda film, despite the powerful ways of narration intended to move the audience.[81] The girls' school film does not polarise issues but utilises the filmic and cinematic techniques – such as voiceovers, sounds, camera angles, lighting and cutting – to create a fluent and entertaining visual-aural image of school days in girls' secondary education.[82]

Although the familiar choreography of school is present in the girls' school film, the choreography is also slightly altered or even contested. The filmic narration introduces a choreography resembling the rules concerning the middle class polite manners and customs of the 1950s more so than the rules and order of basic education[83]. Some scenes even parody the choreography, giving to the film and schooling a humorous, light and bright undertone. Therefore, the film portrays simultaneously the bodily images of schoolgirls regulated by the choreography of the school and bodies of schoolgirls liberated from normative rules.

Shot after shot, subject by subject, the short film sets the scene of Finnish secondary education in girls' schools. The schoolgirls in the film are positioned as the bearers and transmitters of the middle class culture: the appearance, manners and hobbies presented in the film create the visual narratives of the cultivated bodies of the schoolgirls. The film visualises the ritualised ceremonies of schools, where the bodily postures of praying girls or folk dancing girls dressed in national dresses materialise the traditions of the school and carry the symbolic meanings and cultural habits of the school's and Finland's history. The patriotic tone of these scenes is strong and the filmic elements convey this impression. The narration vividly displays how the customs and manners were gendered and how the school-going and even the choreography of the schools differed according to gender.

Like the cultivated bodies of girls and the narratives of middle class values, the healthy, cared for and caring bodies of the schoolgirls are represented in the film by narrating visually the well-being and care oriented education of the girls' schools. The girls in the film are positioned as both caregivers and people who can take care of their own bodies and physical

[81] Cf. Van Gorp, "The Decroly School in Documentaries (1930s–1950s)," 507–23.
[82] See a technology of visual persuasion Cabeleira, Martins and Lawn, "Indisciplines of Inquiry," 473–90.
[83] Cf. Eggermont, "The Choreography of Schooling as Site of Struggle: Belgian Primary Schools, 1880–1940," 129–40.

and mental well-being. One scene in the film represents rather concrete and down-to-earth views of the body when showing a lesson where the girls are taught first aid skills and home nursing.

Though the filmed school prepared its pupils for academic studies at university, the film introduces in addition to the academic subjects the wide curricula of secondary schools including arts subjects and subjects with a feminine connotation, like home economics and handicrafts. When representing the studies in academic subjects, the bodies of the schoolgirls are mainly narrated through the choreography of the school. The more naturally moving bodies and liberation from desks are visualised outside the classrooms and in other lessons besides the academic subjects. The celebrations and traditions before the final exams and graduation, on one hand, repeat the rituals and rites of middle class school-going. On the other hand, they make it possible to break and contest the normative rules of the school. In the girls' school film, the carnivalesque or bodies of the schoolgirls represent the bodily images of liberation from the choreography of the school, while avoiding the habits and customs of the youth subculture. The girls in the films are embodiments of middle class values and customs.

The short film displays representations of hard-working, polite and helpful schoolgirls and carries the connotations of a desired girlhood and femininity consisting of responsibility and caring. Leena Koski notes that Finnish girls of the 1950s were expected to be conscientious and tidy and to control their feelings and bodies[84]. The schoolgirls in the short film are represented as sociable, companionable, active and extraverted, which enlarges their social roles towards modern femininity, and they are portrayed as active through their participation in sports, which implies a health-oriented culture. The curricula of the girls' schools included both the domestic subjects and the science subjects and the visual narration of the film depicts girls in various roles giving space for an academic identity as well for a girlhood concerning more the traditional roles of women[85].

[84] Koski, "Oppikoulunuoruus 1940–1950-luvuilla," 307.
[85] Cf. Agneta Linné, "Lutheranism and Democracy: Scandinavia," in *Girls' Secondary Education in the Western World. From the 18th to the 20th Century*, ed. James C. Albisetti, Joyce Goodman and Rebecca Rogers (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 133–46; Spencer, "A Uniform Identity: Schoolgirl Snapshots and the Spoken Visual," 227–46; Joyce Goodman, "Class and Religion: Great Britain and Ireland," in *Girls' Secondary Education in the Western World. From the 18th to the 20th Century*, ed. James C. Albisetti, Joyce Goodman and Rebecca Rogers (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 9–24; Penny Summerfield, "Cultural Reproduction in the Education of Girls: a Study of Girls' Secondary Schooling in two Lancashire Towns, 1900–50," in *Lessons for Life. Schooling for Girls and Women, 1850–1950*, ed. Felicity Hunt (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), 149–70.

The film visualises the daily lessons in girls' schools by showing girls undertaking various activities during the school day. The lively bodies of the schoolgirls with smiling faces and joyful attitudes depict attending school in a positive light, emphasising not only the important role of education but also representing education and learning as both interesting and suitably demanding. The voice-over strengthens the visual images, and the film has an undertone which implies a firm faith in education[86]. At the same time, the film does not comment on the demands and pressures that Finnish secondary education was facing at the time. The point of view remains at the micro level, on the daily actions in girls' schools. The visual representation of schooling in the film provides concrete scenes of the authentic surroundings of secondary schools and visualises the places and spaces of the schools[87]. The authentic environment and scenes depicting lessons which follow the curricula give the film authenticity and the slightly humoristic tone conveys the impression of a pleasant and light-hearted school environment. Ruth Watts points out that the gender is not a stable definition but one affected and dissected by class and other societal groupings[88]. In the narration of the film, the performative movements of the girls represent middle-class feminine adolescence in the context of Finnish girls' schools of the 1950s.

[86] Minna Vuorio-Lehti, "Constructing Firm Faith in Education: Finnish Films in the 1930s and the 1940s," in *Visual History. Images of Education*, ed. Ulrike Mietzner, Kevin Myers and Nick Peim, (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2005), 85–107; Koski, "Oppikoulunuoruus 1940–1950-luvuilla," 298.

[87] Cf. Joyce Goodman, "A Cloistered Ethos? Landscapes of Learning and English Secondary Schools for Girls: An Historical Perspective," *Paedagogica Historica* 41, no. 4–5 (2005): 589–603; Braster, Grosvenor and del Mar del Pozo Andreás, "Opening the Black Box of Schooling. Methods, Meanings and Mysteries," 9–19; Ian Grosvenor, "On Visualising Past Classrooms," in *Silences and Images: The Social History of the Classroom*, ed. Ian Grosvenor, Martin Lawn and Kate Rousmaniere (New York: Peter Lang, 1999), 83–104.

[88] Ruth Watts, "Society, Education and the State: Gender Perspectives on an Old Debate," *Paedagogica Historica* 49, no. 1 (2013): 17–33.