

# Construction and Deconstruction of the Myth of the Moscow Metro: An Analysis of Metro Images from Georgiy Daneliya's Films

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## Introduction

The Moscow Metro (Metro) opened its first railway line with 13 stations in 1935. Construction of the Metro was included in Joseph Stalin's Moscow reconstruction project and by the end of the 1950s, the basic radial and circular routes had been constructed. At that time, Metro construction was significant not only as a functional urban transit system but also as a symbolic enterprise such as construction of the White Sea–Baltic Canal and hydroelectric power plants, and polar expeditions, i.e., “conquests of nature.” More over, the Metro stations were magnificently decorated with chandeliers, reliefs, mosaics, and statues and began to be called “underground palaces” or “palaces for the people.” Since the official opening in 1935, millions of tourists have visited these “palaces” for pleasure as well as transport. In other words, not only were these stations utilized for public transportation, they were also cultural icons. Additionally, the mass media through particular films, the most powerful media at that time, played a decisive role in propagating these splendid Metro images to all Soviet citizens, even those residents in remote areas who could not visit the capital. These images of the Metro in Soviet films functioned as attributes of Moscow and impressed upon viewers the superiority of Stalin's new Moscow compared with the original stations whose access was limited to local residents.

However, after the death of Stalin, new types of Metro images immediately appeared in films, linking them to drastic changes in Soviet architectural policy under Nikita Khrushchev. Particularly, Georgiy Daneliya, whose father was a Metro construction engineer, depicted a brand new image of the Metro in *I Walk around Moscow* (1963), filmed in the newly constructed University Station. Moreover, he shot another

film, *Nastya* (1993), in the same station from a different viewpoint after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. It can be considered that these two films clearly reflect shifts in discourse about the Metro. Thus, in this paper, I will first address the formative process for the “underground palaces” and its influence on Metro images in Soviet films between the 1930s and 1950s. Then, I will compare depictions of the Metro in Daneliya's *I Walk around Moscow* with those images formed in the Stalin era to demonstrate why Daneliya's Metro images were epoch making. Finally, I will clarify how the director reveals and deconstructs a mechanism that generated and perpetuated the myth of the Moscow Metro, i.e., a system of glorifying particular places through analysis of *Nastya*.

## 1. Metro Stations as Underground Palaces

Metro construction in Moscow was originally planned at the end of 19th century. However, its realization was postponed due to the outbreak of World War I, the downfall of the Romanov Dynasty, the start of the October Revolution, and then, the Civil War. Finally in 1933, the blueprints for an 80 km underground railway (with 10 metro lines including 1 loop line) were completed by the Moscow Board of Urban Railways (МГЖД), and it was approved by the Central Committee<sup>(1)</sup>. After two years, the first railway lines opened. From the viewpoint of architectural style, the first 13 Metro stations for these lines were relatively diverse, ranging from classicism [Fig. 1] to modernism (rationalism) [Fig. 2], due to a lack of design standards. In this first construction stage, on the whole, more attention was paid to the expression of the station's structure than decoration.

We then see a gradual shift to a more decorative and monumental style full of ideological content, i.e.,



[Fig. 1] Komsomolskaya Station



[Fig. 2] Krasniye Vorota Station

Socialist Realism began in the subsequent construction stages. To be more precise, the newly designed stations in the second and third construction stages formed the norms of Socialist Realism architecture with the construction of, literally, palace-like stations. However, from where did the idea of constructing such grand stations originate?

A contemporary Russian philosopher, Mikhail Ryklin, devised the term “Metro discourse,” which includes remarks that encouraged and even forced Soviet architects to design these palace-like stations<sup>(2)</sup>. He identified Lazar Kaganovich’s speech at the opening ceremony of the first railway line as the origin of the Metro discourse. Kaganovich declared that Soviet Metro stations should be designed so that passengers would feel like being in a palace, not in the depths of the earth or in the functional but humble stations of capitalist cities. He stated:

Metro stations in capitalist cities are gloomy, monotonous, and dull. Tired people leave the workplace and go down into the darkness of the tomb, sit in an underground train, not feeling rest, but, on the contrary, getting more tired. We have a different society and a different system. Our society is, above all, a socialist society. The socialist state can afford to build facilities which are more expensive but can provide more convenience, better health, and artistic pleasure to the public. We want such constructions, which serve millions more people than any other palace or theater, to raise people’s spirits, make their lives easier, and give them leisure and pleasure.

...

That is why, comrades, we have built Metro stations, where, going down, according to Moscow

workers, people feel as if they were in a palace. And our Metro palaces are not monotonous. Every station has its own distinctiveness. Bourgeoisie! Where are the barracks? Where is the destruction of the individual? Where is the destruction of creativity? Where is the destruction of art? On the contrary, in our Metro stations we see the greatest development of creativity and flourishing architectural thought. Each station is a palace and each palace has its own design. But each of these palaces is lit by the common light, that is, the light of socialism advancing toward victory!<sup>(3)</sup>

Following Kaganovich’s statement, the stations in the second and third construction stage were designed in a more monumental style with significant ornamentation: mosaics, frescos, reliefs, and statues. These stations, as “architecture parlante,” conveyed ideological messages. Ceramic reliefs in the Ploshchad Sverdlova Station (present-day Teatralnaya Station, 2nd stage, opened in 1938) represented “harmony” among the national republics of the Soviet Union through depicting figures from these republics dancing and playing musical instruments [Fig. 3]. Ploshchad Revolyutsii Station (2nd stage, opened in 1938) had 76 bronze sculptures of ideal Soviet citizens including revolutionary soldiers and Stakhanovite workers [Fig. 4]. In this way the socialist dream world was freely projected inside stations without concern of the inherent historical, cultural and social context of sites that is inevitable in buildings on the ground. In other words, Metro stations under the ground, which essentially lacked a topos, turned into utopias (ou-topos). This ornamental, and at the same time ideological, architectural style was called Socialist Realism and it



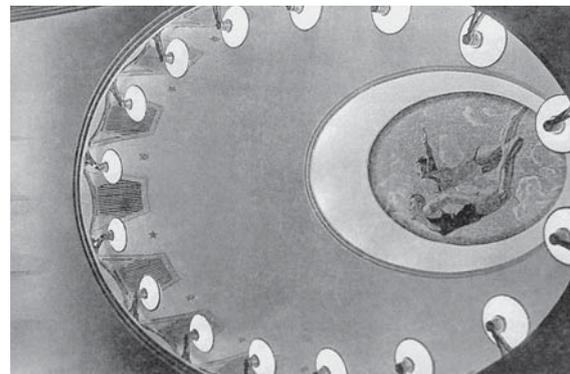
[Fig. 3] Ploshchad Sverdlova Station:  
Relief of an Armenian woman playing a tambourine and a dancing Georgian man



[Fig. 4] Ploshchad Revolyutsii Station and a statue of an architect



[Fig. 5] Mayakovskaya Station

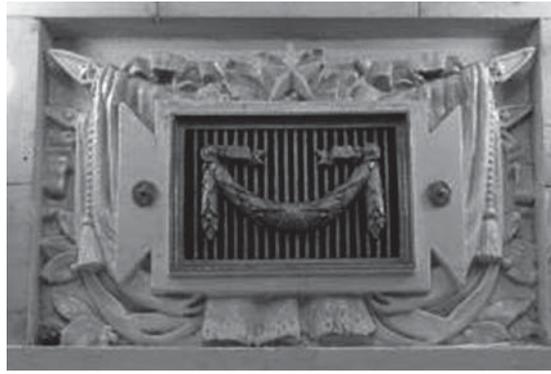


[Fig. 6] Vents on the platform ceiling

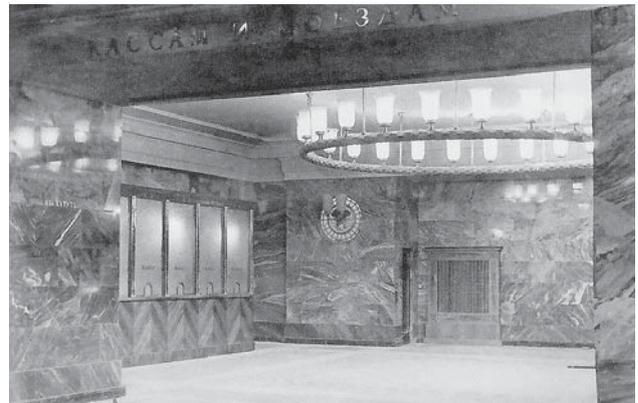
was introduced as the official standard for Soviet architects in the 1930s.

In this style, architects were expected to disguise the technical, utilitarian elements of the stations that would prevent people from being absorbed in the virtual utopia. For example, in the second construction period, Mayakovskaya Station was designed in the Art Deco style [Fig. 5] and it was highly praised by critics for its 35 ceiling mosaics depicting a beautiful and

joyful “24-hour Soviet Sky.” However, vents on the platform ceilings [Fig. 6] were an exception; they were criticized as “stains of modernism,” which provoked “uneasiness”<sup>(4)</sup> about being under the ground. That is, technical elements which, in fact, overcame nature and made underground areas habitable were rejected because ideological decoration was expected to dominate these features. Consequently, in stations constructed during the fourth construction stage, such



[Fig. 7] Decorated vent of Oktyabrskaya Station (4th stage, opened in 1950)



[Fig. 8] A gaudy chandelier in *New Moscow* and the original chandelier in the Kurskaya Station

technical details were combined with or covered by ornaments [Fig. 7]. This means that the underground palaces were highly dependent on superficial decoration rather than structural or technical elements.

We can also see the rapid formation of the Metro discourse in Soviet films. *Circus* (1936), directed by Grigori Aleksandrov, was the first narrative feature film shot in a real Metro station. Aleksandrov filmed one scene in the Okhotny Ryad Station (1st construction stage, opened in 1935) two months after the opening of the Metro<sup>(5)</sup>. In the station scene, a camera focused on a technical aspect of the construction: escalators. In this scene, a young man gets off at the station and rushes toward the wrong side of the escalators. It reminds us of Charlie Chaplin in the film *The Floorwalker* (1916), which climaxes with a slapstick chase on an escalator<sup>(6)</sup>. It is also worth mentioning that this scene on the platform is inserted between scenes of a clown's trick cycling at a circus. That is, the escalators are used for creating a non-purposive, comical motion similar to the clown's. This direction depicts the station as a circus arena not as a palace.

However, the film *New Moscow* (1938), directed

by Alexandr Medvedkin, also had an impressive scene involving escalators, yet it was depicted quite differently. In the film, three characters get on an escalator at Kurskaya Station (2nd construction stage, opened in 1938). Soon, an unnaturally gaudy chandelier appears behind them [Fig. 8]. This chandelier, in reality, was shot in a vestibule of the Kurskaya Station and was superimposed in the background of the escalator shot. As a result, here, a new virtual station, which existed only on screen, was constructed from multiple shots of actual station (in this meaning, it can be considered as a variety of film techniques "creative geography" invented by Lev Kuleshov). But why did the director Medvedkin dare to emphasize the chandelier in spite of its unnatural appearance? An assumption could be made that this expression was based on Kaganovich's former speech. Kaganovich remarked that each station had its own style, but they were lit by "the common light, that is, the light of socialism advancing toward victory." Evidently, emphasizing the chandelier was a direct embodiment of the mythical light of socialism from Kaganovich's speech. In other words, in this scene, the chandelier transforms from a piece of tech-



[Fig. 9] The three characters in Komsomolskaya Station

nical (functional) equipment to an ideological symbol.

Stations from the fourth construction stage, which were built in a so-called “victory style” after WWII, have the most decorative and monumental characteristics. The decorations in these stations did not depict the model of an up-and-coming society but a realized utopia or history ending with the victory of communism. The film *Alesha Ptitsin Develops his Characteristics* (1953) was shot in one of these stations, Komsomolskaya Station, which has huge ceiling mosaics depicting historical events from Aleksander Nevsky's victory over the Teutonic Knights to the victory of the Great Patriotic War. The film showed how the Soviet citizens should behave in such a monumental, even sacred place. The protagonist of this film is a boy from Moscow, named Alesha. One day he guides visitors from a local city, his grandmother's long-time friend Sima and her granddaughter Sashenka, around Moscow. Accordingly, viewers of this film enjoy a virtual, visual trip around the capital, including the Komsomolskaya Station. This type of plot was quite common among Socialist Realist films. In the 1930s, the Soviet government introduced the internal passport system and attempted to guide the inflow of population away from large, already overpopulated cities, particularly Moscow. At the same time, however, the government needed to establish and propagate the superiority of the capital, which was closely connected to the authority of the Party and the leaders. Therefore, a virtual trip around Moscow through these films would be quite effective for these purposes.

In terms of the Metro discourse, the depiction of the Komsomolskaya Station is worth examining. Standing in the center of the platform, Sima and Sashenka admire golden mosaics on the ceiling, shiny

chandeliers, and a statue of Marshal Kutuzov [Fig. 9]. Excitedly, Sashenka yells, “Everything is gold! It's like a fairy tale (как сказка!)” There is significance in Sashenka's expression “like a fairy tale” as it was one of the stereotypical descriptions of the Metro. The simile of a fairy tale world was often used in Soviet media to depict Metro stations not as ordinary utilitarian facilities but as miraculous places transcending rationalism. In fact, Sashenka is not the first who compares the Metro station to a fairy tale world. For instance, the story “Like a Fairy Tale,” which was written by the famous novelist of children's literature Iakov Taitis, was published just after the opening of the Metro in 1935<sup>(7)</sup>. In the story, an old man is invited to a Metro station by his daughter who works there. The old man is impressed by a palace-like appearance of the station and says, “It is as if I'm in a fairy tale world (как в сказке).”<sup>(8)</sup>

As Svetlana Boym pointed out, the “realization of a fairy tale world” theme repeatedly appeared not only in children's book but also in various other genres and it was primarily used to illustrate the almost “miraculous” tempo of industrialization during the five-year-plan period<sup>(9)</sup>. According to a Soviet folklorist, Vladimir Propp, one of the things that distinguishes fairy tales from myths is that the speaker and listener(s) both consider fairy tales to be fictional<sup>(10)</sup>. However, the description of the Metro being “like a fairy tale world” or “realization of a fairy tale world” mixes fiction with what is believed to be truth, i.e., a myth. This mixture of fairy tale and myth was actually the core of Socialist Realism. During the first congress of the Soviet Writers Union, Maxim Goriky remarked that Socialist Realism should be based on the folklore of the people<sup>(11)</sup>. Therefore, fairy tales were deliberately

adapted by Soviet writers and artists to express the main subjects of Socialist realism, depicting what reality should be. Evgeny Dobrenko pointed out that the purpose of adapting fairy tales was infantilization. According to Dobrenko, “the Socialist Realism ideal was a grown-up child and a strategy to preserve the child in adulthood because a child’s mind is easily directed and affected by superstitions and myths and it tends to subordinate to the power that a sovereign state, the nation, and authorities display.”<sup>(12)</sup> As a result, fairy tales lost their critical distinction from myths and they were used for displaying this miraculous reality.

## 2. From a Palace to a Place for Transportation

The death of Stalin triggered a drastic shift in Soviet architectural policy and design. In November 1954, Nikita Khrushchev officially criticized Stalin-style architecture, especially its excessive decoration, which was regarded as a waste of resources and disregard for public utility. As a result, public buildings, including Metro stations, were no longer designed in the previous style. Leading architects such as Konstantin Ryzhkov, the top of the research institute for Metro construction Metrogiprotrans, insisted on reverting to a more simplistic disposition that resembled those from the first construction stage<sup>(13)</sup>. This shift in Soviet architectural canons also affected the depiction of Metro stations in Soviet films. One of the most evident examples is, no doubt, Georgiy Daneliya’s *I Walk around Moscow* (1963), which is often considered the film that signaled the coming of a new era.

In the beginning of the film, one of three protagonists, Kolya, a Moscovich engineer, is shown engaging in the excavation of a new tunnel for the Moscow Metro. After having worked through the night, he takes the Metro home from the new Student Station (5th stage, opened in 1958). This station was unique in that it was built on aboveground with an unadorned, practical platform; therefore, even though it is a part of the Metro, the scenery is full of morning sunshine in contrast to the dark tunnel scene where Kolya was working. In a subway car, Kolya meets a young amateur writer, Volodya, who has just arrived in Moscow from Siberia. They soon hit it off and Kolya guides Volodya to the typical tourist hotspots around Moscow. Here we again experience a virtual tour of

Moscow, as in *Alesha Ptitsin*. However, there is a significant difference between sites that are introduced in these films from those in the Stalin and Khrushchev eras.

In *Alesha Ptitsin* Alesha first takes his visitors to the Komsomolskaya Station because, curiously enough, granddaughter Sashenka listed the Metro as well as Red Square as places of interest. Next, they visit the new Moscow Stalin-style skyscrapers (“Stalin’s Seven Sisters”), which had just been built or were under construction. These skyscrapers have relatively similar silhouettes; they are crowned with a spire that originated from the Spasskaya Tower on the Kremlin Wall, which embodies the owner of the Kremlin, that is, Stalin. On top of one such skyscraper known as the Kotelnicheskaya Embankment Building (1952), they all enjoy a panoramic view of Moscow. They then go to Red Square where they see the real Spasskaya Tower, hear the bells ring, and know that it is time to leave Moscow. In sum, Sima and Sashenka tour Stalin’s new Moscow after the Great Patriotic War and finally meet his symbolic double in the heart of the city.

However, in the film *I Walk around Moscow*, the director purposefully excluded Stalin buildings including Stalin-style Metro stations from the characters’ route<sup>(14)</sup>. Instead, the characters visit more general sites such as Red Square, the department store GUM, the Park of Culture, and newly constructed areas such as New Alvert Street, the South-East region, and so on. Additionally, in the background, there are several impressive new buildings: a glass-in café next-door to Kolya’s apartment [Fig. 10]<sup>(15)</sup>, the new movie theater “Russia,”<sup>(16)</sup> the new Student Station and so on. These buildings were designed in a simpler and more open style with plenty of sunlight, which is symbolic of this film and of the Khrushchev era. Among these structures, the University Metro Station, which was named after Moscow State University and is located within close proximity to it, plays an outstanding role in this film.

Construction of the University Station was approved in 1953. Then, a joint competition for five new stations in the fifth construction stage, including the University Station, was held. As a result, a plan submitted by Lev Lillie’s team for the design of Kievskaya Station (opened in 1953) [Fig. 11] was chosen as the original plan for the University Station<sup>(17)</sup>. Their



[Fig. 10] Glass-in café next-door to Kolya's apartment



[Fig. 11] Kievskaiia Station



[Fig. 12] Original design of the University Station



[Fig. 13] A Moscow State University building



[Fig. 14] University Station

design [Fig. 12] was as ornamental as Kievskaiia Station, although four other winning plans for new stations were apparently simpler, reflecting the new architectural policy. This was likely because the judges took into consideration harmony of the design with the Stalin-style construction of the buildings of Moscow State University [Fig. 13]. However, soon the design for the University Station was remarkably simplified. Reliefs on the frieze became more plain and monotonous. Huge chandeliers, like in Kievskaiia Station, disappeared from the design and more “economically feasible”<sup>[18]</sup> lights were introduced. Thus, the new

design for the University Station completely ignored the Metro discourse formed during the Stalin period. The station finally opened on January 12, 1959 [Fig. 14].

We can notice the new views of the Metro stations in *I Walk around Moscow*. In the film, the University Station appeared in the background of the last scene. Volodya and a Moscow girl, Alena, who Volodya met at a record shop and with whom he fell in love, get off at the University Station late in the evening. On the platform, they meet Kolya again. The three protagonists exchange parting words and then



[Fig. 15] Leaving Kolya in the empty station

[Fig. 16] Panoramic view of Moscow from the Kotelnicheskaya Embankment Building in *I walk around Moscow* (left) and in *Alesha Ptitsin* (right)

Volodya gets on a train heading for the Vnukovo Airport to return to Siberia. Alena boards a train heading in the opposite direction, the center of Moscow. After seeing them off, Kolya leaves the platform and takes an escalator to the ground level, singing. In short, the people who met one morning by coincidence, part at the end of the day.

During this scene, the simple platform, which has neither gorgeous chandeliers nor golden mosaics, is almost empty [Fig. 15]. Other than the station attendants, there is no one there. Accordingly, viewers of this film may pay more attention to the arrivals and departures of the trains and the characters. In fact, the line to Vnukovo Airport had not officially been opened when the film was shot in the station (it opened on December 30, 1963). According to cameraman Vadim Yusov, Daneliya obtained permission to blockade the station and move the train heading for the Airport to film this parting scene<sup>(19)</sup>.

This direction makes a striking contrast to *Alesha Ptitsin's*. In *Alesha Ptitsin* there is no scene that shows Sima and Sashenka taking a subway. They just appreciate the decoration of Komsomolskaya Station's platform, standing in awe of its magnificence. In other words, for the grandmother and granddaughter, the

Metro is not a means of transportation but a goal. Their reaction to Komsomolskaya Station clearly shows how the Soviet people were expected to respond to the stations; they were to behave not as users (passengers) but as admirers of these underground palaces. On the other hand, the characters' near-constant movement in *I Walk around Moscow* symbolizes dynamic, contemporary city life based on a developed public transportation system where anonymous people accidentally meet and part. In other words, the station stops being a monument where people should stay to appreciate ideological content and recovers its normal function as public transportation. Thus, the Metro obtained a brand new image and broke the spell of the Metro discourse in *I Walk around Moscow*.

On the other hand, Daneliya carefully eliminated Stalin-style buildings from *I Walk around Moscow*; however, they still affected several scenes in indirect ways. For example, in the beginning of the film, we see a panoramic view of Moscow. Actually, it was shot from two of Stalin's Seven Sisters, the Kotelnicheskaya Embankment Building (which was previously seen in *Alesha Ptitsin*) [Fig. 16] and the building of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1953). These views

from the top of high-rise buildings show the magnificence of the capital as in *Alesha Ptitsin* and, simultaneously, these buildings were pushed out of the screen. Hence, the exteriors of the Stalin's skyscrapers whose scale granted prestige to Moscow became invisible in *I Walk around Moscow*, although the system glorifying the capital still continued to exist outside of the frame.

### 3. Return of the Underground Palace

One of the most influential film critics in the 1960s, Rostislav Yurenev, addressed *I Walk around Moscow* in an article and criticized the lack of the characters' strong will and the absence of a heroic plot overcoming difficulties<sup>(20)</sup>. However, it was these particular characteristics that made *I Walk around Moscow* a work typifying the new era.

At the same time, images of Metro stations as underground palaces were disregarded or to be more precise, were repressed in *I Walk around Moscow*, as if they did not exist at all. According to Sigmund Freud, such negation (Verneinung) of a perceived object is "a way of taking account of what is repressed," though it is "not, of course, an acceptance of what is repressed."<sup>(21)</sup> Therefore, on the one hand, the film rejected the excessively decorated Stalin-style constructions but on the other hand, through this denial, implied the target of desire: a totalitarian cultural system directly linked to the Party's ideology that rejected diverse styles. Thirty years later, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, finally Russian film directors began on screen desacralization of totalitarian sanctuaries, including Metro stations. In several films made in the 1990s and 2000s palace-like Metro stations were described as dirty, dangerous, and even absurd spaces. For instance, the detective film *Murder at the Zhdanovskaia Station* (1992) was based on the real murder of a KGB officer at the Zhdanovskaia Station (present Vykhino Station, opened in 1966). In *Scientific Section of Pilots* (1996) the Metro turns into a space of indiscriminate wholesale slaughter. In *Moscow* (2000) a young couple has sex in a Metro car. However, Daneliya problematized the Metro discourse and the totalitarian cultural system in somewhat different ways in the film entitled *Nastya* (1993), which was shot in the same location, University Station.

In contrast to the images of the newly constructed or under construction capital city in *I Walk around*

*Moscow*, the main character of the film, Nastya, lives in devastated Moscow. There are potholes all over the roads. Buildings are in ruin. Armored vehicles are towing buses that cannot drive due to a lack of gasoline. People are suffering from poverty even though they are already surrounded by Western consumer culture (or at least images of Western consumer culture).

Nastya is a quiet, inconspicuous girl who lives with her sickly mother. One day, her mother insists that she finds a boyfriend like an ordinary girl her age. Nastya roams Moscow to find a boy to play the role of her boyfriend. Finally, she meets a drunken young man, Sasha, by accident and brings him home as her boyfriend. She successfully deceives her mother and on the way home, after seeing off Sasha, she helps an old woman whose bicycle has gotten stuck. This woman, in fact, is a witch and promises to fulfill two of Nastya's wishes in return for her kindness. Nastya does not believe her words but before falling asleep, she looks at a figure of a beautiful ballerina playing Swan Lake on a wall calendar and says, "I wish I was beautiful like her." The next morning, she finds that she looks just like the ballerina.

From this point, the story turns into fairy tale. As a consequence of her transformation, most people cannot tell who she really is and many men go crazy for her attention. Among them, only her mother, her best friend, and Sasha can truly identify her as the former Nastya. Then, Nastya and Sasha make a promise to meet again at the Metro Mavno Station (which is actually University Station). However, when Nastya is going through the ticket gate at the station, she is accosted by a TV host and his staff. They tell her that she happens to be the millionth user of the station and she is invited to a celebration, although in fact, the TV crew just chose her because of her good looks. Then, the celebration and its live broadcast begin on the platform, which is decorated and carpeted like a palace. Nastya is awarded and presented with a fur coat by one of the sponsors of the TV show [Fig. 17]. As soon as the TV broadcast goes to commercial, a dance party begins with a waltz on the platform and Nastya joins in by dancing with the sponsor [Fig. 18]. These sequences are evidently based on the Cinderella story, in which the heroine temporally transforms into a princess and goes to a dance party in the palace.

Meanwhile, during the party, Metro passengers are prevented from getting off of the cars and entering



[Fig. 17] Nastya on the platform at University Station



[Fig. 18] Dancing Nastya



[Fig. 19] Sasha and other passengers in the subway car



[Fig. 20] Various people on the platform

the platform. Therefore, Sasha, arriving at the station by Metro, sees the dance party and Nastya dancing on the platform from a window with the other passengers [Fig. 19]. He then gets off at the station with the aid of a driver. However, he tells Nastya good-bye and leaves, thinking that he is not good enough for her. Nastya is shocked and rushes up a stopped escalator, wishing to return to her previous self. When she wakes up the next morning, her original appearance has returned. In the following final sequence, no one mentions Nastya's transformation or the party in the

underground palace; therefore, it might be interpreted that these events were only in her dream. Finally, Nastya's relationship with Sasha is restored.

It is noteworthy that there are two faces to each of the characters at the party on the platform. Sponsors of the TV show are all suspicious; for instance, one of them works as a thief during day. The prize fur coat is a stolen article. It is implied that the official from the Ministry of Culture who arranged the underground party is in cahoots with the thieves. These new Russian elites or nouveau rich, hiding their other faces,

keep up appearances in this space. Nastya, who is wearing a mask of the beautiful ballerina, is not an exception. However, in her case, she is not able to adapt to her new gorgeous appearance. Above all, the station itself changes its appearance drastically. During the ceremony and the party, it is temporarily decorated and filled with various people from priests of the Orthodox Church to clowns [Fig. 20]. That is to say, the simple undecorated University Station literally turns into an underground palace. However, as in Potemkin Village, this palace was quite superficial. Actually, Daneliya ostentatiously shows this palace as an ephemeral stage set and the participants of the ceremony as actors assembled for the TV show.

Walter Benjamin mentions that fairy tales (Märchen) are one of the opponents of myths in his essays such as "Frantz Kafka" and "The Storyteller." "The first true storyteller is, and will continue to be," he says, "the teller of fairy tales ... [that] tells us of the earliest arrangements that mankind made to shake off the nightmare which the myth had placed upon its chest"<sup>22</sup> through fictional characters and their conduct, in particular, acting dumb. In the case of the fairy tale *Nastya*, the scene of the underground dance party implies that the myth of underground palaces is also a fabrication; nevertheless, it is believed (or at least should be believed) to be truth. Namely, this fabricated underground palace (University Station), which mocks Stalin's "palaces," suggests that the virtual reality of these underground palaces also depends on superficial decoration, that is, they only appear to be palaces.

What is more important is that when the station turns into the palace, its function as public transportation is paralyzed. During the party, Sasha and the other passengers are prohibited from getting off the train and entering the platform. This implies that these ordinary people, including Sasha, are considered inadequate to enter the station because it has turned into a palace. The only thing they are permitted to do is simply look at the palace-like station and the people dancing there. The new Russian elites who occupy the underground palace can be considered a parody of the images of ideal Soviet citizens that filled Stalin's Metro stations. On the other hand, Sasha and other passengers play a role of admirers of the underground palace like Sima and Sashenka in *Alesha Ptitsin*, however, they do not appear to be very impressed. On the other hand, Nastya, different from Sasha, is one of the

chosen few due to her "miraculous" but superficial beauty. As a result, contrary to *I walk around Moscow*, in *Nastya*, this palace-like station not only blocks traffic but also blocks the meeting of the two protagonists, who belong to different groups.

This is the motive that leads Nastya to reject the fabricated palace and to return to her "real world." A plot in which a protagonist goes to an ideal (fairy tale-like) world through a dream is one of the features of Socialist Realism films. For instance, in Sergei Eisenstein's *The General Line (Old and New)*, a protagonist, Marfa, reaches an ideal sovkhos in her dream. Soon it becomes clear that it is not a dream, but reality. However, in contrast to Marfa, who remains within her realized dream world, i.e., the world of her daydream, Nastya decides to escape from the "ideal" world. Her run up the stopped escalator from the platform symbolizes rising from sleep. Then, through her awakening in the following sequence, the line between dream and reality becomes clear. This point definitely divides *Nastya* from Socialist Realism films that strategically mix the two fields and create myth. In other words, Daneliya restored the fairy tale's critical power against myth at the end of *Nastya*.

## Conclusion

Since the Stalin era, Moscow kept its superiority to other places not only in the political field but also in the field of imagery. Such superior images authorized the Party and leaders to (re)construct the capital. The Moscow Metro was a crucial part of these capital images. Even in *I Walk around Moscow*, which represented the Thaw period, the Metro functioned as both Kolya's and Moscow's identity. However, on the other hand, the decorative and monumental Stalin-style stations were carefully eliminated from *I Walk around Moscow*. Instead, Daneliya picked two newly constructed stations; the Student Station and the University Station. The Student Station, where Kolya and Volodya meet, and the University Station, where they part, fully embodied the new architectural canons of the Khrushchev era: utility and economization. These stations, which were emancipated from decoration and monumentality, launched new images of Metro stations as spaces for public transportation. The main plot of *I Walk around Moscow*, which consisted of the characters' constant movement, significantly depended on a means of transportation in the metropo-

lis. In particular, the two Metro stations played a symbolic and decisive role in the opening and ending scenes of this film.

Meanwhile, we should consider the Stalin-style stations that were eliminated from *I Walk around Moscow*. The negation of these legacies from the Stalin era not only criticized but concealed and preserved the system glorifying the Metro and consequently, granting a privileged status to Moscow. Hence, this centripetal system kept attracting people, including Volodya, from all over the nation. Thirty years after in the film *Nastyia*, which was shot in the same University Station, Daneliya attempted to problematize this mechanism. For this purpose, he built an ephemeral palace in the University Station so as to visualize the controversial characteristics of Stalin's underground palaces: paralyzing the public's flow and eliminating ordinary passengers from the scene except for a few socialist-elites. Additionally, this gorgeous but superficial palace, full of deceit, ironically suggests that underground palaces or socialist utopias were also comprised of an assemblage of superficial images based on decorations that concealed the tectonic structures. The self-referential nature of *Nastyia*, including the fabrication of the underground palaces themselves, does not simply violate the Metro discourse, but also reveals and deconstructs the mechanism for generating and perpetuating totalitarian myths.

#### NOTE

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- (2) *Рыклин М.* «Лучший в мире». <http://www.topos.ru/article/4123>.
- (3) Победа метрополитена-Победа социализма: речь тов. Л.М. Кагановича на торжественном заседании, посвященном пуску метрополитена, 14 мая 1935 года // Как мы строили метро. М., 1935. С. XXXIII.
- (4) *Сосфенов И.* Станции метро горьковского радиуса // Архитектура СССР. 1938. №8. С. 32.
- (5) *Нильсен В., Петров Б.* Как мы снимали «Цирк» // Искусство кино. 1936. №7. С. 44.
- (6) Aleksandrov was a great admirer of Chaplin and actually a Chaplin-like actor appears in the movie *Circus*. In addition, in an earlier version of the script, there were several episodes referring to Chaplin's comedic films. *Салис Р.* «Нам уже не до смеха»: Музыкальные кинокомедии Григория Александрова. М., 2012. С. 103.
- (7) *Тайц Я.* Вроде сказки // Готов!: Рассказы и стихи о метро. М., 1935. С. 100-108.
- (8) Там же. С. 106.

- (9) Svetlana Boym, "Paradox of Unified Culture: From Stalin's Fairy Tale to Molotov's Lacquer Box," Thomas Lahusen, E. A. Dobrenko, Stanley Eugene Fish, and Fredric Jameson, eds., *Socialist Realism without Shores: Post-Contemporary Interventions* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1997), pp. 122-123.
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- (11) Katerina Clark, *Moscow, the Fourth Rome: Stalinism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Evolution of Soviet Culture, 1931-1941* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011), p. 165.
- (12) *Добренко Е.* Соцреализм и мир детства // Под ред. Ханс Гюнтер, Е. Добренко. Соцреалистический канон. С-П., 2000. С. 35.
- (13) *Рыжков К.* Новые станции метрополитена имени В.И. Ленина // Архитектура и строительство Москвы. 1956. №3. С. 14.
- (14) One exception is a distant view of the building of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (one of Stalin's Seven Sisters) behind a glass-in café next-door to Kolya's apartment [Fig. 14].
- (15) This café is only a movie set but the appearance of a glassed-in café in the Exhibition of the United States in Moscow in 1959 caused a boom of these transparent buildings. *Михейкин Д.И.* Архитектура в кино 1960-х. гг. // Эстетика «оттепели». М., 2013. С. 305.
- (16) The movie theater "Russia" was designed by Daneliya's teacher at the Moscow Architectural Institute and a representative architect of the Khrushchev era, Yuri Sheverdiyaev. It was the largest movie theater in Europe at that time and opened with the premier of *I Walk around Moscow* in 1964.
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- (21) Sigmund Freud, "Negation," James Strachey, ed., *Collected Papers: Miscellaneous Papers, 1888-1938* (New York: Basic Books, 1959), p. 182.
- (22) Walter Benjamin, "The storyteller," Hannah Arendt, ed., *Illuminations* (London: Fontana/Collins, 1973), p. 102.

#### ILLUSTRATIONS

- [Fig. 1] Московское метро. Подземный памятник архитектуры. М., 2016.
- [Fig. 2] Строительство Москвы. 1935. №2.
- [Fig. 3] Photo by the author.
- [Fig. 4] Left: Московское метро. Подземный памятник архитектуры. М., 2016. Right: photo by the author.
- [Fig. 5] Строительство Москвы. 1938. №13.
- [Fig. 6] Московское метро. Подземный памятник архитектуры. М., 2016.

[Fig. 7] Photo by the author.

[Fig. 8] Left: Новая Москва (1938). Right: Московское метро. Подземный памятник архитектуры. М., 2016.

[Fig. 9] Алеша Птицын вырабатывает характер (1953).

[Fig. 10] Я шагаю по Москве (1963).

[Fig. 11] Московский Метрополитен. М., 1953.

[Fig. 12] Архитектура и строительство Москвы. 1958. №1.

[Fig. 13] Photo by the author.

[Fig. 14] Архитектура и строительство Москвы. 1959. №2.

[Fig. 15] Я шагаю по Москве (1963).

[Fig. 16] Left: Я шагаю по Москве (1963). Right: Алеша Птицын вырабатывает характер (1953).

[Fig. 17] Настя (1993).