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***“I AM A PHENOMENON QUITE OUT OF ORDINARY” Notebooks, Diaries and Letters of Daniil Kharmis*** . By Ayse Dietrich\*, Published by: Academic Studies Press, Boston. Edited by Anthony Anemone and Peter Scotto. Year of Publishing: 2013. Subject Area: Literature. Book Type: Literature, Fiction and Poetry. Total Number of Pages: 586. ISBN: 978-1-936235-96-4

This book is comprised of the avant-garde poet, short story writer, and dramatist in Soviet literature Daniil Kharmis’ notebooks, diaries and letters. It also includes some official documents and photographs.

The book was translated from Russian by Anthony Anemone and Peter Scotto and edited by Anthony Anemone and Peter Scotto. It was published by Academic Studies Press in 2013.

The book begins with an Introduction in which the authors first introduce the surviving notebooks which date back to 1924. The authors mention thirty-eight extant notebooks which include notes, an almanac and a diary from 1932-1933 and one diary which covers the years 1924-1940 with notable gaps; little or nothing has survived for the years 1936, 1938 and 1941. Because of the semi-public, semi-private nature of Kharmis’ notes and documents he employed a code to keep certain passages secret from anyone who might happen to look into his notebooks, yet this code was cracked by the Russian researcher Aleksandr Nikitaev. The Introduction continues with the story of Kharmis’ life and his art.

The book consists of six sections. The first section “Preliminaries” is a translation of Kharmis’ first notebook which covers the years from 1924 to 1931. The “Preliminaries” also includes the earliest surviving letters. The entry for the year 1924 contains his notes, poems and record of a poetry reading from the first, second, fourth, fifth notebooks. The entry for the year 1926 includes notes, letters, illustrations and poems from the eighth, and thirty-eighth notebooks. The entry for the year 1927 includes notes, illustrations, an article by N.Ioffe and L. Zheleznov, “Smena”, from April 3, 1927, Kharmis’ and Vvedensky’s statement to the Leningrad Union of Poets and a draft letter to

Aleksandr Vvedensky from the eighth, ninth, tenth, eleventh, thirty-eighth notebooks. The entry for the year 1928 includes the Declaration of the OBERIU, a letter and notes from the eleventh, thirteenth, fourteenth, fifteenth, sixteenth and thirty-eighth notebooks, a review of "Three Left Hours" published in *Kranaia Gazeta*, no.24, January 25, 1928. The entry for the year 1929 includes notes from the seventeenth and thirty-eighth notebooks. The entry for the year 1930 includes notes, letters and illustrations from the seventeenth, eighteenth, twentieth, and thirty-eighth notebooks and a review of an OBERIU performance at Leningrad State University titled "A Reactionary Circus". The entry for the year 1931 includes notes from the twenty-first, twenty-second and thirty-eighth notebooks, letters and scenes from the life of the poet.

The second section, "Arrest by OGPU. December 1931", includes Interrogation No.1; Interrogation No.2; Interrogation, January 1, 1932; Interrogation, Wednesday, January 13, 1932 and his letters from his twenty-second notebook, written in 1932.

The third section "Diary 1932-1933, November 22, 1932-September 10, 1933" includes his notes. The "Diary" continues with the notes, letters and illustrations taken from his twenty-fourth, twenty-fifth, twenty-sixth, twenty-seventh, twenty-eighth, twenty-ninth and thirty-eighth notebooks. The entry for the year 1934 contains notes and letters from his thirtieth and thirty-first notebooks. The entry for the year 1935 includes some notes, a poem from the thirty-first notebook and scenes from the life of the poet. The entry for the year 1936 contains scenes from the life of the poet, poems, letters, and his speech given on April 3, 1936.

The fourth section, "The Blue Notebook" (August 23, 1936-October 26/27, 1937), includes his notes and poems. The entry for the year 1937 includes notes from the thirty-second and thirty-eighth notebooks, scenes from the life of the poet, and two letters to philosopher friend. The entry for the year 1938 includes notes from the thirty-eighth notebook and the year 1939 includes notes from the twenty-second, thirty-third and thirty-eighth notebooks. The entry for the year 1940 includes notes, letters, illustrations from the thirty-third and thirty-fourth notebooks and the entry for the year 1941 includes two letters.

The fifth section "Unknown Years" includes notes and letters from the thirty-eighth notebook.

The sixth section "Epilogue" contains the arrest order, protocol of personal search, decrees, and conclusion of the case. The "Epilogue" also includes Kharms' "Finale" written in 1934.

The pages between 535 and 540 contain a chronology of the events in his life. A selected bibliography in Russian and English is given on page 541. Pages 543-564 include a Commentary and pages 565-586 include a Glossary of names, places, institutions and concepts.

As the authors themselves clearly indicated in the section about their translation, their intention to write "a creative biography in documents" has been thoroughly accomplished. It is obvious that the authors are intimately familiar with and have made extensive use of the original handwritten sources and original documents. The translations are of a very high quality showing that the authors have

attempted to bring out the full meaning of Kharms' writings. For anyone interested in Daniil Kharms, his life and his times this book constitutes an invaluable source.

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