David Burliuk was such a prolific and multifaceted poet and artist that it is difficult to isolate any one "Burliukian" element without distorting the psychological constitution of this Kulturträger of the Russian avant-garde. While acknowledging the numerous intricate personal and artistic connections that Burliuk had with practically all the leading figures of Cubo-Futurism, however, we might pay particular attention to his response to the painter and theorist, Pavel Nikolaevich Filonov (1883-1941), one of the less familiar figures of the avant-garde. Examination of this relationship helps to illustrate the creative methods of the two men and to emphasize the essential inner contradictions of Russian Cubo-Futurism as a whole.

There are two primary reasons for investigating the Burliuk-Filonov connection: 1) Burliuk was in close contact with the artist Filonov, propagated his own art, wrote about him, and transferred some of his ideas to his own painting; 2) The communication, or perhaps non-communication between these two leaders of the Russian modern movement, relates to the wider issue of the two Futurisms of Russian culture in the 1910s—what we might call the external or horizontal one, and the internal or vertical one, identifiable conditionally with Moscow on the one hand, and St. Petersburg on the other.

Both artists were aware of the cardinal differences between their worldviews and both in no uncertain terms described and criticized them. Burliuk was associated with Moscow and the provinces, while Filonov was associated with St. Petersburg, even though he was actually born in Moscow.

In 1954 David Burliuk published a long appreciation of the artist Filonov in the 28th issue of his magazine Color and Rhyme. In a romantic and nostalgic mood, Burliuk wrote the following of Filonov (I retain Burliuk's somewhat eccentric English):

For the sake of his creative power, Filonov had to separate himself from life. He converted his room into a monastery cell. He treated life in a haughty manner. He lived only for his art, surrounded by a circle of images.

which possessed him, and persistently demanded from him the emanation. For a period of more than three years, Filonov almost never left his room. He secluded himself from reality, spending on himself 50 rubles a month. His life was filled by the rigor of stern privations. If somebody would come in and propose to Filonov an order, he would refuse it. Meanwhile, every turned away check meant so much to him. He would decline everything that could interfere with his work, to find his own artistic personal ego. The creative genius is similar to a ball of thread. You need only to find the end of the thread, and with patience to unwind it, and only then he will see how long and strong the thread is.

"You must understand," Filonov used to say, "that an artist must run away from life if he wishes to find himself and give form to his dreams."

"Life could be compared to a talkative woman who takes a seat alongside of the creator, laughing and willing under his hand."  

This sentimental description might seem to be a long way from the real Filonov. Even so, the very fact that Burliuk would have devoted such a long text to the fetishistic Filonov indicates that the artistic connection between the two men is worthy of commentary. But before we proceed to the central part of this article, we should recapitulate certain facts concerning Filonov and their relation to Burliuk.

After an uneven artistic education in various St. Petersburg schools, Filonov made his debut as an avant-garde artist at the "Union of Youth" exhibition in St. Petersburg in 1910. This society was a St. Petersburg group of artists, poets, and writers which included many members of the Russian avant-garde, from Ol'ga Rozanova to Mikhail Larionov, from Velimir Khlebnikov to Vladimir Tatlin, from Filonov to Burliuk. According to Filonov's own words, his first painting called Heads, a repeated motif in Filonov's oeuvre, was painted in 1910-11, i.e., when he was already a member of the Union of Youth. The importance of his painting lies in the fact that it was among the first of Filonov's so-called sdelannye or made paintings, and already illustrated principles from his theory of madeness on which he worked from 1912 onward.

There is no question that Burliuk knew his theory, as he demonstrated in a lecture that he gave in St. Petersburg in 1913 "Filonov the Perfector of Psychological Intimism," 3 and he even adapted some of Filonov's ideas to

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2. Ibid., p. 2.

3. Burliuk gave this lecture in November, 1913 in St. Petersburg in conjunction with a "Union of Youth" exhibition. The announcement of this lecture gives N. Burliuk as the speaker (see TsGALI f. 2348, op. 1, ed. khr. 44, 1. 17), but it is tempting to suggest that the author was David, not his brother Nikolai. First, David, not Nikolai, was the au-