

Title: National Identity (De)Construction in the Russian New Wave: Kirill Serebrennikov's *Iur'ev Day* (2008) and Sergei Loznitsa's *My Joy* (2010)
Author: Justin Wilmes, Ohio State University

Many critics have characterized the *chernukha* films of Perestroika and the 1990s as a historical corrective to the varnished reality of Soviet cinema. If the majority of these films deconstructed the Soviet metanarrative, then the Russian cinema of the post-2000s demonstrates the opposite preoccupation with reconstructing national identity in one form or another. In recent commercial cinema, this is most evident in a plethora of blockbusters glorifying Russian historical and folk heroes. While it has taken a different and more sophisticated form in Russian independent cinema, identity discourse is nonetheless front and center. This is certainly the case with two of the most celebrated films of the New Wave, Kirill Serebrennikov's *Iur'ev Day* (2008) and Sergei Loznitsa's *My Joy* (2010), which engage the national idea both explicitly and allegorically. These films reveal striking aesthetic and thematic similarities. The journeys of their respective protagonists constitute a modern-day "return to the people." However, the Russian *narod* that they encounter has little in common with the one envisioned by 19th-century populists like Aleksandr Gertsen. Both films depict the Russian folk in an unflattering, if not grotesque, light. However, they ultimately draw very different conclusions about Russian cultural tradition and its direction in the future. While *My Joy* shatters any nostalgia for Russia's past or its folk, *Iur'ev Day* reaffirms, if ambivalently, the centrality of Russian folk tradition to its national identity. Moreover, these films represent the two predominant tendencies in New Wave cinema's national identity discourse: a continuation of *chernukha*'s utter rejection of all traditions, past, present and future; and a fraught, but ultimately reaffirming exploration of Russian cultural history.