



Childhood between subversiveness and constraint: The polyphony of representational forms in Romanian cinema

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Abstract

Childhood was a central theme in Romanian cinema during the Ceaușescu regime, reflecting both the ideals promoted by the party and the social realities of the time. Films produced during this period primarily had an educational and propagandistic role, promoting ideological values, but they also managed to capture a certain autonomy of the child, emotional complexity, and even subversion within child characters, despite the constraints imposed by family, educators, or government directives. In this paper I will analyze a selection of films from different stages of the Communist period, highlighting the representations of childhood and the complex relationships between autonomy, responsibility, and dependency foreshadowed in these productions. I will explore three representative films from different stages of the communist period: *Aventurile lui Babușcă* (1973, Gheorghe Naghi & Geta Doina Tarnavski), *De dragul tău, Anca* (1983, Cristiana Nicolae), and *Întâmplări cu Alexandra* (1989, Cornel Diaconu). Beyond their thematic content, these films introduced innovative forms of storytelling such as: blending realism with fantastical or exaggerated elements, exploring the psychology of the child, and experimenting with image, music, and editing in ways that made them aesthetically engaging.

Introduction

Children's and youth films made in Communist Romania, especially from the 1960s to the late 1980s, had a significant educational and formative role. Produced in accordance with the cultural policies of Nicolae Ceaușescu, these films were expected to reflect socialist ideals while drawing inspiration from the everyday realities of Romanian life. Although these were often considered as propaganda, especially after 1990 due to their ideological context, their narratives should not be overlooked solely on that basis. These films have simple narrative structures, but they offer, in a certain way, contextualized representations of childhood and adolescence, which provide relevant insights into the social realities and interpersonal relationships of the time. It is important to critically reassess these works as part of Romania's cinematic and cultural history, as they contributed to the construction of shared social imaginaries, articulated through the dominant values grounded in solidarity, mutual support, and social responsibility, despite the political framework. In *Aventurile lui Babușcă* [The adventures of Babușcă], (1973, Gheorghe Naghi and Geta Doina Tarnavski), the child protagonists certainly exemplify the ideal socialist youth, navigating moral dilemmas with courage and loyalty. However, moments of play and initiative suggest a tension between individuality and ideological conformity. *De dragul tău, Anca* [For your sake, Anca], (1983, Cristiana Nicolae), focuses on the everyday life of the working class, standing out as one of the most intricate explorations of gender roles and social norms in Romanian society. The protagonist, the defiant Anca, struggles against a set of implicit, deeply ingrained behavioural expectations imposed by both family and society. The film unfolds the emotional and psychological strategies a young girl develops in her effort to cope with or resist the pressure to conform. Finally, *Întâmplări cu Alexandra* [Adventures with Alexandra], (1989, Cornel Diaconu) made at the end of the regime, stages the domestic disorder between a father and his daughter with humour and affection, gently undermining authoritarian models of discipline and suggesting an alternative one: intimacy, improvisation, and emotional openness.

The representation of children in these films goes beyond mere didactic typologies. It reveals the dynamics of young characters and their ability to engage with the world and shape it from their own perspective. Although a binary logic (child/adult) often underlies these depictions: the child seen as vulnerable, naive, and dependent, and the adult as rational, authoritative, and self-sufficient. The films I examine in this paper suggest a different approach: the child is not simply defined in relation to adulthood but is portrayed as an active character whose growth is shaped through interaction, experience, and self-expression. In this light, childhood is not just a preparatory stage for adulthood, but a meaningful and formative phase that should be understood on its own terms, rather than through an adult-centred perspective. Alongside this, I will explore how violence and gender norms are also meaningful to these narratives. The children are not simply portrayed as vulnerable or shaped by gendered expectations, but are often placed in situations marked by violence. However, they consistently find ways to build alternative relationships, resisting imposed roles, and ultimately avoiding or transforming violent situations. In this sense, the child is not a passive actor shaped solely by ideology and control, but a responsive figure who negotiates their place within the system through subtle acts of agency and connection.

In this context, Markus P. J. Bohlmann and Anna Hickey-Moody's introduction to *Deleuze and Children* (2019) offers a significant philosophical perspective. Drawing on the ideas of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, the authors suggest a reimagining of childhood. Rather than adhering to the Freudian psychoanalytic model of the Oedipus complex, Deleuze and Guattari advocate for a conceptual framework grounded in affect, multiplicity, and the fluid process of becoming.

Within this framework, Deleuze and Guattari introduce a philosophical perspective that challenges linear models of development: the child is not a lesser or incomplete version of the adult, but a subject in a continuous process of becoming. In *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980), they understand childhood as a poetic and creative journey, marked by the productive instability of becoming: becoming-animal, becoming-woman, becoming-child. In fact, the child represents a "line of flight", a way of escaping structural, rigid and hierarchical systems. Becoming-child is a movement of deterritorialization disrupting adult norms and identities. (1980:270) From this stand point, education ought not to function as a mechanism for molding children according to predetermined ideals, but rather as a space for improvisation, experimentation, and creative exploration as integral to the child's becoming. A child encouraged to desire holds the potential to contribute to the coming to light forms of social interaction, perhaps resonating with the transformative aspirations of Romanian Communism, at least in its theoretical conception. In *Anti-Oedipus* (1983), Deleuze and Guattari reconceptualize the child not as a passive subject to fulfil the adult expectations, but as an active desiring figure. Within this framework, education is not meant to repress desire, but to engage it. The child exists within a rhizomatic constellation of forces, relations, and affects that subverts linear, hierarchical models of development. Accordingly, pedagogy must be reoriented toward openness, attentiveness, and relational intensity, rather than the imposition of fixed identities or adult-centric frameworks of normativity.

Moreover, Deleuze and Guattari argue that desire itself is revolutionary, especially because it seeks connections, flows and lines of flight from oppressive system. Children, thus represent a revolutionary subject, not because they are innocent, but because their desires are not yet captured by system of power. As Deleuze and Guattari put in: "For the prime evidence points to the fact that desire does not take as its object persons and things, but the entire surroundings that it traverses, the vibrations and flows of every sort to which it is joined" (1983, 292).

Bogdan Jitea (2021) argues that the important moment in 1971 is relevant in Romania with the July Theses, which called for the ideological education of the masses, an objective also incorporated in cinema. The Romanian authorities demanded measures for political-ideological improvement and the Marxist-Leninist education of working people, and cinema was the perfect mechanism through which to promote these socialist realities (2021, 116). Carmen Tagsorean affirms that: "In Communist societies, the child's environment was very limited and closely controlled. He lived in a neighbourhood with similar conditions to others, he went to the same school as the others, he was obligated to participate in the same extracurricular activities as the others, he read the same magazines, he watched the same TV as the others and listened to the same radio" (2017, 6). With all these mechanisms of coercion, I will argue that these films featuring child characters have the potential to shape the way children participate in social relationships, particularly by modelling different forms of interactions. Through its portrayals of children engaged in communal life, cinema enacts a vision of social relations that avoid individualism and hierarchy in favour of collective consciousness, dialectical development, and revolutionary humanism. The child learns to develop in solidarity, to cooperate, to understand its role in the world. An interesting perspective on education and children's imagination comes from Lev Vygotsky (1968; 2004). The psychologist argue that imagination is a key point that depends on experience; therefore, education should broaden children's experience to provide raw material for imaginative and creative thought. He also emphasizes

the emotional dimension of imagination. Imaginative activity is often emotionally charged, and emotions help structure the content and combination of creative elements. Moreover, imagination allows the child (and human being generally) to orient toward the future, envision alternatives, and transform the present (2004, 32-33).

In this sense, the pedagogy proposed by Paolo Freire resonates with the socialist ideal: education is not simply a repository of information, but a dialog between equals, a relationship based on mutual learning and respect (1970; 2005). Like Vygotsky, Freire sees children as agents of change, capable of reflection, creativity and historical participation, even if still in formation. In all these three films, when applied to the collaborative spaces of childhood, this model helps for an educational approach in which the child learns through cooperation, thinking and creating alongside others, thereby cultivating the ethic of collective care and shared responsibility. In contrast to the capitalist model, which privileges competition and individual achievement, the socialist framework promotes mutual support and interdependence. A further point of significance is the child's active participation in society: children take part in decision-making processes and communal activities, gaining access to socially formative experiences. In the socialist community, the child is not left to face life alone but is accompanied, guided, supported. In fact, also the state assumes an active role in the child's education. In this way, dialogical education prepares children to become adults committed to the common good rather than driven by self-interest. Ultimately, this pedagogy of solidarity, cooperation, and social responsibility forms the foundation for a just and equitable society.

The pedagogical features discussed above also resonate at the narrative surface of these films, where the child-character functions as a site of creative expression and structural flexibility within the cinematic form.

Marilena Ilieșiu (2013) analyzes narrative constructions from primitive forms to sophisticated structures, mirroring socio-political transformations. In her opinion, the 1970s were characterized by three narrative directions: the intermediation with literature through adaptations, a realist decoding of everyday life that captures subtle meanings and tensions, and a diversification of narrative formulas grounded in a functional grammar of image and sound. It is evident that the cinematic narrative is gradually freeing itself from theatrical and literary influences, acquiring aesthetic and semiotic autonomy, by imprinting meanings about the individual, the community and history (2013, 77). According to Ilieșiu (2013, 103), the post-1980s period saw a thematic ossification, with narrative structures becoming repetitive and schematic, characters reduced to ideological functions and typologies dictated by political imperatives. Yet, in the films selected for this analysis, narrative innovation is still perceptible, particularly through the figure of the child. No longer a passive or purely innocent presence, the child-character emerges as a nucleus of narrative freedom: spontaneous, imaginative, and active within the diegetic world. These young protagonists reconfigure domestic spaces into realms of play and adventure, creating hybrid universes where the real and the imaginary coalesce. In doing so, they offer a counter-narrative to the supposed ideological rigidity, opening up new dimensions of storytelling grounded in affect, agency, and the freedom to imagine. Therefore, in the mentioned films, childhood is seen from several perspectives. All three films reflect, in distinct ways, a broader shift in children's cinema: from the idealization of the morally exemplary child to a more layered portrayal that emphasizes inner life and personal experience.

Nature's Ally: Innocence and Freedom in *Aventurile lui Babușcă* [The adventures of Babușcă]

Gheorghe Naghi directed a series of children's and adventure films in which child protagonists transcend the trope of innocence, emerging instead as morally grounded, courageous, and often ironic figures. Through spontaneity and decisive action, these young characters become agents of social equilibrium. In films such as *Brigada lui Ionuț* [Ionuț's Brigade] (1954), *Alarmă în Deltă* [Alarm in the Danube Delta] (1976), and *Dumbrava minunată* [The magic grove] (1980), Naghi crafts narrative spaces imbued with freedom and guided by a pedagogy rooted in empathy, friendship, and justice. Actually, *Aventurile lui Babușcă* is a literary adaptation of the novel *Ostrovul Lupilor* [The Island of Wolves] (1969) written by Petre Luscoș. The film exemplifies this approach by framing a murder investigation and the pursuit of smugglers in the Danube Delta through the voice of a child. Narrated in the first person by Babușcă (Gabriel Nacu), the voiceover lends the film both a tone of clarity and objectivity and a lively, curious energy.

Babușcă comes from a working-class family, while his friend Scatiu (Horia Zugrăvescu) is the son of the harbour captain, a contrast in social backgrounds that the film delineates. This difference is most apparent in the expectations placed on the two boys: Babușcă's father insists he contribute to household responsibilities, whereas Scatiu enjoys greater freedom, a privilege afforded by his father's important social position. This contrast highlights an awareness of class distinctions and the differing expectations determined by hierarchical position. For Babușcă, helping with domestic labour is not presented as optional, but as an obligation, an expected duty within the family structure.

The film suggests that personal merit and active engagement can transcend the limitations imposed by one's social background. This message aligns with the ideals of Communist ideology, which promote the belief that individual success is possible through work, responsibility, and collective effort.

After running away from home, Babușcă becomes directly involved in the pursuit of a supposed professor, who is in fact a trafficker. Together with Scatiu, he transports the suspect by boat toward the Ostrovul Lupilor (The Island of Wolves). Tension rises when the boys begin to realize, based on the stranger's gestures and behaviour, and especially when he draws a gun and shoots a snake from a tree, that the so-called "teacher" is not who he claims to be. Their familiarity with the natural environment: knowledge of trails, bird movement, and local signs, proves crucial in uncovering the impostor's true identity. The film thus introduces the idea that a child's practical intelligence, local wisdom and powers of observation can even surpass those of official authorities. The local children possess a *form of intelligence* rich in experience, community, and harmony with nature. This reflects Donna Haraway's notion of *natureculture*: the inseparable entanglement of human and natural histories, knowledges, and agencies (2003, 17). The children's intelligence embodies and situates a form of becoming with their environment and its creatures. They are not just in nature, they are co-constituted by it, forming ethical and epistemological bonds through their experiences. Moreover, the antagonists stand out as outsiders, who neither know nor understand the environment. This difference highlights a deeper message promoted by the film: those who live in nature, like the local children, are stronger and more trustworthy than those who try to use it for selfish or illegal purposes.

Babușca and Scatiu represent vigilante children, who act not just out of curiosity, but out of a profound sense of fairness and truth. The narrative reaches its climax when boys are captured, escape again, and lead the Militia through the Delta, offering precise guidance on the quickest route to intercept the traffickers. The children's connection with the dog Spic, who is wounded during the mission, symbolizes their empathy and bond with the natural world. This contrast with the perspective offered by Valenska Bopp-Filimonov (2022, 16-18) who examines the relationship between children and animals in early 20th century Romanian literature for children. Through a combined approach of Animal and Childhood studies, she explains that Romanian literary texts often depict violent acts committed by children against animals. Bopp-Filimonov argues that Animal and Childhood Studies point out that the 19th century marked a shift in how children and animals were viewed, no longer just useful for labour, but cherished emotionally within family. However, she explains that this change did not happen in the same way in Romania. Due to the fact, at that time, Romania was still largely rural and agrarian, the roles and treatment of children and animals followed different patterns. Therefore, animals continued to serve mainly as companions, and children remained closely tied to survival and traditions. The frequent depiction of cruelty in Romanian literature, especially when children harm animals, reflects deeper cultural tensions between traditional ways of life and the pressures of modernization. In fact, as Valenska Bopp-Filimonov also suggests that literary violence may not only reflect interpersonal or societal conflict but also resonate with Romanian's broader history of structural and imperial violence (2022, 18). While Bopp-Filimonov's analysis highlights literature where cruelty is normalized and mirrors broader tensions between tradition and modernization, the film from Communist period offers a more hopeful, perhaps modern reimagining: children act ethically, engage with the landscape, and connect with animals as a source of strength.

Furthermore, their relationship with the Militia is a pedagogical one: Major Vlad (Lazăr Vrabie) teaches them, but also respects them as partners. In this way, the film shows a model of a socially responsible child, able to distinguish right from wrong and to act effectively against danger. Thus, the child is not protected from adventure, but directly exposed to danger, which amplifies the idea of character building through action.

Despite being instructed not to reveal certain details, such as the death of a man named Murfatlar (Constantin Rauțchi), the children ultimately reveal the truth. This moment does not show defiance or bravery, but rather highlights their emotional sincerity and instinctive honesty. In doing so, the film creates space for childhood vulnerability, suggesting that mistakes and spontaneity are not flaws, but parts of life based in the impulse to trust, to believe in others and to say the truth without thinking at the consequences. At the same time, it reveals the limits of childhood, where emotional honesty coexists with limited knowledge and a heightened risk of being misled or taken advantage of. This nuance contributes to a more complex portrayal of the child, not as a perfect model, but as a feeling, fallible individual. However, the centrality of the child as a bearer of moral clarity and social promise can instrumentalize childhood for political purposes.

In one of the film's final twists, an elderly woman who asks the boys for help turns out to be another trap. This is a scene that emphasizes the persistent need for vigilance, even in seemingly innocent encounters. Yet the boys' resilience continues to prevail. The action culminates in a shootout within an abandoned house, where the Militia finally apprehends the criminals. The film closes with a public ceremony: the Pioneers sing "Trei culori" (Three colours), the national anthem of the Socialist Republic of Romania from 1977 and 1990, and Babușcă receives the

important badge (cutezător). This ending affirms the central socialist message of the film, that heroism arises not from privilege or authority, but from courage, intelligence, and the ethical application of knowledge in service of the collective.

Rebellion in the Frame: Gender and Resistance in *De dragul tău, Anca* [For Your Sake, Anca]

If in *Aventurile lui Babușcă* [*The Adventures of Babușcă*] the children are guided, in a certain way, by collective principals, and become heroes in a story with social and moral stakes, then in *De dragul tău Anca* [For Your Sake, Anca], the main character, an 11-year-old girl, faces the expectations and pressures of a world organized on social, gender and domestic conformity. Cristiana Nicolae's film constructs a dramaturgy of the interior, centred on family life, school, and everyday interactions. If Babusca succeeds by virtue of her courage and knowledge of his surroundings, Anca (Alexandra Duca) distinguishes herself through emotional intelligence, her ability to interpret the world through fantasy and her refusal to fit into the established gender roles. Cristiana Nicolae has directed other films exploring childhood besides the one mentioned, such as *Al patrulea gard, lângă debarcader* [The fourth fence, next to the pier] or the *Racheta albă* [White Rocket] series, where children are often involved in shared learning experiences through adventure, curiosity, and discovery. Georgiana Vrăjitoru (2022) writes that the film could have more explored Anca's discomfort with the social norms of the time, but some scenes were cut by order of Ion Traian Ștefănescu, a cultural official. Despite this, the film still conveys strong criticism of that period concerning the social inequalities and emotional repression.

In *De dragul tău, Anca* [For Your Sake, Anca], the protagonist, Anca, is frequently mistaken for a boy by neighbours and even by her own parents, who refer to her as "little boy" with a tone of amused irony. She enjoys playing soccer, wearing trousers, and taking initiative. All these behaviours are perceived as inappropriate for a girl within the normative framework. Scenes such as the one in which she is scolded for reading instead of helping with housework, or her interactions with the well-dressed neighbour and her obedient daughters, highlight the pressure to conform to traditional gender roles. At school, she is reprimanded for failing to meet expectations tied to gender and discipline but her rich inner world becomes a form of resistance, an imaginative counter-space to the rigid structures around her. In this light, Cristiana Nicolae interrogates the gap between Communist principles and the gendered social realities girls must navigate.

Anca's parents are hard-working people who manage to move from a communal household to a comfortable apartment. Her parents, tired, pressured by rules and work, see Anca as a troublemaker. Her mother (Rodica Mandache) constantly compares her to "good" girls, and her father (Dan Condurache) reacts violently, not knowing how to deal with her expansive personality. A pivotal scene contrasts Anca's working-class mother, arriving at school burdened with shopping bags and met with condescension, with the elegantly dressed mother of a male classmate, whose school absences are overlooked due to social status. While Anca is unfairly blamed and publicly humiliated, the boy is shielded by both his mother and the class teacher. These scenes emphasize how gender and class intersect to produce unequal treatment and reinforce structural hierarchies.

Although Ana's connection with school is strained, the film does not portray education exclusively as a repressive mechanism. On the contrary, in the key scene in Physics class, the teacher does not simply accept a mechanical recitation of the lesson, but challenges the pupils to give authentic examples from their own experience. In this moment, education becomes a space for questioning, critical thinking and connecting knowledge with real life. In this sense, Anca's spontaneous joy, curiosity, and emotional intelligence shine through. Her shifting between fantasy and reality, whether telling stories, mimicking adults, or imagining alternative futures, functions as a creative survival strategy. For Anca, this openness to active thinking provides a springboard: she begins to learn not out of fear or compulsion, but through play, curiosity and analogy. Her free spirit is not quashed by school, but, directed and empowered in those moments when learning becomes alive and relevant to the world. Thus, the film shows that education is when the child is challenged to reflect, create and relate.

The final scenes of the film, including a symbolic football match where Anca removes her jacket and plays freely with a marginalized boy, reaffirm her nonconformity and capacity for solidarity. In this way, *De dragul tău, Anca* [For Your Sake, Anca] not only critiques restrictive norms but also offers a vision of emancipated childhood rooted in imagination, resistance, and relational agency.

Domestic Disruptions: Fragility and Imagination in *Întâmplări cu Alexandra* [Adventures with Alexandra]

The third and final film I chose to analyze, *Întâmplări cu Alexandra* [Adventures with Alexandra], directed by Cornel Diaconu, combines gentle humor with a sharp lens on domestic labour, gender roles, and the socialist of early social integration. Cornel Diaconu also directed *De ce are vulpea coadă* [Why the Fox Has a Tail] (1989), a light-hearted comedy about a city family visiting the father's rural hometown. Set in the intimate space of an urban

household, *Întâmplări cu Alexandra* [Adventures with Alexandra], focuses on Alexandra, a precocious 10 years old girl, who assumes adult responsibilities in her mother's absence. While her father, portrayed as confused, passive, and comically out of touch, is unable to maintain daily routines, Alexandra takes charge: she cooks, does the dishes, organizes the home, and even helps solve practical problems such as broken locks or forgotten keys. These scenes, while framed with warmth and humour, also they show a form of child labour, particularly in the domestic sphere, which remains a persistent issue in contemporary Romania. A curious fact is that the actors playing Alexandra and her father are, in real life, daughter and father, Ana and Mircea Diaconu.

The film is a comedy about their relationship and intergenerational issues, emphasizing the growing complicity between them. However, from a feminist perspective, the film both reflects and questions gendered divisions of labour. Alexandra's early assumption of household duties, typically assigned to women, highlights the gendered burden of domesticity, even in childhood. Her father's inability to function in the mother's absence draws attention to the structural imbalance between male privilege and female responsibility within the socialist family. Despite socialist rhetoric of gender equality and collective responsibility, the practical dimension of care work still falls on women, and, by extension, on girls.

On the one hand, her gestures and actions can be seen as a form of solidarity with the situation of the father who is left alone to take care of her, and on the other hand, they can be an interpretation of the roles that women fulfill in both society and the private sphere. Hence, Alexandra guides her father, corrects him, advises him, listens to him, without rebellion, but by assuming the role of temporary adult. At the same time her father's frequent frustration and moments of yelling, particularly when her imaginative freedom leads to chaos or transgresses adult boundaries, reveal how child autonomy is conditional, tolerated only within the limits of adult authority. These scenes are emotionally charged and may resonate strongly with viewers, as they expose the fragility of adult authority in the face of child agency. While Alexandra is granted a surprising degree of freedom, the consequences of her actions (disorder, mistakes, misunderstandings) highlight how quickly that children's freedom can be withdrawn when it challenges adult expectations or disrupts normative order. In this way, the film reflects a central tension in socialist pedagogy: the desire to cultivate responsibility and independence in children while maintaining control and reinforcing discipline. This ambivalence ultimately deepens the film's emotional impact, inviting viewers to reflect on the complex balance between autonomy, care, and authority in the socialization of children.

The film constructs a layered image of childhood in socialist society, where formation occurs not only through affection and play, but also through policing their behaviors and reinforcing hierarchical control.

In contrast to *De dragul tău, Anca* [For Your Sake, Anca], which offers a nuanced depiction of how pupils are treated within the school system, this film presents a different perspective of the educational environment. Here, the female teacher is portrayed as more approachable and empathetic, suggesting a more supportive relationship between adult and child. It is also significant that Alexandra is a primary school pupil, while Anca, is approaching adolescence. The primary school is shown as a place where the values of work, order, solidarity and creativity are encouraged. Alexandra is inquisitive, inventive, involved, a model promoted by the education of the time.

Moreover, Alexandra's relations with the other children are marked by cooperation, mutual respect and initiative. There are no dramatic conflicts, but a culture of everyday friendship, organized play and small gestures of solidarity. Alexandra engages in morally charged situations, defends his friend Ică against bullying, tries to mediate peer conflicts. In her group of friends and mates, there are children and adolescents (because age does not matter), everyone contributes what they can, where mistakes are forgiven and learning is shared.

The film shows details related to technological development: household gadgets, modern toys, small inventions or technical preoccupations, which indicate a childhood adapted to the modernization of society. Alexandra lives in an urban one, where material progress goes hand in hand with personal development. This detail is essential in the socialist vision: the child must be prepared also technically for the future of an industrialized, rational, efficient society. The child's curiosity about technology is encouraged as part of an educational ideal oriented towards science and social utility.

Întâmplări cu Alexandra [Adventures with Alexandra] offers a picture of a socialist childhood, in which the child is not cut off from the world, but deeply integrated into the mechanisms of family life, school and community. Through Alexandra's responsibility, her common sense and active curiosity, she can be seen as an example of learning through care, involvement and social awareness. Her relationships with her father, school and friends reflect the ideals of the time: personal progress through solidarity, training through involvement and education through a life lived, not just learned.

As I tried to show here, beyond the ideological framework, Romanian children's films from the socialist period reflect an interesting tension between the official message (the formation of the useful, educated,

responsible child) and the living nature of the child-character, who often contradicts this formula: the character is rebellious, dreamy, ironic, spontaneous.

In conclusion, Romanian cinema for children during this period cannot be understood only as an instrument of propaganda, but also as a space for collective formation, experimentation and becoming. The child is not just an educable object, but an active agent of learning and creation. The values conveyed by these films - solidarity, responsibility, openness - remain relevant today, inviting us to rethink education not as a disciplinary process, but as a process of building the world together.

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