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### **Paper: One man's journey: hard work and broken hearts in the New World**

#### **SLIDE 1: The Welcome Wall -minibiography, Australian National Maritime Museum**

-- migrated 3 times (1957, -69 & -78) until he finally settled down in Brisbane with S.S. He has worked, mostly as a carpenter, all around Australia from the Snowy Mountains to the sugarcane fields of North QLD. He acquired dual citizenship in 2005. He has two daughters living in Finland. He is a well-known conversationalist and debater with numerous fascinating stories to tell and has all his life possessed a strong interest in history, culture, society and different phenomena.

In my paper today I examine the diary of a Finnish man Pauli (Paul) born in 1930 and currently living in Australia. My paper is related to my ongoing study on migrant family heritage in which I examine private and public memories of Finnish-Australians.<sup>1</sup>

Though diary keeping is estimated to be very popular in Finland, there are very few studies on the topic and even less studies on men's diaries, because so called ordinary men seldom keep diaries<sup>2</sup>. It is difficult to say how common it is for Finnish men to keep diaries, but it has been suggested that only one in every five men has kept a diary at some point of their life.

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<sup>1</sup> The Academy of Finland -project (250307): "Our Place? Constructing family heritage in a global context" (2011-2014). The study is transdisciplinary and combines theories, methods and concepts of several fields: folkloristics, history studies, narrative studies and memory studies. The research material consists of multiple types of sources: interviews, participate observation, autobiographical materials, online materials such as blogs, websites, social networking forums etc.

<sup>2</sup> Anna Makkonen 2003; Tero Norkola 1995; Miia Votka 2005. In the Literary Archives of the Finnish Literature Society there are about 700 diaries, of which only some have been written by so called ordinary Finns. Most of the diarists are well-known authors, authors or politicians, whose diaries may be defined as serial diaries. A major part of the diaries written by ordinary people were collected in the beginning of the 1990s. Most of the 302 diaries collected at the time were written by women. Only 17 of the diarists were men.

Some scholars have suggested that they are just too intimate and too confessional for Finnish men - at least this has been the case earlier.

I first began reading Pauli's diaries as a diary of a Finnish man migrating to Australia, and only after understood that the diaries were not written by a Finnish-Australian migrant, but a 27-year old Finnish man who had decided to try his luck and travel to Australia for a few years, not permanently. In the late 1950s five thousand Finns left for Australia because of the recession in Finland and because Australia supported migration (General Assisted Passage Scheme) to Australia. Especially for working class men like Pauli migrating was an appealing alternative to unemployment. Every now and then he mentions counting his savings to see if he has enough money to buy a ticket home, but decides each time to continue his stay in Australia for a little longer and maybe travel also somewhere else before returning home.

Pauli's diary consists of two separate diaries written during September 1957 to December 1960. The diaries include features of different life writing genres, e.g. the diary, journal, and travel journal. He has faithfully recorded events and occurrences on a daily basis and though he does not reflect on his experiences and impressions in depth, there are numerous references to feelings: boredom, fatigue, anger, laziness, sorrow, frustration, eagerness, joy, hope, longing etc.<sup>3</sup>

The first entry is written on the same night (September 1957) that Pauli has begun his long journey to Australia unsure – as he has later mentioned - if he will ever see his home country again. On the first pages of his diary he recollects the events of the day in detail, leaving home and saying farewell to his siblings and friends, but also his feelings about leaving his home country:

**SLIDE 2: Men don't cry?**

21.9.57-- farewells over the rope, a rose was pinned on my chest. The atmosphere was sad. The girls [sisters] cried. Father was touchingly manly. Departure at 7.15 pm. I stood on deck and watched the lights of Turku. I cried. Some little boys said, look dad, he's crying. In the evening we explored the ship. Alcohol is cheap. 2 bottles of beer. And then to bed --<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Sidonie Smith & Julia Watson 2010; Phillipe Lejeune 2009; Robert Fothergill 1994.

<sup>4</sup> I have translated the original Finnish texts myself.

His first diary tells of his journey to Australia, his efforts to learn English and find a job and earn money. He finds studying English hard and frustrating, but necessary, and little by little begins to make brief entries also in English in his diary, first only single words, later whole sentences. Sometimes he worries, that he spends too much of his free time with other Finns and cannot practice his English enough.

Finding a job also turns out to be more difficult than he had expected, but after a few months, in January 1958, he finally succeeds in getting work and from then on his diary concentrates on his many different jobs around South Australia and finally in Northern Queensland, where he works at sugar cane farms.

### **SLIDE 3: I work (too) hard for the money**

18.7.[1959] Another hard week. We finished at Dawling farm yesterday. If nothing special happens, I'm off. I left Finland to earn better money more easily, so I don't want to pester myself. It is too difficult to get rich this way. In the morning you have to start at 6 am and end at 6 or 6.30 pm. A whole day at full stretch. I can't sleep at night. Don't know why. My limbs hurt, I have scratches and aches -- "

The second diary has a different character to it. It is more of an adventure narrative. It begins in Cairns in December 1959, when Pauli finally decides to fulfill his long desire to buy a car and heads off to Mt. Isa, which was at the time one of Australia's largest Finnish communities. Because of his lack of language and working skill Pauli fails to get a job as a mine worker, so he continues his journey to Darwin and from there to Alice Springs. After experiencing the Australian outback he returns to Melbourne, where he enlists on a freight ship heading to Japan and then to Canada. After the ship returns from Canada back to Japan, he abandons ship and ends up in jail for three days.

All this time Pauli has been saving money that he can return back to Finland someday and buy a new car on his way back home from Germany, but at this point he estimates that it will be easier for him in the future to buy a car than to have another chance to spend time in Japan and Hong Kong

### **SLIDE 4: The happiest days of my life**

Tuesday evening 11.10.60 – Bars here rob you. Beer 400, whiskey 400-600 etc. A lot of talk, but no results. This time I fancy **Mini, very nice**. A few days ago it was Satako. **Nice too from Kawasaki. I miss Nobuko a little. After all she is a very fine**

**lady.**<sup>5</sup> -- I cashed checks and exchanged money for 114 thousand today. So it has happened, that I have lost my Volkswagen [car] on this trip, but it is easier to get a new Volkswagen than this holiday in the Far East. I am totally satisfied with the way things are. No one knows what tomorrow will bring --

After having “the time of his life” in Japan, he travels to Hong Kong for a few weeks and then back to Australia with a small ship, him being the only passenger. In late November he is back in Canberra and on Boxing Day 1960, a little over three years after his arrival to Australia, he writes his last entry.

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So why did Pauli write? And who was he writing to? Only to himself or also to other possible readers? He doesn't mention any particular reason for writing his diary – and I do not know if he has kept a diary before or after this. One obvious reason for his writing was, of course, he felt it important to keep record of his one-in-a-life journey. He might have anticipated that his journey is so interesting that someone else might be interested in it also and took this into notice.

E.g. he seems quite conscious about what and how he writes about different matters, and only hints about hanging out in bars and night clubs, (heavy) drinking and his love-life. E.g. in Canada, he writes “The scenery is wonderful here and people have nice houses, but for a sailor this is a dull place.” After his English improves he begins to use English when speaking of these topics, e.g. “A little sick, you know” and “Typical Australian girl, you know” and “Good time with Nabuko, you know”.

His only actual confession concerns the way he got his first job as a carpenter at The Snowy Mountains. When applying for the job he and his Finnish friend had said that they are both experienced carpenters, though they were not. After a while Pauli began to feel that his lack of skill and new carpenter tools would eventually expose them, and decided that it would be better to reveal the matter and quit before they got caught and spoil the reputation of all Finnish carpenters. So they confess to their bosses, who are surprised, because they had not noticed anything wrong in their working skills and Pauli and his friend end up not losing face.

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<sup>5</sup> The text in bold was written in the original version in English.

### SLIDE 5: The confession

6.11.58 Thursday. The situation cleared a lot today, I feel much better. It has been so awkward because I have felt that I've been hoeing on someone else's field. We told the bosses today that we have never done this work before. They were quite astonished. It was so nerve-recking not knowing what to do, and you can't and don't want to always ask. We would have been exposed gradually anyhow and the reputation of Finnish carpenters would have been spoiled. It was better this way, a head start is half of the victory --

Coming from a poor rural family Pauli had only been able to go to elementary school, but had always shown an interest in reading and writing. I was actually quite surprised how well he wrote, both grammatically and stylistically. In addition to keeping a diary, he was also a keen letter writer and mentions nearly every day writing and receiving letters from relatives, friends and girlfriends: Who has written, who should have written and who is he going to write next. He even keeps count of all the letters and cards he has been sent. He also reads books, at first only Finnish ones, but later on he begins to read also books in English. And by coincidence one of the books he mentions is the *Diary of Anne Frank*.

In his last entry written on Boxing Day 1960 he writes that he has met "L.M.", and anticipates that they will meet again: "I think it not finish yet". And he was right, his and L.M.'s story continued and L.M. became his first wife with whom he moved back to Finland six months later in July 1961.

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44 years later in 2005 Pauli gives me his diary to read and preserve, and mentions that from 1961 on my mother can tell me what has happened. Yes, this paper is about the reading of my father's diary and therefore also about exploring of my own family heritage.<sup>6</sup>

At first I was quite surprised, because I did not know of the diaries and hesitated on reading them unsure of what I might find, but after accepting the fact that my father had given them to me, there could not be anything that he did not want me to know. (And yes, I have mentioned that I will be talking about his diaries today!) But I do realize that there are several serious ethical issues to be considered if I wish to continue the study of my father's diaries.

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<sup>6</sup> Families are not only biological, social and cultural networks, families may also be defined as imagined communities, whose members share memories about the families past and which gives them a sense of belonging to a lineage.

In recent studies of family heritage it has been said that exploring and knowing one's roots is important for self-making, self-exploration and self-understanding.<sup>7</sup> After reading the diaries the thing that struck me most was, that all my life I have lived with the impression that though my father worked as a carpenter he was “really” a seaman and I was a seaman's daughter.

E.g. I was brought up listening to the Finnish singer Tapio Rautavaara's “Vain merimies voi tietää” (Only a seaman can know) song. Especially the following last verse was always stressed:

**SLIDE 6:**

”Only a seaman can know how a [young] women loves  
 When you tour many harbors and always find a new one  
 Only a seaman can know how she will miss him  
 But he will only remember the girl at home  
 Even when surges crash or waves emerge  
 One will feel longing even if his heart is filled with joy”

Also many of my father's characteristics and doings have been explained by him being a former seaman, his restlessness, his appetite for drinking beer and gambling, his enthusiasm for debating. He even had tattoos like a seaman: one from Japan (Fuji), one from Canada (a First Nation woman) and one from Hong Kong (a rose). But only after reading the diary I found out that he had actually been at sea for only 6 months (April-September 1960) and most of this time dissatisfied and bored and continuously planning to abandon ship as soon as he saw it possible and even that it meant ending up in jail.

The second thing that struck me was that though I have grown up hearing stories about his travels and looking at photographs of him in exotic places, most of these stories were not mentioned in the diary. In fact there were only a few incidents that I recognized and I had heard about before.

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To conclude: In my paper today I have tried as a folklorist interested in life writing and the construction of family memories to examine Pauli's diary as a construction of manliness,

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<sup>7</sup> See Ann-Marie Kramer 2011; Carol Smart 2001; Paul Basu 2005.

ethnicity and class. In other words, how Pauli has represented himself as a young Finnish working-class man during his one-in-a-lifetime-journey to the New World. Diaries might not be folklore texts as such, but they have features that can be regarded folkloristic, e.g. like all narration they are written according to known conventions and cultural narratives. In concrete historical situations, masculinity seldom occurs as notions about what all men or even all “Finnish” men have in common. At any given time and place, a multitude of different sets of knowledge about men, contradicting each other, are in circulation. Gender intersects and interacts with a wide range of other social categorizations, in the process producing an almost infinite range of masculinities.

In his diary Pauli portrays himself as an adventurous Finnish man, who is always on the look for new experiences, places and people, but does not give the impression of being reckless. On the contrary, he keeps regularly in touch with his family and friends back home in Finland, but also in Australia, he takes good care of himself, and is worried about other Finnish men, who drink or gamble too much. Finns regard themselves and are often represented as hard workers, but Pauli, who is used to hard work and has been working since the age of fifteen, complains about his jobs all the time, because he is not content with the salary or the working conditions, which are usually too hard, but sometimes just too boring for him. He is continuously looking for new opportunities, because “there is no reason for him to suffer” and “he deserves better”.

In autobiographies written by Finnish men they usually portray their lives very negatively. They write about melancholy, solitude, depression, of lost opportunities, of a life of hard work without any joy or alternatives. Though Pauli is not always happy with his work and sometimes feels homesick, he feels no regret in leaving his home country and criticizes other Finns who want to give up too easily and go back to Finland. All through his diary he keeps on asking himself did he make the right choice when he left, and each time comes to the same conclusion, yes, he did. All in all Pauli’s diaries give the impression of a content man, who makes his own choices and is in control of his life, which is not at all in line with how Finnish men usually picture themselves.

Thank you!