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JARMO JÄÄSKELÄINEN AND THE EXPERIENCE OF “LATE RESETTLERS” TO GERMANY

A b s t r a c t. This article examines *Antonius the Emigrant / Antonius: The Resettler* (1977), a documentary by Finnish filmmaker Jarmo Jääskeläinen, whose long career in Poland was marked by an exceptional degree of analytical distance and engagement with sociopolitical themes. The film addresses an underexplored aspect of Polish post-war history: the emigration of autochthonous inhabitants of Warmia and Masuria to the Federal Republic of Germany in the 1970s. While often framed as a “national minority” issue, the film reveals a more complex reality shaped by property ownership, rural socio-economic structures, the legacy of collectivisation, and state policy toward individual farmers. Drawing on memory-politics research and regional historiography, the article argues that Jääskeläinen exposes dimensions of migration that remained outside official discourse and were largely absent from Polish documentary cinema. Through its intimate portrayal of one family, the film illuminates broader mechanisms of marginalisation, displacement and identity in socialist Poland. Consequently, Jääskeläinen’s film emerges as an important testimony to the experiences of “late resettlers” and a critical reflection on Poland’s memory policy pursued in the communist period.

Keywords: documentary film; Warmia and Masuria; migration; late resettlers; memory politics; Jarmo Jääskeläinen

JARMO JÄÄSKELÄINEN’S DOCUMENTARY APPROACH: AN INTRODUCTION

Jarmo Jääskeläinen (1937–2022), a Finnish journalist and documentary filmmaker, was often described as an “immigrant with a Polish soul”. Over the course of his long career in Poland, he became an important figure in documentary culture, distinguished by a sustained engagement with sociopolitical issues and an analytical distance uncommon among domestic filmmakers. His distinctive position can be attributed to his long-standing involvement in Polish

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public life, his perspective as a foreign director, and his avoidance of Aesopian language, which had become increasingly opaque to younger audiences.

A notable aspect of his work was his command of the Polish language, which enabled him to grasp historical and social nuances and to interpret interviewees without reliance on translation. Remaining outside informal professional networks, he retained a level of autonomy that allowed him to avoid both political bias and self-censorship. His adherence to high editorial standards – reminiscent of institutions such as the BBC – has regained relevance in an era marked by growing scepticism toward reliable sources. As a result, his films continue to be valued for their credibility and analytical integrity.

Before the 1990s, Polish documentary film functioned less as a commercial product than as a tool for interpreting social attitudes. Jääskeläinen's work should be situated within this context. His films consistently explore sociopolitical transformations through “small stories about big issues”, examining broader processes through the experiences of individuals and local communities. This approach is evident in films such as *The Coronation* (1979), *Boundaries of Democracy* (1982) and later *Winners and Losers* (2011).

The aim of this article is to draw attention to Jääskeläinen's distinctive contribution to the representation of complex political and social realities in Poland from the 1970s to the early 2010s. Despite the significance of his work – one that merits a comprehensive monograph – it remains largely absent from scholarly reflection both in Poland and internationally (Hučková, 2017). The present study focuses on a single film in order to highlight its artistic qualities.

The analysis is grounded primarily in a film studies perspective. The key questions concern the choice of subject, its historical significance, its visual representation, and the selection of the protagonist. Particular attention is paid to the filmmaker's approach to his subject and to the use of visual metaphor within the structure of cinematic expression (Witek, 2005). The selected work may also be considered within studies that approach film as a historical source (Hendrykowski, 2000; Ferro, 2011; Pereboom, 2016; Musser, 2016; Chapman, 2020).

Jääskeläinen's films belong to this category of sources, yet only a limited number were broadcast in Poland or presented at festivals. Although produced for Finnish television, they have likewise received little scholarly attention in Finland, as they address issues specific to Poland (Kaapa et al., 2023). The selection of *Antonius the Emigrant/Antonius: The Resettler* as the focus of this analysis requires reference to scholarship on post-war migration (Żakowska, 2011; Stola, 2020; Marcinkiewicz, 2022; Czyż, 2024).

Within the framework of research on historical memory, it is important to note that after 1989 new thematic strands emerged in documentary cinema, often focusing on earlier historical periods and coinciding with a broader current of memoir literature (Żytyniec, 2007), while the most recent past remained underexplored (Marczak, 2012). The topic of this migration remains insufficiently represented in studies of memory politics (Wójcik, 2016; Ponczek, 2018; Blaive, 2019).

The most significant contextual framework for interpreting the film lies in the transformations that took place in the countryside after the Second World War as a result of agricultural collectivisation. Although forced collectivisation was abandoned after 1956, the authorities continued to pursue the socialisation of agriculture through indirect means, including the establishment of State Agricultural Farms and systemic constraints placed on individual holdings (Hučková, 2023).

The central interpretive proposal advanced in this article is to shift the focus from migration as such toward an analysis of the condition of individual landowners cultivating their “own” land. The issue extends beyond economic concerns to encompass the ethos of the farmer, systems of values, beliefs and forms of communal belonging. In this sense, the film captures a broader process of transformation affecting rural societies and can be situated within a global context of structural change.

Given editorial constraints, this article discusses Jääskeläinen’s work in broad outline, while offering a more detailed analysis of a single film that addresses a subject largely absent from public discourse at the time.

A phenomenon virtually absent from Polish documentary cinema in the 1970s was the wave of emigration to the Federal Republic of Germany undertaken by individuals of German nationality living in Poland. Mass departures to the Federal Republic were rarely discussed, even in the national media, and the connection between the exodus from Warmia and Masuria and the bilateral Polish-German agreements was practically never mentioned. Only local newspapers reported on the issue, although the limited number of such articles did not reflect the true scale of the phenomenon. This disparity became more apparent with the significant increase in press coverage from 1981 onwards (Czyż, 2024, p. 101). Until then, information circulated mainly in the form of rumours about abandoned villages, often believed to have been spread by opposition groups. The background to this process was complex.

Chancellor Willy Brandt’s Ostpolitik and the Treaty between the Polish People’s Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany on the Basis for Normalizing Their Mutual Relations (7 December 1970) marked a significant shift

away from treating Poland's western border as a negotiable issue (Kranz, 2005, p. 12). Under this agreement, Poland received a low-interest loan, and approximately 120,000–125,000 people were authorised to resettle in the Federal Republic of Germany over a four-year period for family reunification. Negotiations on resettlement had begun in 1968, and the agreement specified that departures were limited to persons of “undisputed German nationality” (Muszyński, 2005, p. 46) and to mixed families, as defined by domestic legislation. Yet, as noted earlier, nationality in this region was far from unambiguous, given the historically intertwined Polish and German populations of southern East Prussia.

Jääskeläinen's *Antonius maastamuuttaja/Antonius the Emigrant/Antonius: The Resettler* (1977, 60 min.),¹ produced for Finnish television and not shown in Poland, is one of the few documentary films to address these issues directly. The documentary illuminates the complexities of ethnic identity in Warmia and Masuria while also engaging broader historical and social questions. It is noteworthy for taking up a subject largely absent from public discourse – partly due to censorship – and for preserving a visual record of processes otherwise only marginally documented.

The documentary stands out both for its thematic range and its artistic execution. Jääskeläinen worked on a subject lacking clear documentary convention, and *Antonius: The Resettler* was likely one of the earliest attempts to address it in film form.

The film situates migration within the historical and cultural context of Warmia and Masuria, tracing ethnic and territorial transformations from the Middle Ages onwards. Despite its multiple narrative strands, extensive visual material and archival footage, the film maintains a balance between its educational aims and its cinematic qualities, with Antonius's presence and responses guiding the viewer's engagement.

1. MOVING LOGISTICS

The film introduces Antonius at an advanced stage of preparation for departure. Livestock and household goods are being loaded with striking precision, and the scale of the operation becomes clear almost immediately. The commentary

¹ I would like to express my sincere thanks to Ms Elżbieta Jääskeläinen for translating the film from Finnish. As she suggested, the English term *emigrant*, used in the director's filmography, does not fully convey the author's intent. Rather than presenting the figure of an emigrant or immigrant, the film shows a displaced person or resettler, who is forced to leave rather than freely choosing to migrate.

notes that the horses were sent off first, followed by the bulls and sheep; then came the fodder and water for the journey, and finally the crates – built by Antonius himself and marked with the destination: Friedland. All of these were scheduled to arrive in Olsztyn by eight in the morning, where, after customs clearance, they were to be transferred into two freight wagons that Antonius had arranged through the Polish State Railways. The meticulous scale of these preparations mirrors the magnitude of his hopes.

Within the first two minutes, the viewer thus learns not only that Antonius manages a large, well-organised farm and intends to continue farming after resettlement, but also that he maintains strong ties with neighbours and relatives – whose Polish surnames underscore the region's complex identity patterns.

The film then situates Antonius's departure against the picturesque landscape of Warmia, where, at first glance, no compelling reason to leave seems to exist. This impression is further reinforced by the revelation that he was a wealthy and respected farmer who owned 56 hectares of land, including arable fields and forest, as well as a twelve-room manor house.

From this moment on, the viewer is prompted to ask what circumstances could have led to such a decision. The visual imagery of cattle wagons inevitably evokes post-war mass displacements across Europe, reinforcing the sense of rupture that frames Antonius's journey. He spends a few days and nights in a livestock wagon, sleeping on straw and reflecting on what lies ahead; the enclosed space becomes the central arena of the film's drama.

In the farewell scene at the railway station – where, in accordance with local custom, vodka is offered as a gesture of gratitude – the voiceover notes: "The time has come to say goodbye. Antonius has been waiting for this moment for seven years." The decision to leave thus appears deliberate, shaped over an extended period in which the family must have followed political developments surrounding the Polish-German agreements.

When asked about the reasons for emigrating, Renata, Antonius's wife, responds first, speaking from a train compartment with their children. Her explanation, marked by both determination and fatigue, frames the family's departure in terms of identity, arduous labour and uncertainty about the future:

"The reason we're leaving is, first of all, that we feel German – after all, we're of German nationality – and here we just don't have the possibility to live according to our own identity. And besides, we had to work incredibly hard here, because you couldn't really count on much help from anywhere. It was from dawn till dusk, and then pretty much round the clock after that. And second, our farm doesn't really have much of a future here, because you never

know what's going to happen. A man might sit on what's supposed to be his own land, but even then, he still can't be sure he has a place that's truly his."

Renata's statement can be interpreted on multiple levels: it exposes both the tensions surrounding nationality and the insecurity inherent in private land ownership under state socialism. These themes acquire even greater depth when juxtaposed with the family photographs shown later in the film, which highlight the fragility of the family's situation despite conditions that might have seemed sufficient to ensure material prosperity.

2. A JOURNEY INTO THE SOUL

Antonius's grandfather, Józef, was a prosperous Polish resident of Sząbruk who spoke Polish more fluently than German. He married Otylia from northern Masuria, of German background, and together they raised seven children. A family photograph from 1906, taken on Józef's fiftieth birthday, attests to their considerable economic standing. Their fifth child, Aloizeusz – Antonius's father – inherited the farm and married Eufemia Kwiatkowska, the daughter of a neighbouring farmer. The wedding took place in 1930.

Following the sequence of family photographs depicting the prosperity of Antonius's ancestors, the viewer is confronted with a stark contrast: Antonius rising from a straw-covered bedding in a cattle wagon on his way to Germany. From this moment onward, the viewer begins to observe him with heightened attentiveness. The juxtaposition of the dignified attire in the archival images and his present circumstances does more than signal the beginning of his downward social trajectory; it also initiates a gradual narrative shift. As the film proceeds, it becomes increasingly clear that this decline did not stem from national affiliation – which, as shown, was complex – but from Antonius's position within the socio-economic stratum of affluent farmers.

The recurring image of Antonius travelling alone in a freight wagon underscores the reflective space in which the documentary situates him, prompting the viewer to consider the values and conditions that shaped his early life in the late 1930s and early 1940s.

The director encourages the viewer to adopt the perspective of a prosperous Warmian farmer. Elderly residents of Sząbruk recall the 1930s as a time when, after the upheavals of the First World War, the Treaty of Versailles and the plebiscite won by Germany, local farmers sought stability and favourable conditions for cultivating their land. Many believed that the National Socialists

would restore order and reinforce the value of labour and money – a view articulated by an elderly resident of the village who appears among those photographed in 1931. When Antonius began primary school in the autumn of 1943, life in Sząbruk appeared calm and orderly.

Large landowners were not conscripted during the war, as agricultural production was essential in East Prussia – then known as *Kornkammer Deutschlands* (Germany's Granary). On Antonius's family farm, labour was provided first by two Belarusian and two Polish women from a labour camp, and later by French prisoners of war.

The voiceover then explains how the events of the final phase of the Second World War shaped the fate of Antonius's family.

By late January 1945, the Soviet army had reached Sząbruk; Antonius's father attempted to flee but was arrested. Soon afterwards, Soviet troops held a military parade in nearby Olsztyn.

The film further recalls that at the Potsdam Conference in the summer of 1945, Allied leaders once again asked, "Where are the Germans?" That was a question that had no easy answer. During the war, the Allies had proposed various territorial arrangements, which the film presents through contemporary maps. What these proposals shared was the complete absence of East Prussia from all post-war configurations.

At the Potsdam Conference, the Allies decided on the forced transfer of German citizens from former German territories, and between 1945 and 1947 around 3.5 million Germans were resettled from Poland. In the aftermath of these decisions, the retreating German army and the advancing front had stripped farms of livestock and machinery, leaving families such as Antonius's with almost no resources; with his father imprisoned, the farm had to be rebuilt from scratch, beginning with a single horse provided by UNRRA.

In 1949, Antonius's family faced the same pressures as individual farmers across Poland who, within the communist framework, were treated as kulaks. Antonius was labelled a "class enemy" at school, while private farmers were subjected to high taxes and increasing coercion to join production cooperatives as the forced collectivisation campaign unfolded. In Sząbruk only a few families complied, yet when unpaid taxes exceeded the value of their property, the first emigration applications appeared.

The political shift of October 1956 initiated the first major wave of migration to the Federal Republic of Germany. Between 1957 and 1958 more than 200,000 people of German descent left Poland, including Antonius's uncle and cousin.

The film commentary notes that although development in the Polish countryside progressed slowly, Antonius remained a relatively affluent landowner, with 36 hectares of arable land and 20 hectares of forest, yet was constrained by the policies directed at individual farmers, limiting his ability to manage the property in the way he deemed appropriate. This observation places his experience within the broader post-1956 rural context: the easing of the hard-line collectivisation policy did not materially improve the situation of farmers previously labelled as kulaks. Instead, state policy shifted toward more concealed mechanisms designed to coerce individual farmers into abandoning their private holdings.

Only midway through the film do we learn that the family's plan to emigrate did not arise solely from the political opening created by the Polish-German agreements of December 1970. A more personal factor proved decisive: Antonius had earlier been denied a passport, which prevented him from visiting relatives in Germany. As the commentary notes, repeated applications for permission to leave the country were rejected. His decision was therefore shaped by a sense of injustice and a curtailment of personal freedom – sentiments that eventually outweighed his attachment to the land. The informational barrier typical of socialist states also played a role: limited access to reliable knowledge about life in the West fostered idealised expectations of the opportunities awaiting emigrants.

Antonius's unwavering determination to emigrate raises the question of how fully he understood the economic consequences of this decision. The film notes that his farm generated a net annual income of 40,000 Finnish marks, supplemented by earnings from timber sales, yet contemporary regulations allowed emigrants to take only a small part of their assets, as financial transfers abroad were prohibited. These facts acquire emotional force when juxtaposed with the images that follow: Antonius selling the manor's furniture that cannot be taken to Germany, porters carrying out heavy pieces used by several generations, and Renata distributing remaining household items to neighbours.

The camera lingers on their young son, seated beside his removed bed, his expression marked by a sorrow that gestures towards the cost of the family's decision. The accompanying sequence of family photographs – shown from the most recent to those from earlier decades – underscores the physical resemblance between father and son and their shared expression of quiet sadness. This visual parallel prompts reflection on the recurrence of life trajectories: Antonius avoided wartime repatriation as a child, yet now experiences a comparable rupture as an adult, while his own son undergoes a similar disruption from a child's perspective.

The most emotionally charged conversation takes place on the train. The director asks:

"Did your mother ever tell you why she didn't leave after the war, when you were still a young boy?"

Antonius's face immediately reflects deep sorrow. Struggling to speak, he replies:

"Back then... nobody knew yet... whether my father would come back or not."

"And when did the family learn he wouldn't return?"

"Maybe... it must have been in 1946."

"Did you speak Polish at that time?"

"No – how could I have?" replies Antonius, with a note of disbelief.

"And where did you learn Polish?"

"At school."

"And now – why is your family leaving?"

Antonius is unable to answer; he is too moved to speak. The film then cuts to a brief visual reminiscence: a horse-drawn cart crossing sunlit meadows, with another horse running freely beside it. Antonius never completes his sentence, hiding his face and searching his pockets for a handkerchief in vain.

A further part of the exchange is conducted in German. The director shifts the conversation from the past to the future:

"What are you planning to do in Germany?"

"Right now... I still don't know what I'll be doing."

"And what do you expect from the German government?"

Antonius does not respond. The question remains suspended, underscoring his uncertainty about the prospects awaiting him.

The next scene can be read as a metaphor for the experience of the "late resettlers", who formally chose to leave yet often lacked a clear sense of what awaited them. Antonius transports part of his livestock to Germany at considerable effort and expense. The image of the horse resisting entry into the wagon constitutes one of the film's most powerful symbolic moments. At the narrative level, it reflects the practical challenges of transporting livestock under constrained conditions, yet its significance extends well beyond the literal function, opening the way for a broader reflection on the experience of dislocation.

Led in circles with its eyes covered until it loses orientation, the horse embodies the dislocation experienced by this group of late-period emigrants, who formally chose to emigrate yet did so with limited information and under significant structural pressure. The animal's instinctive resistance – its clear reluctance to enter the wagon, as if sensing that doing so was not in its best interest

– contrasts with Antonius's determination to leave, shaped by hopes built on fragmentary information and by long-standing administrative injustices. In this juxtaposition, the film highlights the asymmetry between instinctual knowledge and human uncertainty, suggesting that migration, although formally voluntary, unfolds as a movement undertaken with one's "eyes covered", marked by disorientation and limited agency.

The visual contrast between agrarian and industrial worlds, developed in the subsequent scenes, intensifies this reading. The livestock transported from Poland appears out of place within the mechanised landscape of Western agriculture, underscoring not only cultural and economic displacement but also the incompatibility between deeply rooted rural identities and the structures of late-industrial society.

3. AT OUR PLACE IN FRIEDLAND

Upon arrival at the Friedland transit camp, resettlers from Poland enter a highly efficient administrative system; an official even assures them that its operation will become even more streamlined. According to the commentary, around 3,000 people pass through the camp each month, including roughly 2,000 from Poland, 500 from the Soviet Union and the remainder from other socialist states. New arrivals undergo medical examinations and registration, receive identity documents, food, clothing, pocket money and a free railway ticket to the next camp or to relatives. Despite this extensive support, the camp remains largely self-contained, and its residents have limited contact with the outside world.

The administration welcomes each group as "compatriots", although some arrivals do not speak German and must begin learning the language almost from scratch. It is during a routine interview with a representative of the Federal Government that a central truth emerges: more than 56 hectares of Antonius's land passed to the Polish state without compensation.

The brief exchange with the official outlines Antonius's prospects in Germany:

"In agriculture we are facing difficulties; rationalisation is underway and many farmers are leaving the profession. What do you intend to do?"

"I want to learn a new trade," replies Antonius.

"That is all I have to say. I wish you the very best for the future."

The interaction proceeds in a ritualised and highly efficient manner, skilfully sidestepping the core issue. The official communicates the limits of Antonius's

future with a practised neutrality that leaves little room for hope, yet the exchange still ends with the family thanking him – an outcome that underscores both their vulnerability and the profound asymmetry inherent in such encounters.

Significantly, the moment in which the official makes clear that Antonius has no future in farming is accompanied by a shot of the child's sorrowful face – the same child who earlier watched strangers carry the family's belongings out of the house. Whether or not he imagined a future connected to agriculture, the scene suggests that his life trajectory is being shaped in ways that effectively foreclose such a possibility.

The question, then, is how to construct a future under the weight of such abruptly acquired losses. The dream of running a farm is extinguished: Antonius's livestock has been slaughtered, and the drought has left him with exceptionally low sale prices. With the loss of land and animals – the foundations of his former livelihood – the process of rapid downward mobility begins, foreshadowed earlier in the scene of transporting the animals.

A family that once lived in a spacious, twelve-room manor now occupies a two-room apartment, surviving on unemployment benefits, child allowances and the grandmother's pension – an abrupt shift from agrarian self-sufficiency to structural dependence on welfare. Antonius receives clothing from German Caritas.

As the narrator remarks: "Once, these hands worked the land. Now they are learning a new trade in a beginners' metalworking course." The contrast between Antonius's former status as a prosperous landowner and his new position as an unskilled trainee is not only economic but also deeply social and symbolic. The narrator notes that Antonius will turn forty in December, underscoring how late in life this rupture occurs and how completely it unsettles the continuity of his biography.

4. MANY HAPPY RETURNS

The title of this final section resonates on several levels. It evokes both the possibility of literal returns – to the village, to familiar landscapes, to memories – and the conventional birthday greeting, subtly recalling the moment when Antonius, standing on the threshold of forty, confronts the need to remake his life from the beginning.

In the closing section, the director introduces a pronounced note of nostalgia. The child, now attending a German school and learning German – just as his father had once learned Polish after the war – recalls his lessons in Poland and

the song “Hej, Mazury, jakie cudne...”, which idealises the beauty of the Masurian landscape. Its nostalgic tone deepens the contrast between his past and the realities awaiting him in Germany. Recalled in this new context, the song functions as a symbolic link to the cultural landscape of Warmia and Masuria and highlights the emotional dissonance between the child’s past and his present circumstances.

The foreseeable future for Antonius seems to be one in which, once he achieves some stability in Germany, he will purchase a car and return occasionally to visit his native village – much like earlier emigrants. The director places such a scene at the end of the film. In June 1976, one month before Antonius’s departure, a family who had emigrated earlier returned for the Corpus Christi celebration. They had roots in the region, and one of them had been baptised in the local church; Antonius’s own family is also present.

The commentary adds a significant detail: “Antonius is going to fulfil an honorary duty owed by the family. He will lead the priest in the Corpus Christi procession.” Carrying the canopy over the priest bearing the monstrance is a distinction rooted in local Catholic tradition, typically entrusted to those with long-standing ties to the parish. The act signifies both communal belonging and the continuity of roles and hierarchies reproduced through ritual practice.

Viewed sociologically, the scene highlights how migration disrupts locally embedded forms of identity. Participation in religious ceremonies such as the Corpus Christi procession or a child’s First Communion constitutes a core element of the community’s symbolic universe and collective memory. These practices reinforce the sense of belonging characteristic of Warmian rural life, where identity has been transmitted through embodied ritual, generational continuity and stable participation in local traditions. In this context, ritual functions less as a mechanism of social dominance than as a practice through which meaning and belonging are sustained. It serves not to enforce hierarchy for its own sake, but to affirm continuity, recognition and shared memory within the community.

The scene thus anticipates the broader themes that Jääskeläinen develops throughout his work.

The family’s imminent departure shows how migration severs precisely these forms of embeddedness. The film therefore frames the procession as a final enactment of their place within the community – a symbolic farewell to relationships, practices and memories that migration will inevitably interrupt.

CONCLUSION

Jarmo Jääskeläinen consistently foregrounds in his films the social transformations produced by political upheavals. A Polish director of the 1970s could not have shown the full trajectory of an emigrant’s journey: documentary work had to align with the government’s interpretation of the Polish-German agreements of 1970 and with official explanations of contemporary migration. At the time, even the press rarely addressed the factors that encouraged autochthonous inhabitants to leave. As noted by Maciej Czyż, many Warmians were owners of sizeable farms and thus faced state hostility, unresolved property issues and difficulties obtaining credit – problems that, alongside local conflicts, shaped their decisions to emigrate (Czyż, 2024, p. 109).

In this light, *Antonius: The Resettler* should not be viewed primarily as a film about a national minority. Although the protagonists identify as Germans, their position in post-war Poland cannot be adequately understood through national categories alone. Jääskeläinen captures a set of relationships shaped less by ethnicity than by the precarious position of prosperous farm owners within the socialist state – relationships that rarely appeared in public discourse and were almost entirely absent from documentary cinema of the period.

Viewed through the lens of memory politics, the way the film frames the Warmian and Masurian question as a “peasant issue” foregrounds its structural and economic dimensions while relegating its national ones to the background. This interpretive shift is crucial, for it redirected attention away from ethnic identity and toward the precarious position of prosperous individual farmers within the socialist state. Although the term *kulak* had fallen out of official usage already by the late 1950s, state policy directed against individual farm owners continued to be marked by hostility, reproducing earlier patterns of administrative pressure and symbolic marginalisation. Renata’s statement on the train – expressing both the family’s uncertainty about the future and their persistent sense of precarity – vividly illustrates how these dynamics shaped everyday experience.

Such insecurities were not merely psychological but structurally embedded. Private landholders operated under persistent ambiguity regarding their long-term prospects, their ownership rights and their position vis-à-vis state institutions. Since state ownership remained the most privileged and politically safeguarded form of property, land abandoned by resettlers was routinely transferred to State Agricultural Farms, reinforcing a hierarchy that placed individual farmers at a systemic disadvantage. In this context, the family’s decision to emigrate appears

not simply as a matter of nationality, but as a response to prolonged uncertainty, diminishing autonomy and the erosion of the material foundations on which rural life and identity had traditionally rested.

As Czyż also observes, Polish public discourse tended to construct a bleak image of “late resettlers” in the Federal Republic of Germany, emphasising alien landscapes, homesickness and even deaths framed as resulting from longing for the homeland. Such representations functioned as instruments of memory politics, reinforcing state narratives that warned against emigration as such and suppressed alternative interpretations of regional history. Jääskeläinen’s films challenge this narrative framework by restoring visibility to experiences largely excluded from official discourse and by exposing the mechanisms through which socialist Poland produced and sustained its historical self-understanding. By focusing on the history of a single family, the director approaches the phenomenon of “late resettlement” with particular sensitivity, remaining attentive to both its structural conditions and its human consequences. This method exemplifies what might be described as one of his characteristic “small stories about big issues”: stories rendered intimate not to diminish their scope, but to make visible the lived dimensions of historical processes often discussed only in abstract terms.

In this sense, Antonius’s experience belongs to a much broader history of post-war population movements, expulsions and resettlements initiated by the arrangements made at the Potsdam Conference. Although the conditions of resettlement in the 1970s were undoubtedly more regulated and humane than those of the immediate post-war years, the emigration procedures depicted in the film nonetheless reveal their impersonal and bureaucratic character when viewed from the perspective of the individual. Through the fate of a single farmer, Jääskeläinen exposes uncomfortable truths – not only for the authorities of socialist Poland, but also about less-acknowledged aspects of the Polish-German agreement itself and its far-reaching social consequences.

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JARMO JÄÄSKELÄINEN
I DOŚWIADCZENIA „PÓŻNYCH PRZESIEDLEŃCÓW” DO NIEMIEC

Streszczenie

Artykuł analizuje film *Antonius the Emigrant/Antonius: The Resettler* (1977) fińskiego dokumentalisty Jarmo Jääskeläinena, którego wieloletnia działalność w Polsce wyróżniała się połączeniem zaangażowania i analitycznego dystansu. Film podejmuje rzadko przedstawiany problem emigracji autochtonicznej ludności Warmii i Mazur do Republiki Federalnej Niemiec w latach 70., zwykle interpretowany jako kwestia mniejszości narodowej. Jääskeläinen ujmuje to zagadnienie szerzej, ukazując, że decyzje migracyjne wynikały z uwarunkowań własnościowych, strukturalnych napięć wokół indywidualnych gospodarstw rolnych, spuścizny kolektywizacji oraz polityki państwa wobec zamożnych rolników. Analiza filmu pozwala dostrzec mechanizmy marginalizacji, niepewności oraz zerwanych więzi lokalnych, które pozostawały poza oficjalnym dyskursem. Poprzez intymny portret jednej rodziny reżyser odsłania społeczne i historyczne konteksty, które rzadko znajdowały odzwierciedlenie w polskim filmie dokumentalnym. Film Jääskeläinena staje się tym samym ważnym świadectwem doświadczeń „późnych przesiedleńców” i krytycznym komentarzem wobec polityki pamięci okresu PRL.

Słowa kluczowe: film dokumentalny; Warmia i Mazury; migracja; późni przesiedleńcy; polityka pamięci; Jarmo Jääskeläinen