

Reflexive essay

Afterword: On *The February Journal's* Name

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Katerina Suverina & Andrei Zavadski

‘Февраль. Достать чернил и плакать!
Писать о феврале навзрыд,
Пока грохочущая слякоть
Весною черною горит.’

‘February. Take ink and weep,
write February as you’re sobbing,
while black Spring burns deep
through the slush and throbbing.’

Boris Pasternak, *February*, 1912
(trans. A. S. Kline)

In February 2022, *The Garage Journal: Studies in Art, Museums & Culture*, of which the two of us were editors, was preparing an issue on the notion of sanctuary. Work was going well, and we were aiming to publish the issue in spring. But this did not come to pass. On February 24, the Russian Federation (RF)¹ launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Almost immediately after the start of the war, the RF authorities introduced military censorship in the country—and we realized that our journal, based at the Garage Museum in Moscow, could publish neither an anti-war statement nor many of the contributions to the upcoming issue. We stopped the work and started to think about how, if at all, the journal could exist in the new context. As the RF authorities were introducing increasingly punitive legislation, most of the academic writing in *The Garage Journal* became outlawed. As a result, the Garage Museum decided to shut down the journal’s website.

For years, the humanities in the RF had been promoting the idea that academia should occupy an apolitical position. This, some of our colleagues openly stated, was the only way to be able to do research; in reality it was a comfortable position that allowed scholars to avoid dealing with or even to adapt to the spread of ultraconservative autocratic power. This was never our intention. From the very first days of *The Garage Journal's* existence, we paid a lot of attention to queer and gender studies, feminist agendas, inclusion and discrimination—topics that, in the pre-war RF, were time and again politicized. When the RF started its full-scale war against Ukraine, we began a conversation with the museum management on closing *The Garage Journal*: we did not want to compromise our academic integrity by adapting to the new political conditions. The conversation turned out to be long but culminated in the museum transferring the rights to the journal’s archive and platform to its editorial team. In parallel to this conversation, from February 2022 to February 2023, we were working on *de facto* two issues:

the unfinished one, on the notion of sanctuary, and a new one, on silent resistance. The former was supposed to have been published in *The Garage Journal*; the latter was conceived for a new journal, yet to be born.

During this time, we realized that February was not only a month when our life as we knew it had come to an end; it was also a bifurcation point that made us think about and settle on a way forward. Using the platform of the previous journal, we decided to launch a new one: in a different place, with a different scope, and with different aims.

In February 2023, *The February Journal* was born in Berlin.²

Today, in the fall of 2026, the war is still going on, causing more destruction than ever. Academic life in the RF is almost destroyed by the continuing censorship, repression, and exile. Over the past three years, *The February Journal* has been working to advance a variety of decentering, queer, feminist, decolonial, and autotheoretical approaches, and, in doing so, has sought to address urgent cultural, social, and political questions. All this time, the journal's name has been and continues to be of utmost importance to its work, emphasizing the caesura of the war on a daily basis.

This special issue on names and naming, edited by Jesse van Amelsvoort, Gwyneira Isaac, and Tomasz Wicherkiewicz, does not deal with the war in Ukraine and the process of widespread decolonial rethinking of names that this war has intensified. But the fact that it has been brought by its editors to our journal seems symbolically laden. *The February Journal's* name is part of its origin story and its routine. February 2022 was a February that changed everything, and saying the journal's name has become our everyday practice of sobbing over the atrocities in Ukraine and resisting far-right ideologies by doing what academics should do: thinking, writing, and spreading knowledge.

1. We choose to refer to the country as the 'Russian Federation' and 'RF' here in order to avoid the trail of colonial and other connotations that the name 'Russia' has accumulated over centuries.
2. Issue 01–02 of *The February Journal* 'On behalf of silence, seeking sanctuary,' edited by Shura Dogadaeva (Katerina Suverina) and Andrei Zavadski: <https://thefebuaryjournal.org/index.php/tfj/issue/view/5> (accessed on 14 September 2026).

Authors' bios

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