According to Weld, infantilism leads to a "profound minimalism" (212), of which Kazimir Malevich provides the ultimate exemplar. Through "the profound simplicity that is the crowning achievement of the infantilist aesthetic," the Russian avant-garde drives "a wedge between the object and its meaning on a path toward self-obliteration" (205). The overturning of the pejorative connotations of *childishness* was of course central to the avant-garde's use of the child, as Weld makes clear. But it is hard not to hear the pejorative sense of *infantile* in her description of avant-garde infantilism as, finally, a self-destructive minimalism, the best of which can be said that it clears the ground for a "rebirth and resurrection" (216). The author's conclusion performs just the kind of radical simplification that she identifies in infantilism but which seems somewhat unfair both to the writers and artist whom she discusses and to the sophisticated analysis and complexity of her book. In fact, *Voiceless Vanguard* demonstrates the variety of uses to which the child was put, from Andrei Belyi's "attempt to re-create infantile consciousness" in *Kotik Letaev* (137) to Kruchenykh's merger of his zaum practice with actual (albeit carefully edited) examples of children's writing.

This study largely stays on the level of art and literary history and theory. The place of children in late imperial and early Soviet Russian society is not its subject, just as, Weld argues, the real child is largely absent from the construction of an imagined child "that reflected the avant-garde's own aesthetic principles and advanced its own agenda" (68). Yet she also provides a wealth of examples of the avant-garde's engagements and collaborations with real children, leading me to wonder whether her criticism of the avant-garde's failure to address the real child is as much a limitation of her own approach as an indictment of avant-garde infantilism. Such reservations do not, however, undermine Weld's basic and extremely valuable point about the centrality of the child to avant-garde practice in Russia. Rather, they leave open the possibility of further studies that might explore the larger historical and social implications of the shifting place of the real and imagined child in early twentieth-century Russia.

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Constructivism. By Aleksei Gan. Trans. and introduction, Christina Lodder. Barcelona: Tenov Books, 2014. xcix, 77. Notes. Illustrations. Photographs. $32.50, paper.

This is an intensely valuable book, republished in English translation by Christina Lodder and supplemented with her introductory essay, almost as long as the work itself. Aleksei Gan was a pivotal figure in Russian constructivism, but his politicized theory has been little known in the west for over 70 years. Now scholars can study his view of Soviet constructivism, proposing collective creativity, a commitment to communism, and public results. This contrasts with western versions, where the case of Naum Gabo is informative. Gabo exhibited in Moscow in 1920 but became convinced that art existed beyond the transitory world of politics. Gan took the opposite view, namely, that art was luxury goods for wealthy patrons and inappropriate for the dictatorship of the proletariat. Gan's extreme principles appeared as the book *Konstruktivizm* (Constructivism) in autumn 1922.

He applied his principles in two important journals, *Kino-Fot* (Cine-Photo), in 1922–23, and *SA* (*Sovremennaia arkhitektura* [Contemporary Architecture]), from 1926 to 1930. In the context of revolution, Gan promoted creative activity that could replace art with construction, as in engineering, wiring, building—construction that

escaped good taste, elitism, and selfish acquisitiveness—by using anonymity, geometry, material structures, and photography. This kind of construction was identified with building communist culture.

When important private collections were nationalized in 1918, Gan was made responsible for the modern collections of the great merchants Sergei Shchukin and Ivan Morozov in Moscow. Museums, art schools, and exhibitions were reorganized as public and collective institutions in which constructivism played important roles. At the Higher Art-Technical Studio, the constructivist tutors Aleksandr Rodchenko, Varvara Stepanova, Aleksandr Vesnin, and Liubov' Popova designed a basic course, adopted the title *constructor,* and soon diversified into industry, theater, film, photography, design, graphics, and architecture.

Christina Lodder's cool critique of Gan's ideas perfectly complements his fierce rhetoric and typographic explosions. While Russian-speaking scholars have long known Gan's book, here at last is an accessible introduction and translation that goes to the heart of culture in the early 1920s. Recognizing that collective creativity should be politicized and made public, Gan turned to film for his opportunities. His wife, Esfir' Shub, was a filmmaker who together with Gan rejected narrative film for the rapid, factual qualities of newsreel, with its dynamic editing and contemporary themes.

Already involved with theater in 1918, Gan wanted workers themselves to create theatrical productions, an active engagement in line with the Proletkult concept of Aleksandr Bogdanov, who expected the proletariat to devise its own new cultural forms. This is why Gan attacked professional theater. Gan's play *We* used costumes by Rodchenko, though no text survives of what may have been a mass action realized by the crowd, reenacting recent events, celebrating the collapse of capital, or the Third International in Russia.

Gan encouraged Vladimir Tatlin and Kazimir Malevich to write in the newspaper *Anarkhia*, a platform for discussion and argument for a world without individual ownership. When, as Lodder explains, anarchism was finally suppressed in 1921, Gan began to join other groups, including Komfut (communist futurists), and in 1919 worked with Osip Brik, who connected him with IZO, the visual-arts wing of Narkompros, where he worked closely with Rodchenko on the First State Exhibition, a memorial to the painter Ol'ga Rozanova. He also liaised with the Working Group of Constructivists, who were attempting to make constructors the equivalent of industrial workers.

Gan's engagement with the journal *SA* showed that constructivism could be a powerful force in Russia, physically realizing a new culture. Gan worked with constructivist architects, including Moisei Ginzburg, to design this new way of life. He also used constructivist typography to interpret and present their achievements. Gan was a typographer, film expert, ideologist, designer, activist, editor, publisher, and constructivist, yet he sought no unique artistic identity for himself.

Aleksei Gan intended his book to be a form of agitation. He announced that "we declare, uncompromising war on art," because "art is indissolubly linked to theology, metaphysics, mysticism." He asserted, in bold type and with the slogan underlined, "Death to Art!" (18). Being an elegant intellectual and a dedicated activist did not ensure his safety, however. He was arrested in 1941 and shot in 1942. He was rehabilitated in 1989.

For both Lodder's text and Gan's, this book is a valuable resource for scholars of any aspect of Russian culture in the early revolutionary years.

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