

Hungarian Animation, Folklore, and The Soviet Government

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ABSTRACT

This study will use rhetorical criticism to analyze eleven Hungarian animation films and four TV shows from the Soviet-era to discover how Hungarian animation in this period utilized folktales to criticize the government. The Thompson Motif Index will be used as a point of comparison. Results from the study show that multiple animation films utilized folktale elements to criticize the government, leaving it open for further study to explore other ideologies that may be reflected in Hungarian animation in the Soviet-era.

KEYWORDS

rhetorical analysis, animation, motifs, folklore, Kádár

INTRODUCTION

Soviet-era animation is a heavily researched topic, however, most studies focus primarily on Russian animation during the various phases of the Soviet period. Researchers study animation within these periods and project the events and characters that appear in them to the broader Soviet context, thus creating interpretations of the meaning of these animation movies. Within a number of these studies there is a focus on how folktales are used in the animation movies to promote certain ideologies, either state supported or directed against the state itself. Despite

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much research done in this area, many of the studies in question focus primarily on Soviet-era Russian animation, bar a few studies on other countries. While a handful of studies on Soviet-era Hungarian animation do exist, these are limited, as they focus on one specific film or TV show rather than on Soviet-era Hungarian animation as a whole. Furthermore, they do not explore whether folktales are used within these animations and if yes, then in what manner. To remedy this, this study seeks to understand Soviet-era Hungarian animation through the lens of folktales by asking the question: how does Soviet-era Hungarian animation utilize elements of folktale to criticize the government?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Definition of Folktale

For this study, it was necessary to arrive at a basic understanding of folktales. I used Jan Harold Brunvand's textbook on an introduction to folklore to develop this understanding. While the textbook is primarily on American folklore, it introduces the concept of folktale and its many characteristics in a way that could be understood and applied universally, due to the nature of folktales. Brunvand defines folk tales as "traditional narratives that are strictly fictional and told primarily for entertainment, although they may also illustrate a truth or moral" (229).

An important feature of folktales which is essential to understand for this study is that many folktales from around the world have parallels. This has led scholars to develop two theories to explain this phenomenon: "polygenesis" and "diffusion". Polygenesis is defined as "the independent invention of the same materials in different places", while diffusion is defined as, "the single invention at one place of an item that was then transmitted to other regions" (Brunvand, 1998, 187–188). Two indexes were created by scholars to help organize folktales, the Thompson-Motif-Index (TMI) and Aarne-Thompson-Uther's Tale-Type-Index (ATU). The former is an index of narrative elements (motifs) of folk literature, while the latter only classifies whole plots of folk literature. A motif, as Brunvand writes, is "any striking or unusual unit recurring in them; it may be an object (such as a magic wand), a marvelous animal (such as a speaking horse), a concept (such as a taboo or forbidden act), an action (such as a test or deception), a character (such as a giant, ogre, or a fairy godmother), a character type (such as a fool or a prophet), or a structural quality (such as formulistic numbers or cumulative repetition)" (179). Generally, the TMI subscribes to belief in polygenesis, while the ATU subscribes to belief in diffusion (232).

Eras in Soviet History and Animation

In the earliest phase of the history of the Soviet Union, folktales were seen as unacceptable subject matter. The belief at the time was that thanks to industrialization even the Soviet countryside would progress and metamorphose into factory landscapes, and art forms depicting rural life and its concomitant traditions would die out. The workers' paradise achieved through Marxism and the Soviet Union would erase the injustices and social inequality seen in traditional folktales and folk songs, thus eliminating the need for them (Miller, 1991). However, at the First Congress for Soviet Writers in 1934 author Maxim Gorky gave a talk declaring the importance of folklore to Soviet life. Gorky claimed that previously folklore had been misinterpreted, and that in fact it stemmed from the "striving...of working men to ease their own



labor and to increase its productivity.” Gorky argued that in folklore, “the most artistically perfect heroes” were created by the “working masses” and could be used as role models for society. Gorky encouraged his colleagues to begin to study folklore as “the beginning of the art of words is in folklore” (Miller, 1991, 8). Due to Gorky’s actions, it now became socially acceptable to use folklore as a subject matter for films. Boris Shumyatsky, head of the Soviet Russian state-run film studio ‘Soyuzkino’, also supported the use of folklore in films. Thanks to public and state support for animation under Stalin, a subdivision of Soyuzkino was formed in 1936 primarily focusing on animation. The newly established animation studio was named Soyuzmul’film, a word meaning Soviet animated film, which gave rise to the creation of a great many animation films based on folktales, such as the feature length film *Konek-Gorbunok (The Humpbacked Horse)* released in 1947 (Kononenko, 2011, 274–275).

In an analysis by A.V. Fedorov on Soviet Russian animation in the second half of the 1940s it was concluded that many of these animations were based on folktales, and with their integration came Soviet ideologies. This is seen in *Skoraia pomoshch (Ambulance)*, and *Chuzhoi golos (A Foreign Voice)*, both of which were released in 1949 and both had used elements of folktales, such as, Fedorov writes, “wolves as negative and evil beings, magpies as stupid chatterboxes, hares as eternal victims of predatory animals, and so forth”. *Ambulance* criticises the Marshall Plan (an economic relief program created by the United States to help rebuild western European countries after World War II), promoting the message that the Marshall Plan is in fact a trap for European countries and a method for American imperialists to lead them into poverty. *A Foreign Voice* promotes the message of rejecting Western influence, in this case American jazz, in preference for traditional and state accepted alternatives such as folk and classical music (Fedorov, 2016, 198–199). This study is important to the present author, as it showcases how folk tale elements were utilized in critique of Western ideologies and in support of Soviet ones. While not directly pertinent to the objective of this paper, it still provides a classic example of “typical” Soviet animation, illustrating the common use of folktales in animation films during the Soviet Russian period, appealing both to children and adults.

After the death of Joseph Stalin in 1953, no one stepped up to fill his boots, so to speak. As Laura Pontieri writes in her novel, *Soviet Animation and the Thaw of the 1960s: Not Only for Children (2012)*, Stalin was not replaced by another Soviet personality who would have continued the tradition of embodying charm and charisma in his rule, and was replaced instead by a figure who had challenged this tradition. In the same novel, Pontieri writes that this figure, Nikita Khrushchev, wanted to promote a better future than had been promised by Stalin; a future of “real” communism was to be brought about. Under Khrushchev, the arts had experienced a brief moment of new freedoms since, while the government and cultural institutions still had the final word on what could and could not be expressed, the atmosphere was more receptive and open to experimentation compared to the days of Stalin (51). Due to such a tendency of issuing contradictory policies, Khrushchev’s period of rule was subsequently tagged “the thaw” by Ilya Ehrenburg in his book of the same title, published in 1954. Pontieri was to describe these contradictory policies in her aforementioned novel as, “...pendulum swings in the behavior of the authorities, at times granting more freedom, at other times freezing the liberal atmosphere and imposing harsher control. It was a time of contradictions as well as of instability...” (52). These swings would be seen even in the early years of Khrushchev’s rule in 1956 and ‘57. Works that openly challenged the untruths of socialist realism, as well as works by younger poets, such as Evgenii Evtushenko and Andrei Voznesenskii, who both experimented in



form and criticized Stalinism, gained permission to be published and became available to the people, as public poetry readings were now permitted in Moscow's city center (Pontieri, 2012, 53). However, by the second half of 1956, the pendulum had begun to swing. The severe repression of the Polish uprising in the summer of 1956, as well as of the Hungarian revolution in the fall months of 1956, led to Khrushchev holding meetings in March and May of 1957 with writers and artists, reminding them of the mandatory artistic obedience to the state and the need to "write about what is positive in life" (Suny, 2011, 406). These ups-and-downs, "warmings" and "freezings", seen in Khrushchev's thaw introduced and then again restricted many rights and liberties of the people of the Soviet Union, and even went on to introduce certain aspects of Western culture, such as allowing American and British radio in Soviet Russia (McMillan, 1985, 52–54).

These changes in culture and policy were represented in animated work; as Khrushchev had supported the use of satire as a "corrective tool", a boom in satirical animations ensued which targeted issues deemed by the Party as acceptable subject matter. Case studies in Pontieri's aforementioned novel on animation movies released by Soyuzmul'tfil'm during the early 1960s showcase and criticize life under Khrushchev's rule, as seen in the study of *Great Troubles* (*Bol'shie nepriiatnosti*, 1961). According to Pontieri, *Great Troubles* was "...the first film in the new phase of Soviet animation of the 1960s that combined a fresh satirical take on contemporary life with innovative stylistic choices" (85). This had made *Great Troubles* a matter of importance, since while it could only criticize problems within Soviet society that were accepted subjects of ridicule by the government, its unique style broke away from the traditional "Disney" style of early Soviet animation. *Great Troubles* was not grounded in reality – the animated moves did not imitate human movement, nor did it follow the rules of a real-world reality, such as *Ambulance* (1949) and *A Foreign Voice* (1949) had done. Instead it used the context of a young school girl drawing her family all day long while narrating their actions using sayings she had picked up from her older relatives. The satirical and comic effect arises when the girl uses these figurative sayings with little knowledge of their literal meaning and is thus shown in the act of illustrating the literal meaning of these sayings. For example, the father of the narrator is corrupt, selling refrigerators illegally and bribing inspectors until he finally gets arrested. These events are presented through metaphorical sayings, such as "he let fridges pass on the left", which are then drawn literally. The depiction of the narrator's older brother and sister, Kolya and Kapa respectively, are also important. They are introduced in relation to jazz music, a foreign genre new to the Soviet people brought about by Khrushchev's policies and representing the generational gap between them and their parents, represented here by classical music. The study goes on to examine the metaphorical oral and illustrative depictions of Kolya as an untraditional, lazy, drinking and smoking young adult who participates in "Western vulgarity"; a typical member of the youth subgroup called *stilyagi* (style-hunters). *Great Troubles* was not criticizing the establishment or the Soviet system as much as the "failures" of society, dispersing illusions about progress toward Khrushchev's "real" communism (Pontieri, 2012, 86–93). This study is important to researchers as, while it does not analyze animation movies that had used folktales, it does introduce the era of Soviet animation, forming a bridge to the use of satire as a form of criticism, as well the concept of a non-conventional artistic style that does not adhere to the reality-based approach of prior animation films.

Following Nikita Khrushchev's deposition in 1964, there was still an air of artistic liberation left over from the period of the Thaw that continued into the early years of Leonid Brezhnev's



rule. This is seen in the 1967 animated film *Mountain of Dinosaurs (Gora dinozavrov)* which, while it painted itself as an educational film on the extinction of the dinosaurs, could clearly be read as a political commentary on everyday Soviet lifestyle and the accompanying feeling that it was suffocating its people. Yet, the Artistic Council approved the production of the film, as they had still kept to the policies of Khrushchev's Thaw (Pontieri, 2012, 123).

However, by the middle of 1965, evidence of an oncoming new Soviet society under Leonid Brezhnev was apparent. Previously celebrated journals, such as *Novyi mir* and *Iunost*, were criticized for publishing "negative" works. Some writers, such as Aleksei Rumiantsev, were dismissed from their editorial positions due to their "negative" articles. In the case of Rumiantsev, it was his article written in defense of the waning artistic freedom under Brezhnev that caused his dismissal (Woll, 2000, 166). The Czechoslovakian invasion in August of 1968 showcased to the people of the Soviet Union that the fluctuating policies of Khrushchev's Thaw were over, and a stricter, less tolerable and more conservative regime had come (Pontieri, 2012, 122).

After the early years of Brezhnev's rule in the late 1960s, the remaining years of his regime seemed stagnant, as it was deemed that the struggles of the working class were over and it had become a matter of a waiting game for the arrival of the Soviet utopia. Thus, Brezhnev's regime, from 1965 to his death in 1982, became known as the Era of Stagnation, defined by Anna Fishzon as a time "...when the Stalinist past was unspeakable and the future postponed or foreclosed...the loss of narrative coherence and futurity, the never to arrive communist promise...". However, in contrast to the bleak unforeseeable future of the Stagnation period, the resurgence of the use of folk art in animation was accompanied, although for the benefit of no target audience in particular, by a "voluptuous present, possibility and feeling" in the Soviet Russian animation of the time, which also gave a "revitalized time and space where one could desire" (Pontieri, 2012, 169, 173, 179; Fishzon, 2015, 572). This "revitalized time and space where one could desire" could be seen in the 1975 Soviet Russian animation, *Hedgehog in the Fog*, where a hedgehog is on the way to meet his bear cub friend for their nightly meeting to have the same innocent conversation that the two have every night, word for word. However, during one night when the hedgehog is out walking, a dense fog appears with a white horse inside it. The hedgehog wonders how the horse could survive in the mysterious fog, and then walks into it, unable to see ahead of him, yet he refuses to turn back. The hedgehog soon falls into a river, letting himself be carried away, only to bump into a hidden animal, which helps carry him to shore and out of the fog. In the end, the hedgehog circles back to the bear cub, and they begin their safely repetitive, nightly conversation. However, the hedgehog "does not truly return...the purity of their repetitions, dumb and beautiful, cannot be recaptured", meaning that the hedgehog, representing the Soviet people, cannot "repeat what was repeatable innocently" with the bear cub (representing the Soviet Russian government). Fishzon concludes that with animation films such as *Hedgehog*, Soviet people were pushed into a feeling of self-awareness, where they could "no longer fully be immersed in and merely act out stagnation after watching and listening to it on screen and records" (Fishzon, 2015, 574–579). Fishzon's study on *Hedgehog in the Fog* is important from a scholarly point of view as it illustrates how some animation movies offer a perspective on one or other of the aspects of the Soviet reality of the time, in this case one related to living under Brezhnev in the period of stagnation, while also using folk art to get the film past censorship policies, as an animation that could pass as "children's entertainment" and still deliver its message.



The Kádár Era and Censorship

During the overarching rule of both the Khrushchev and Brezhnev regimes, János Kádár had his own rise to power in Hungary. Kádár was placed into power by the Soviet government after the removal of Hungary's former, Soviet-era leader, Mátyás Rákosi, following the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, and remained in power until his removal in 1988. These are thus the years known as the Kádár Era. However, this study will expand upon this definition as a year later the Soviet Hungarian government collapsed and no long-term replacement was found for Kádár, and thus the definition of the Kádár Era for the purposes of this paper will accept that the end of the era came in 1989 with the collapse of the Soviet government. (Kovrig, 1978, 721; Panka, 2020, 342). While Hungary was already a part of the Soviet Union's sphere of influence before Kádár, Rákosi's rule covered only 10 years as opposed to Kádár's 32 years, therefore this study will focus primarily on the Kádár era.

During his reign, Mátyás Rákosi was known for his harsh censorship, Stalin-like personality cult, and his use of "salami tactics" – a term referring to the practice of removing political opponents one by one, as one would cut up a salami slice by slice – by which he managed to put Stalinist communists in power with the goal of bringing Hungary under the Soviet model. In contrast, Kádár was known for his "goulash [a Hungarian stew] communism" – a term referring to a period of reform beginning and ending in the 60's – and the "cultural liberalism" that came with it and continued throughout his regime, whereby Kádár's policies "meant extraordinary cultural freedom within the limits imposed by communist rule" (Nyysönen, 2006, 154, 156, 169, 170). Although "extensive surveillance and suspicion" were prevalent – long lists existed of people and groups (usually rock and pop artists) deemed "dangerous" to the government – protocols were becoming lax. As Balázs Varga wrote, ideologues had realized that a "self-sustaining, self-regulating" censorship system could be created if artists were combined with the censorship process directly, and would result in no open hostility towards the arts or the government (Panka, 2020, 343). Thus, a model known as the "3-T's" was created, having three flexible categories, interpreting independently what is supported (*támogatott*), tolerated (*tűrt*) and forbidden (*Tiltott*). In addition, negotiations could be pursued about the meaning and significance of works (such as films and literature) if positive sentiments were accorded to socialist ideology in the work. When the criticism in the work was too open or direct, "advice" from the government was also advanced, often resulting in slightly altering a film's script or ending (Nyysönen, 2006, 169–170; Panka, 2020, 343).

METHOD

The aim of this study is to discover how Soviet-era Hungarian animation used elements of folktales to criticize the government. In doing so, it highlights an important aspect of Hungarian life under the Kádár regime within the Soviet Union's sphere of influence. The study also aims to extend the results of similar studies, such as Pontieri's and Kononenko's research on animation in other Soviet occupied countries, as little research has been done on Soviet-era Hungarian animation in general. The study will achieve this through a form of analysis known as rhetorical criticism. Rhetorical criticism is "an interpretation of a text and explanation about how it should be understood...within a larger social context" using a point of comparison to help create these interpretations (Atkinson, 2017, p. 84).



ensorship (Kononenko, 2011, 273). Furthermore, comparing the accuracy of the animated media to its supposed source material is beyond the scope of this study. Such motifs of the TMI as are identified in the movies in questions will also be listed, and evidence to support this will be included in the sections on visual and oral representation.

The expectation for this study is that results will be similar to prior studies on Soviet-era animation movies and the way in which they utilized folktale elements, as well as humor to criticize the government.

RESULTS

After viewing the films and TV shows in question, it was found that these works did not criticize the government and do include elements of folktale, with the exception of two films. These are *Hófehér* (*Snow White*) and *Az Erdő Kapitánya* (*Captain of the Forest*), released in 1983 and 1988, respectively. Below I shall provide a general overview of the plot of both films, and demonstrate how they presented their criticisms of the government of the Soviet-era through the use of folktale elements.

Hófehér (1983)

Hófehér (*Snow White*) is József Nepp's take on the folktale Snow White. However, the film does not proclaim to be a direct adaptation of that tale (or of any other). Snow White and the seven dwarves are side characters of little significance and screen time until the latter half of the film, meanwhile Arrogancia, the evil servant-turned-queen, and the kingdom's scientist, Professor Tutegál, are the film's main characters.

The film follows Arrogancia's rise to power through her assassination of Queen Fridzsider and her marriage to (and later assassination of) King Leo, as well as her plans to expand her rule to the neighboring kingdom. The film's use of violence could be interpreted as a parody of the use of "salami tactics" by past regimes in both the Soviet Union and Soviet-era Hungary, when the entire royal court devises a plot to murder King Leo, starting with Professor Tutegál offering to sell poison to kill now-Queen Arrogancia at a moment's notice, all the way to the killing of a royal flag-bearer who had spread rumors of one of the royal court members (Figure 2), more specifically the Earl. In addition, King Leo could also be seen as a representative of Khrushchev's Thaw, due to his erratic, often contradictory actions and mood swings. Similarly to the abruptly changing periods of liberalization and restriction during "the Thaw", King Leo switches emotions at a moment's notice, becoming enraged and condemning all science when Tutegál reminds him that his prized chickens are, in fact, not doves, as Leo is insane and cannot tell the difference. Immediately afterwards, however, the king orders Tutegál to "fix" one of his prized chickens, Kolumbo, as she is laying eggs; entrusting Tutegál with the job due to his knowledge of science.

It is important to note how the elements of folktale within *Hófehér* (as seen in Fig. 3) help set up the scene for critique, such as the assassination of King Leo; another supposed showcase of salami tactics, as well as the change of regimes. Before Leo's death, the Earl and Tutegál speak in private, discussing that the time to kill the king is close, and ending with Tutegál handing a red sewing button to the Earl and instructing him to press it when the time comes. However, the button is never seen or heard of again. This is probably due to censorship, as pressing a red





Fig. 2. Flag-bearer getting shot, *Hófehér* (00:15:17)

button to blow up and kill a political leader was most likely too extreme, which is where Motif S112.5 comes into play: murder by feeding overly hot food. It could be inferred that this is where the regime had intervened, forcing Nepp to change the method of murder resulting in the gruesome way matching the motif. To add to this claim, Tutegál gives a detailed speech to a young Snow White about the importance of working, meaning that ideology was associated here with positive sentiments. The king's assassination takes place during a banquet with the royal court all smiling, as they watch the new Queen Arrogancia instructing King Leo to fill his stomach with "hot honey-beer" and numerous other foods. Arrogancia soon orders the king to eat one final dish, a sour-cream-chicken-offal-cake made of his prized chicken, Kolumbo. The king cries while eating the dish (Fig. 4), before excusing himself with his visibly bulging belly, and blowing up as he steps out of the dining hall. When applied to the Soviet context, the brutal death of the king (and others) could be seen as a humorous representation or parody of the brutality of the Soviet regime. Without such a use of the folk tale, this probably would not have been possible due to the unique context and method of the killing which this "cover" of folktale lends the movie, enabling it to avoid heavy censorship, which might have demanded that the king's death be written out entirely.

Az Erdő Kapitánya (1988)

Az Erdő Kapitánya (*Captain of the Forest*) is Attila Dargay's 1988 animation film about an animal world in which a canine police captain, simply known as the Captain, leaves the city and pretends to retire to the protected Round Forest in order to foil the plans of Zéró, the film's villain. Zéró is a wealthy criminal feline known for being a master of disguise and plots to take over the Round Forest in order to destroy fell the trees and sell the wood off for profit. He plans to do this by gaining control of the Forest Council via slandering the Madam President of the Round Forest. Zéró also plans to gain the favor of the citizens by advertising the city dump as a high-opportunity residential area through propaganda, as well as exiling anyone who refuses to

Title of Animated Media	Used Folktale Title (If Applicable)	Motif Number	Motif	Visual Representation	Oral Representation
Hófehér	N/A	S11.4.3	Cruel fathers threaten to kill their children if undesirable sex	N/A No specific scene of the king making this threat	When a snooping maid asked how Snow White has not been killed by the king, another replies that the professor would kill his prized chicken
		S112.5	Murder by feeding on over hot food	Arrogancia forces the king to eat many foods while he cries; leaves and explodes	King refers to food as very filling, and hot honey beer as "like melted lead"
		P27	Grief at queen's death	King collapses on the queen's corpse in bed, then cries	"Who is going to be my wife now...letting me rest my heavy ruling head on her bosom?" cried the king
		P25	Queen meddles in state affairs	Arrogancia, now queen, plots invasion of neighboring country	"We attack, devastate, and capture Retrograd"
		S31	Cruel stepmother	Arrogancia scolds Snow White for Prince Alfons has flirted with her	Arrogancia orders to have Snow White work to death, later has the hunter try to kill her in the nearby forest
		X120	Humor of bad eyesight	Prince Alfons stumbles many times, later has giant glasses	Prince Alfons the Nearsighted is the butt of many jokes about blindness throughout the film
		Z65.1	Red as blood, white as snow	Snow White is seen and said to have eyes as red as blood and hair as white as snow	Used various times in the film, such as other queens wishing for their children to have "hair as red as blood, skin white as snow"
		X800	Humor based on drunkenness	The dwarves get drunk after drinking tea with rum, mayhem ensues	The dwarves start crying comically when drunk

Fig. 3. Folktale table for *Hófehér*

leave their home. Zéró is helped by a toad named Vanda, a snake named Simi, and a magpie named Szaniszló. The Captain also has help, such as a secret agent flea named Góliát, a mouse known as Corporal Ede Eleméri, and several citizens of the Round Forest, notably Dini the bat and the Madam President's granddaughter, Dorka. Zéró's plan changes, however, when he realizes that the Captain is now living in the Forest, and instead disguises himself as the Captain, to lure Dorka into a trap. During this time Szaniszló tells the Madam President about Dorka's imprisonment and leads her into another trap. This was done in order for Zéró to disguise himself as the Madam President and not to have her interfere with him stamping the papers which declare it legal to destroy the forest. The film ends with the Captain capturing Zéró, Vanda, Simi and Szaniszló, as well as with the Captain officially retiring and beginning his permanent stay in the Round Forest.





Fig. 4. King Leo crying while eating, *Hófehér* (00:35:02)

Interestingly, the film could be interpreted as both a criticism of Western influence and the strictness of the Soviet-era, being akin to *Ambulance* (1949) in their criticisms of Western influence (discussed in the Literature Review). This criticism of Western influence made us of a folktale element through the character of Zéro and in fact merits deeper explanation which, however, regrettably exceeds the scope of this study. It is important to note how folktale elements were utilized to also criticize the Soviet government, specifically the aspect of its strictness, through the portrayal of the Round Forest. The Round Forest is known for the severity of its regime throughout the film, such as the various rules signposted close to the entrance of the Forest (Fig. 5), and the innumerable permissions required for even the simplest activities within the Forest. Dini the bat is a key catalyst in this interpretation of criticism, as he represents Motif B449.3: a helpful bat. Dini achieves his “helpful bat” role by procuring the Captain permission to live in the Forest through writing a letter of recommendation to the Madam President, as his cousin Corporal Eleméri had asked him to. However, this letter only allows the Captain a temporary permit, leaving him without the right to even leave his new home unless he has explicit permission from the Madam President. The Round Forest could be seen as a representation of the domineering force Soviet Russia had across the entire Soviet Union, as the Madam President herself is a bear, a representation of Russia seen in many animations such as *Hedgehog in the Fog* (1975).

Furthermore, the strict rules that apply and permissions that are required only in the Round Forest present a stark contrast with the Captain’s unnamed city of origin which apparently boasts cars and high rise buildings.

This laxity in law observance in the city when compared to the Forest could be interpreted as representations of Soviet-era Hungary and Soviet-era Russia, respectively, knowing that censorship policies were more relaxed in Soviet-era Hungary under Kádár as opposed to other past regimes under the influence of Soviet Russia or in the Soviet Union itself.



Fig. 5. Signs in the round forest, *Az Erdő Kapitánya* (00:25:37)

To conclude, when applied to the Soviet context, these folktale elements help create situations of supposed critique against the strict rule of the Soviet Union, and without such a usage of folktales these situations most probably could not have been created. One such instance is of Zéró disguising himself as the Captain (Motif K180.1 referenced in Fig. 6, pictured in Fig. 7) where, due to this supposed direct disobedience to her grandmother's rule, Dorka chases and yells after Zéró-in-disguise, believing him to be the Captain. This can easily be interpreted to mean that it was unbearable to witness the disregard of direct Soviet rule.

IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

Despite analyzing only two films out of the original eleven films and four TV shows criticizing the Soviet government utilizing elements of folktale, the initial expectations of the study were met to a certain extent, in that some animations have been shown to utilize elements of folktale to criticize the government. An unexpected finding was that *Az Erdő Kapitánya* [Captain of the Forest] could be interpreted as both a criticism of Western imperialism and of the strictness of the Soviet régime. Analysis of Soviet-era animation utilizing elements of folktale is important, as it leads to a better understanding of how folktales and their individual elements are used in animation to promote or disparage ideologies, not just in countries within the Soviet Union's sphere of influence, but worldwide. By way of conclusion we can safely declare that this is present in Soviet-era Hungarian animation created within the Kádár era, echoing animations made in several other countries during that period.

However, a significant limitation affecting this study is that there has been very little prior research on Soviet-era Hungarian animation utilizing elements of folktale, and further study into the topic might yield different interpretations. An example is the film *Szaffi* (1985), as it includes a specific scene which could be interpreted as a critique of the greed of the Soviet

Title of Animated Media	Used Folktale Title (If Applicable)	Motif Number	Motif	Visual Representation	Oral Representation
Az Erdő Kapitánya	N/A	B126	Amphibian with magic knowledge	After eating the cake made by Vanda, Pimpi the wolf thinks he is now a bird and flies away flapping his arms	"Well what I could concoct for him" says Vanda Magpie replies with "you poison mixer" Toad is known throughout the film to make cakes that convince the eater they are another animal, such as a sheep or bird
		X800	Humor based on drunkenness	Góliát the flea accidentally gets drunk when swimming in alcohol, mayhem ensues	Due to being drunk, Góliát misspeaks, giving the wrong information away
		B449.3	Helpful bat	Dini the bat helps Captain throughout the film: recommending him to live in the forest, to building his house for him, to warning him to not eat poisoned cake	Dini tells the Captain who he thinks might be trying to get rid of him, offering their names and whereabouts
		K311.1	Thief disguised as corpse	Zéró is disguised as a mummy and is delivered to a language professor	When Professor Arara figures out the mummy is a fake, Zéró answers from within, "you figured it out, professor"
		K1810.1	Disguise by putting on clothes (carrying accoutrements) of certain person	Zéró disguised as Madame President by stealing her clothes and wearing a bear costume Zéró disguised as the Captain by wearing identical clothes and dog mask	N/A
		D1031.2	Magic cake	After eating the cake made by Vanda, Pimpi the wolf thinks he is now a bird and flies away flapping his arms	"Well what I could concoct for him" says Vanda Magpie replies with "you poison mixer"

Fig. 6. Folktale Rubric for *Az Erdő Kapitánya*

government, however, a more probable interpretation appears to be that it is an offensive joke about various ethnic groups and their way of handling money. This leads to the conclusion that, provided with an extended collection of films and TV shows, further research could be carried out on how various ideologies (both state-accepted and non-state accepted) are represented in Soviet-era Hungarian animation utilizing elements of folktale. For example, the TV show *Kérem a Következőt (Next, please!)* (1973–1983) is akin to *Great Troubles* (1961) in the sense that both of them criticize what they present as the dregs of society – people who are slowing down the goal of achieving a better Soviet-style society. The table created in this study could be used for further analysis of the research issue at hand, as it is not genre specific.



Fig. 7. Zéró disguised, *Az Erdő Kapitánya* (00:49:48)

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Appendix

Films

János Vitéz (1973)

Lúdas Matyi (1977)

Vuk (1981)

Fehérlófia (1981)

Háry János (1983)

Hófehér (1983)

Daliás idők (1984)

Szaffi (1985)

Gréti (1986)

Az Erdő Kapitánya (1988)

Vili a Veréb (1989)

TV Shows

Kérem a Következőt (1973–1983)

A Kockásfülü Nyúl (1977–1978)

Mesék Mátyás királyról (1982–1983)

Frakk, a macskák réme (1972–1984)

