



KAUNAS BETWEEN THE LINES

IT'S KAUNASTIC

1 KYMANTAITĖ-ČIURLIONIENĖ (1886–1958)

Žemaičių g. 10
The house where S. Kymantaitė-Čiurlionienė lived was built in 1932 and designed by Vytautas Landsbergis-Zemkalnis. The writer, pedagogue, public figure, translator, and critic has significantly expanded and enriched the field of Lithuanian literature with her diverse body of work. An interesting fact: Vaižgantas was her first Lithuanian language teacher. Later, after getting acquainted with Čiurlionis, she also taught him Lithuanian. Čiurlionienės Saturdays took place in this house. During these events, the guests not only read original and translated literature but also coined neologisms.

2 DALIA GRINKEVIČIŪTĖ (1927–1987)

Perkūno Ave. 60, Gimnazijos g. 3
The doctor and writer lived in Kaunas as a child and then after she returned from exile. In 1949 she briefly fled to Lithuania with her sick mother and lived with her relatives in Kaunas. At the time, she was writing her memoirs of exile, which she hid in the garden of her then home under the bushes. Later, in exile, she started studying medicine, graduated from university in Kaunas and worked in Laukva, where she took care of the deportees and rewrote her memoirs because she was unable to find her old manuscripts. Eventually, the texts were handed over to Jelena Boner, the wife of Academician Andrei Sakharov, who took care of their publication abroad. Memoirs Lithuanians by the Laptev Sea were first published in Lithuania in 1988. One of Kaunas Maironis University Gymnasium (located on Gimnazijos Street 3) auditoriums was named after Dalia Grinkevičiūtė.

MORE KAUNASTIC ROUTES

“Kaunas between the lines” route was prepared together with the students of Vytautas Magnus University, Literary Arts, Criticism and Communication Master Studies.

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5 PRANAS MAŠIOTAS (1863–1940)

K. Donelaičio g. 4, J. Janonio g. 38, Kačerginė
The future prose writer, translator, pedagogue, journalist, public and cultural figure grew up in a family of farmers, who repeatedly hosted book smugglers. P. Mašiota attended secret groups of Lithuanian students at Marijampolė Gymnasium and distributed Lithuanian press. Later he spent a long time abroad and returned to Lithuania after the First World War. In Kaunas, he worked as the Deputy Minister of Education, at the Book Publishing and Terminology Commission, and wrote textbooks for primary and secondary schools. In 1924, he left for Klaipėda and after five years, having to retire due to ill health, returned to Kaunas and immersed himself in literary work. In his lifetime, he wrote about 150 books.

P. Mašiota spent his holidays and the last two years of his life with his son in Kačerginė. Pranas Mašiota fairy tale park was established in a little park next to his house in 2004.

6 IEVA SIMONAITYTĖ (1897–1978)

Dainavos g. 5 / Džukų g. 3
The writer, who called herself by her real name Evė, was born to a single homeless mother. At the age of five she contracted bone tuberculosis and had been constrained since then by physical disabilities. The culture of Lithuania Minor Lithuanians was very important to I. Simonaitytė and she tried to nurture and immortalize it in her works. The young Evė's penchant for creativity became apparent early on, her work was published in the newspapers of Lithuania Minor, but her name was not known in Lithuania until the Fate of Aukštėji Šimonių was published. Having received recognition and a state prize, she devoted herself solely to writing after 1936. She moved to Kaunas, Žaliakalnis, when in 1939 Germany occupied Klaipėda region. During her 95th anniversary, a memorial plaque with an haut-relief was unveiled on Dainavos Street.

7 ANTANAS ŠKĖMA (1910–1961)

Gailutės g. 38
Antanas Škėma, the knight of Lithuanian diaspora literature, prose writer, playwright, literary critic, actor and director spent his youth in Panevėžys. He studied medicine and law at Vytautas Magnus University and later entered the Vladas Šipavičius-Fedotas drama studio. Admitted to the State Theatre in Kaunas, he lived with his father in Darėnė. He made his debut as a writer in Lietuvos Aidas with a short story “Fear”, but today Škėma is best known for his novel White Shroud. Kaunas National Drama Theatre features a play directed by Jonas Jurašas, where the main character travels up and down in an elevator through his memories of the interwar period Kaunas and other places.

8 MOTIEJUS VALANČIUS (1801–1875)

M. Valančiaus g. 6, Vilniaus g. 1, Kranto 5-oji g. 7
Motiejus Valančius was a bishop, educator, publisher as well as pioneer of the sobriety movement, book smuggling, and Lithuanian fiction. When after the 1863–1864 uprising, the ban of the Lithuanian publications printed in the Latin alphabet was enforced, the bishop was interrogated, watched, and forced to pay fines. Russian authorities wanted to exile him from Kaunas but were afraid of people's reactions. According to historian Liudas Jovaiša, Valančius managed to enlighten the nation, and “the increasing literacy, to which he contributed directly, raised a generation, which will later buy illegal Lithuanian press distributed by book smugglers and will launch an ethnic reform movement.” The bishop lived in the house on M. Valančiaus St. 6 (currently a museum) from 1864 to 1875. Right next to it, close to A. Jakšto St. you can find a monument built for him and his bust in the cathedral. The facade of Saulės Gymnasium is decorated with M. Valančius' relief portrait and Kaunas 1st School bears the name of Motiejus Valančius.

9 VINCAS MYKOLAITIS-PUTINAS (1893–1967)

Aukštaičių g. 28, Vaižganto g. 36, Vaižganto g. 14, V. Mykolaičio-Putino g. 34, Kačerginė
Lithuanian literature classic, academician, historiographer, and philosopher studied in Seinai Priest Seminary and was ordained as a priest in 1915. He began teaching the new Lithuanian and world literature in the faculties of Philosophy and Theology and Humanities of the University of Lithuania in 1923. Putinas wrote his most famous novel In the Shadow of the Altars, during his vacation in Nice in 1931. After several years he secretly married Emilija Kvedaraitė in Riga. The news featured in the press turned into a scandal, V. Mykolaitis-Putinas was excommunicated - separated from the church community - but this punishment was overruled before his death.

Although the writer lived in several places in Kaunas, Žaliakalnis, Kačerginė, occupies an equally important place in his biography. He rested, wrote, and welcomed the sunset of his life in this summer house. The author wrote the fourth volume of In the Shadow of the Altars (unfortunately did not finish it), translated Adomas Mickevičius' Pan Tadeusz, and wrote poetry in Kačerginė. The street where the writer lived, was named on his behalf in 1989. The sculpture of V. Mykolaitis-Putinas can also be found on the same street, along with a park established to commemorate the literary classic. The Poetry Spring festival is held every year in the park.

10 JUOZAS TUMAS-VAIŽGANTAS (1869–1933)

Vaižganto g. 25, Aleksoto g. 10 – 4, Skuodo g. 27, Aleksoto g. 3
A writer, journalist, literary scholar, canon, public and cultural figure graduated from Kaunas Priest Seminary in 1893 and was ordained priest. He was constantly reprimanded by other priests, politicians, and even fellow writers, and due to that had to move from parish to parish until he finally found himself in Kaunas again, where, from 1920 till 1932, he served as the rector of Vytautas the Great Church. He lived in an apartment right next to the church, where his memorial museum now operates, and yellow canaries can be found chirping there today just like they were back in the day. The writer's favorite place for respite is the Nemunas embankment right next to the house. For a short time, he also stayed in Žaliakalnis. He taught the history of the press ban literature (1864–1904) at the University of Lithuania and established the Rašlava Museum at the Faculty of Humanities, where he worked until 1929. A gymnasium located on Skuodo St. 27 in Šančiai was named after Vaižgantas. In the churchyard on Aleksoto St. 3, a monument to Vaižgantas and his beloved companion dachshund Kaukas was erected.

11 JUOZAS GRUŠAS (1901–1986)

Kalnietičių g. 93, Šarkuvos g. 30
Juozas Grušas is a playwright and a pioneer of a classic modern short story. A. M. Linartienė notes that Grušas' work is characterized by “moral and ethical issues, the constructiveness or form, intellectual disputes, the generalized struggle between good and evil, in which the humanistic meaning of human existence is sought.” J. Grušas built his dream house in the old orchard by himself based on the design by J. Miknevičius. From the housewarming party in 1936 until 1986 intense creative life was in full swing there: gatherings of writers, artists, and theatricals; J. Grušas created his most famous dramas and short stories here and raised his three children. In 1989 a memorial museum was established in the house and old interior of the rooms, works of art, and part of the library were preserved, although people have always been more important to Grušas than books. In Šilaičiai, a gymnasium was named after J. Grušas. And in 1999 the J. Grušas Gymnasium Art Museum was established there.

12 JULIUS KAUPAS (1920–1964)

V. Putvinskio g. 38
Writer in exile, columnist, literary critic, and psychiatrist spent his childhood in Kaunas, in the fifth apartment of the Bank tellers house on Kalnų St. 20 (now V. Putvinskio St. 38). J. Kaupas portrayed his childhood orchard next to the house as a magical gathering place for witches in the fairy tale “Witches' Feast on Kalnų Street” featured in his book Doctor Kripištukas in Hell. The author reveals a city panorama full of both real motifs and fantasies. “If you were walking on Kalnų Street one warm summer evening, enjoying the smell of blooming horse chestnut...”

13 RAIMUNDAS SAMULEVIČIUS (1937–1981)

Vaisių g. 16A
Raimundas Samulevičius, one of the most famous post-war essayists, playwrights, poets and critics, has lived in this house near an old synagogue with his mother Stasė Samulevičienė, a folk artist, toy maker, and sister of the painter Antanas Samuolis, who was a member of the Ars group. Unable to please the authorities of the time with his works that were lacking in ideology, he still gained international recognition. Several of his plays have been staged in Kaunas. After he tragically died in the KGB colonel's apartment in Vilnius under enigmatic circumstances, his essay “White Apple Tree” about A. Samuolis' work, which gained recognition only after his death, was completed due to his mother's efforts. “Now we really miss Samulevičius' home that was full of urban culture and just the right number of special treats on the table for the guests. People who gathered there gossiped about half the city and had great laughs,” journalist Romutė Vaitiekūnaitė remembered in 2001, 20 years after the writer's death.

14 RIČARDAS MIKUTAVIČIUS (1935–1998)

Laisvės Ave. 9
There are many aspects to this personality: a priest, an art collector, a public figure, as well as a poet who had published many books. He loved and truly appreciated J. Tumas-Vaižgantas. He was happy and proud when in 1989 he was transferred to Kaunas, Vytautas the Great Church and settled in an apartment where Vaižgantas had lived for 13 years. He said the flat had a very good and light energy. R. Mikutavičius donated 387 books and prints - including a book with Vaižgantas' autograph and a 2nd class star of the Order of the Lithuanian Grand Duke Gediminas that he himself found and purchased - to the Vaižgantas Museum.

15 VYTAUTĖ ŽILINSKAITĖ (G. 1930)

Tunelio g. 36
The writer's childhood house was rebuilt, so we can only imagine the environment and atmosphere that she grew up in. In her memoirs, she writes, “We lived on a hill under which a tunnel ran, and we could climb down the stairs from the hill to Laisvės Avenue. Once, when I was taking the stairs, a turkey got in the way, I overcame the obstacle and descended to the avenue, straight into the arms of a policeman on duty.

When she returned from Moscow after the war, Salomėja Neris spent the last years of her life in Žaliakalnis and the last month she was treated at the oldest Red Cross hospital in Kaunas. Still, the most characteristic place, where the happiest and most peaceful years of the poet had passed, was her and her husband Bernardas Bučas' house in Palemonas. The two of them lived here from 1938 to 1941. Salomėja commuted from there by train to her work in the gymnasium. She brought her new-born to this house and finished its construction after receiving a prize for her book I Will Bloom Like the Wormwood. The poet was taken from here to the USSR embassy and after she returned, she wrote a poem to Stalin, which had brought her an eternal disgrace. The museum founded in 1962, under the pines and apple trees planted by Salomėja and Bernardas, hosts literary events and the eternal wormwood welcomes the guests at the gate.

16 JURGIS GIMBERIS (1938–2018)

Pravieniškųjų g. 15
According to J. Gimberis' wife, poet Dovilė Žilčiūtė, although he spent 26 years with her in Kaunas Old Town (Gate of Kovos skveras can be seen through their windows where both Jurgis and Dovilė used to meet their fellow creators) Jurgis remained a Šančiai local to the core. He would say that his social background doesn't allow him to take a taxi and that he would rather travel on foot. Šančiai motif, mood and spirit are common in his writing. “Šančiai is my birthplace. It is a district of Kaunas - Žemiejai and Aukštėjai Šančiai. I once wrote a poem, “Oh Šančiai, Šančiai, the sky is always blue above you.” Jurgis Gimberis is a satirist, a master of witty words, who has left us with many winged phrases that have already become folklore. For example, “Kaunas is also liveable.” Although he has been writing since young age, he officially made his debut as an author in Nemunas at the age of 42. He worked for a long time as a laboratory assistant at the Institute of Construction and Architecture of KTU, but this did not prevent him from becoming one of the most memorable literary masters of Kaunas.

17 JANINA DEGUTYTĖ (1928–1990)

Kranto 6-oji g. 3
“I was born on July 8 (my Godparents mixed it up and wrote down 6). July. The clover field is buzzing with barely visible bumblebees. / The days strewn with thunderstorms radiate poppy passion. / I once came to this world on July - / To lose the sun every night and greet the daybreak each morning. / I came to take in the world with the eyebrow / And blindly crawl around, bumping into stone walls. / So that an inexhaustible forest spring of ice and fire would quench me.” That is how a poet wrote about her birth in Šančiai of 1928, in a poem “I Came.”

The poet's time in Šančiai is marked by a secret kept by her as a little girl: her mother drank. At the age of only fourteen, J. Degutytė took full responsibility of the family. She took care of her mother for the rest of her life and dedicated more than one poem to her, “Perhaps it was fated for the child's tears to later turn into poems. They were paid for in advance - by Your destiny.” The poet also published about fifteen books for children.

18 BIRUTĖ DŪKELEVIČIŪTĖ (1923–2007)

Kalnietičių g. 14
Writer, actress, and director was born and raised in Kaunas. She studied journalism and romance studies at Vytautas Magnus University. She made her debut at the Youth Theatre. During the war she found herself in the West. Her first novel Eight Leaves (1956) tells a story of the exodus from Lithuania, “Here, the images of the “white city” - Kaunas - open. Let me look at my hometown until my eyes satiate. At the two-way stream of the river, which looks like hands distorted by grief; at the white town hall tower, the green slope of Aleksotas Hill, the large maples of the cathedral yard, the roofs, streets and intersections. And at those three bridges that chain Kaunas to the other bank, so that it would not sail downstream the Nemunas.” In total, Kaunas is mentioned 159 times in the novel.

19 JUDITA VAIČIŪNAITĖ (1937–2001)

Gedimino g. 56
The poet lived in this house until she was 17 years old. She grew up in the family of a university professor, psychiatrist, great humanist, and idealist. Most of her childhood and adolescence spent in Kaunas can be found in her memoirs In the Mirror of Childhood, published in 1994. “That house still stands today. Only its number is different and the white enamelled metal signs at the front door announcing the doctor's working hours has been gone for 50 years now. The house has three stores, it is made of brick, has a bow window, a little tower and is located on the corner of the street which turns and climbs up the hill. One of its walls has no windows, all covered in a giant vine full of chirping birds, mostly sparrows. No pigeons, however... A thick winter mist on my heart. Easter bells break through it, a hum from the Garrison Church, Kaunas Soboras, still open. The heart is full of both uncertainty and a glimmer of hope. I feel a strange quivering - that's how the bud explodes, that is how the butterfly comes out of the pupa when the wings shoot out so timidly and yet persistently.”

20 SALOMĖJA NĖRIS (1904–1945)

Kęstučio g. 19, Dainavos g. 6, Daukanto g. 18, House museum of S. Neris and B. Bučas, S. Nėries g. 7, Palemonas
It is possible to talk about S. Nėris in Kaunas having many places in mind. During her studies, she lived in a dormitory on Daukanto Street, where she prepared her first collection of poems Early Morning, and where she experienced her first secret and unrequited love. She worked as a teacher in a gymnasium located on Kęstučio Street. It was from there that she was taken to P. Mažylis maternity hospital to give birth to her son Sauliukas.

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21 KAZYS BINKIS (1893–1942)

Vydūno Ave. 45
Lithuanian poet, writer, journalist, playwright and translator, who is known as the pioneer of Lithuanian avant-garde literature and the soul of interwar Kaunas artists' circles is Kazys Binkis, who carried a hundred winds in his pocket. He managed to live in Berlin full of modernist culture with his first wife Pranė. When he returned to Kaunas, he tried to bring everything he saw in Germany to Lithuania. That is how the magazine and movement Four Winds was born. After the death of his first wife, K. Binkis married Sofija Kudrevičiūtė-Nacevičienė. During World War II, they hid Jews from Nazis in their home. The poet did not live to see the end of the war. Kazys and Sofija Binkis were later awarded honorary titles of the Righteous Among the Nations.

22 BERNARDAS BRAZDŽIONIS (1907–2002)

Taikos Ave. 21
Many will have heard the pseudonym of Vytautas Nemunėlis. It was used by Bernardas Brazdžionis, Lithuanian prose writer, poet, playwright, press worker, museologist, literary critic, and a herald of Lithuanian patriotism, who called the nation to fight. While studying, he participated in students' academic groups, edited various publications, and taught Lithuanian after graduation. He was considered as Maironis' successor, especially since he was the head of Maironis Lithuanian Literature Museum from 1940 to 1944. After World War II, B. Brazdžionis moved to Germany and later to the US. He passed away in Los Angeles but was buried in Detrašiūnai cemetery. A memorial bust was put next to the house where the poet lived from 1936 till 1944 and where he would stay while visiting after Lithuania gained independence.

23 HENRIS PARLANDAS (1908–1930)

V. Putvinskio g. 64 / Ramybės park
The modernist writer was born in Vyborg, which was a part of Finland then. From the age of 21 he lived in the temporary capital of Lithuania and worked in the Swedish Embassy (now - A. Žmuidzinavičius Creations and Collections Museum). While partying in bohemian circles he prepared a collection of poems and started writing a novel To Pieces, which became a true classic in Finland and Sweden after the author's early death. In 1930 he got sick and died unexpectedly failing to complete the novel. He was buried in the old Kaunas cemetery (now Ramybės Park) in the Lutheran quarter. During the Soviet occupation the cemetery was closed, some of the graves were relocated, others were destroyed - the location of the writer's grave is unknown. In the autumn of 2019, during the first Memory Festival organized by Kaunas 2022, Tadas Simkus created a fresco at the park. Life in Kaunas according to H. Parland is conveyed by his own poem next to the writer's silhouette, “Spring in Kaunas / dirt / and sun puddles / in backstreets.”

24 JUOZAS ERETAS (1896–1984)

Gimnazijos g. 7 or Town Hall Sq. 23/2
This Swiss national arrived in Kaunas in 1919 and was appointed as press secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Through his efforts, the Lithuanian telegraph agency ELTA was established, which helped to quickly spread information not only from but also to Lithuania, through the country's newspapers, and radio. In 1922 J. Eretas accepted Lithuanian citizenship and became a member of the Second Seimas. J. Eretas friendship with Salomėja Neris started in Kaunas. He would invite her to the cinema, they would go to Metropolis to listen to music. Such a friendship, causing naive S. Neris to get her hopes up, could not continue. In 1941 J. Eretas moved with his family to Switzerland and continued the struggle for Lithuania's independence. In the courtyard of the VMU Faculty of Catholic Theology, you can see a wooden roof pillar dedicated to the memory of the professor and his wife (sculptor Ipolitas Užkurnys). Memorial plaque in the Town Hall Square was unveiled on J. Eretas 110th anniversary.

25 LEAH GOLDBERG (LIJA GOLDBERGAITĖ) (1911–1970)

Kęstučio g. 18 – 12 (according to the old numbering)
Karaliaus Mindaugo pr. 11
Classic Jewish writer, poet, playwright, Israeli cultural and public figure grew up in Kaunas, attended Svabė Hebrew School, and later Kaunas University. In 1935, she settled in Palestine. L. Goldberg started writing when she was around twelve. She mostly wrote in Hebrew and a little in Russian.

Her work is described as dramatic, somewhat melancholic with a vivid motif of unattainable wounding love. Some of her poems carry a reflection of Kaunas. L. Goldberg has translated a number of Lithuanian folk songs into Hebrew. And most of her own texts were turned into song lyrics.

In 2010 a memorial plaque created by Balys Gudas was unveiled on the former building of Svabė Gymnasium (currently Kaunas Vocational Training Centre for Service Business Specialists). After the reading of her poem “Pine”, a pine tree was planted near the school in memory of the author. In 2020, the poet's poems came alive on the wall of a building on Kęstučio Street during the CityTelling Festival. This mural was created by Linas Kaziliūnis in around the same place where the Goldberg family used to live.

26 ABRAOMAS MAPU (1808–1867)

A. Mapu g. 20, Aleksotas Hill
Abraomas (Avraham) Mapu was born and raised in Kaunas. From the age of thirteen, he studied the Talmud independently and learned various languages, worked as a teacher, and travelled extensively. In 1848, after receiving a permanent position at Kaunas Boys' School, he remained here for a long time. In his novels A. Mapu idealized Jewish life in the distant past and criticized the present talking about the need for reforms. He wrote in Hebrew and is therefore considered to be the pioneer of the secular Hebrew novel. The writer loved to create in a gazebo on Aleksotas Hill. In 1928, Nachmanas Šapira published a book A. Mapu, the Kaunas Resident, where he writes, “The pleasing nature of his native town Kaunas - beautifully and symmetrically intertwined hills and valleys, forests and rivers, that make the area wonderful has always captivated him. As a teenager, Mapu enjoyed wandering in the beautiful nature, which often flooded his texts, for hours.” A playful sculptural composition to honour the writer was built in 2018 in the courtyard of A. Mapu St. 20 (idea and execution by sculptor and painter Martynas Gaubas).

27 ADOMAS MICKEVIČIUS (1798–1855)

Aleksoto g. 6 / Rotušės Sq. 9, A. Mickevičius Valley
Polish, Belarusian and Lithuanian poet Adomas Mickevičius taught in Kaunas from 1819 till 1823 in a school founded by Jesuits in the 17th century. He was a teacher of world literature, Latin, ancient Greek history, poetics, grammar and political economy. In addition to that he managed the school library and led an active social life. You will find a memorial plaque on the college that houses Kaunas Jesuit Gymnasium and a small memorial room in Perkūnas House located nearby. But let's explore other parts of Kaunas. Hundreds of streets in Poland and a little less in Lithuania are named after A. Mickevičius. The street located in Kaunas received its name back in 19th century and hasn't changed its name in over a century! The poet would stay in one of the houses on Kartofliškės Folvark from 1819 till 1823. On the southeastern edge of the largest oak park in Europe, the Girstupis Stream flows through the valley. While living in Kaunas, A. Mickevičius especially loved this park and found inspiration in the valley. The poet also immortalized the Girstupis Valley in the poem Gražina (1823). It was here that A. Mickevičius had his seeing-off party before leaving Kaunas. At the suggestion of his muse Karolina Kowalska, friends named the valley after the poet. By the way, composer Jurgis Kamavičius composed an opera based on A. Mickevičius' poem Gražina, which was staged in the State Theatre in Kaunas in 1933. You can also find Gražinos Street near the valley.

28 IGNAS ŠEINIUS (1889–1959)

Vašario 16-osios g. 2, I. Šeinius g.
This writer's real surname is Jurkūnas. He signed his later works under the name Ignas Schejnyus. The author was born in Šeiniūnai village, Širvintos district in 1889. After graduating from teacher training courses in Kaunas, he later studied in Moscow, and in 1916 he left for Stockholm as a representative of the Lithuanian Society for the Relief of Victims of War. After having learned Swedish in one year, he published his first books there. After returning to Kaunas, he engaged in literary activities and became the first chairman of the Lithuanian Writers' Union. He also lived in Klaipėda for some time before finally returning to Sweden. He remained there until his death and wrote mostly in Swedish. Archives containing many various Lithuanian texts by I. Šeinius fiction, journalistic texts - were discovered in Sweden in the beginning of the 21st century.

29 GIRŠAS OŠEROVIČIUS (1908–1994)

A. Mickevičius g. 30
We do not know exactly where this poet lived in Kaunas, but his work was awakened during the CityTelling Festival in the autumn of 2020. The mural of Tadas Vincaitis-Pligaus depicting the once vibrant and now forgotten life of Kaunas Jews (a family photograph) is completed by G. Ošerovičius' poem written in 1968. After graduating from University in Kaunas in 1933, the young man started his creative activity here: he wrote poems, worked in Yiddish-language newspapers. Shortly after writing this poem, the poet left for Israel where he continued to write and was awarded prestigious literary prizes.

Do you really think that oblivion Has truly washed away what was forgotten? It happens that suddenly the image comes to life again from the ashes. And here it is once more - a living, vibrant reality. That will remain as if in a frame of every day to come.

30 JOSIFAS BRODSKIS (1940–1996)

Aleksotas observation deck
This Nobel laureate is considered to be the most important heir to the Silver Age of Russian poetry and one of the greatest poets in the United States and internationally. When visiting Kaunas, and standing on a steep slope in Aleksotas, the poet uttered the phrase, “Who needs the whole of Europe when you can find everything here.” Several subsequent stays in Lithuania, trips to Kaunas, and intellectual communication left important traces in J. Brodskis work.

Hi, welcome to Kaunas full of literature. It is fun to flip through any city, as if it were a thick novel full of historical details and detective stories. Kaunas is also like that: written, rewritten, corrected, versed, quoted, translated, deleted, burned and able to speak once again. The city, which has brought up more than one talented writer (not only Lithuanian!) sheltered hundreds of them and has seen many off abroad, can become both a source of inspiration and a protagonist.

We will try to imagine what kind of Kaunas hides between the lines by taking this multilayered route. From homes where the writers first played and then wrote; secluded corners that attracted them and bookstores that have become history. From places recommended for a quiet afternoon of reading to quotes in which our city blooms with the ever-new words and meanings. Does the route end with the last object on the list? Certainly not. After all, you haven't taken E. Ožėskienės Street yet knowing that it was named in honor of the writer who wrote the novel Near the Nemunas. And did you read the latest issue of the Nemunas magazine, where many modern writers started their careers? There are over a thousand of issues and all of them were published in Kaunas, a city whose last sentence will never be written.

Places

31 MAIRONIS LITHUANIAN LITERATURE MUSEUM

Rotušės Sq. 13

We have already invited you to the homes of Vaižgantas, S. Nėris and B. Sruoga on this route. Do not forget their "father", the former palace of Sirutis that was saved from demolition by Maironis, who ordered to establish a museum there after his death. You can choose what is more interesting to you: the life of the priest and poet, a tour of his spacious but not pompous flat, or the first editions of The Voices of Spring. Or perhaps it is the attic full of the exile writers' fates and other accurate glimpses into the inexhaustible treasure trove of Lithuanian literature. Or maybe what appeals to you is the garden, where blossoms sing as one in a harmonious choir or a remote gazebo that makes you want to stay there after the museum's working hours.

32 MUSEUM OF CHILDREN LITERATURE

K. Donelaičio g. 13

Here you feel like reciting a poem by Henrikas Radauskas, "I don't believe in the world, but I believe in a fairy tale." We have already mentioned the Journey to Tandadrika but this Museum of Children Literature contains many more fairy tales and their characters. In the museum, children or the ones who were kids not that long ago are introduced to L. Gutauskas' last witch of Čepkeliai Marsh, G. Beresnevičius kaukiukai, V. V. Landsbergis horse Dominykas and M. Vainiliūtis' Little Lingonberry. You can take a look around hell with doctor Krištukas and visit the land of Defects with the fidgety Gilė. Modernists interested in the interwar period architecture and the owner of the house - the creator of the Lithuanian state, who served as the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mykolas Sleževičius - are also among the visitors of the museum. The house built in 1932 was one of the most modern and luxuriously furnished in Kaunas and it has been inhabited by fairy tales for the last three decades.

33 KTU SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS

Gedimino g. 50

The building is huge and has witnessed many changes. First of all, it was a State Printing House built according to Henrikas Fišeris' design in 1924. After Vytautas Landsbergis-Zemkalinis adapted the building to new needs in 1929, Vytautas Magnus University was established here. Later Germans set up a military hospital in the building. Today, it is bustling with economics students. Standing in front of a truly beautiful entrance, you can imagine the university community gathered on the stairs. It pays homage to a large J. Tumas-Vaižgantas funeral procession of May 1, 1933 (so many students attended his lectures that there was never enough space). Or you can visualize a tall and always stylish B. Sruoga giving lectures on Russian literature or theatre; or perhaps V. Krėvė, the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, speaking to V. Mykolaitis-Putinas.

34 "AUŠRA" GYMNASIUM

Laisvės al. 95

The first Lithuanian gymnasium in Kaunas raised more than one prominent literary person. It started operating in 1915. Professor M. Biržiška started heading the school only in 1922. It was him who suggested the school should be named Aušra in 1923 during the 40th anniversary of the first Lithuanian newspaper Aušra. By 1940, Aušra boys' and girls' gymnasiums have had 22 years of graduates. Among them were scientist Marija Alseikaitė-Gimbutienė, President Valdas Adamkus and, of course, writers: Jonas Aistis, Vytautas Bložė, Antanas Miškinis, Kostas Ostrauskas, Petras Juodelis and many others.

35 FORMER ANTIKVARAS BOOKSTORE

Šv. Gertrūdės g. 14

The bookstore was opened by young bohemian men Dovylas Repšys and Julius Žukas in 1930. The bookstore was called Antikvaras for a reason and stood out precisely because it sold old and rare books, mostly in foreign languages. Bibliophile Julius Žukas was eager to look for publications that interested him or his clients in various countries' antique stores. He was interested in rare publications about Lithuania and art and was ready to spend a generous amount of money on them; he wanted to acquire entire libraries of societies, organizations, and individuals. The bookstore closed in 1940 when the Soviet authorities decided to nationalize the property, but the building survived.

36 FORMER SIZELIS KAGANSKIS' BOOKSTORE

Laisvės Ave. 92

All the other bookstores must have been quite envious of this bookstore, which was opened in place of Literatūra bookstore that continued to migrate around Kaunas. It was the only seller of some popular foreign newspapers and fashion and lifestyle magazines (Rul, Die Dame, Suzanne, La vraie mode and others) in Lithuania. The bookstore also sold various embroidery, sewing, handicraft, and knitting albums. The building has survived, but books are no longer sold here.

37 FORMER A. PTAŠEKAS' BOOKSTORE

Vilniaus g. 35

One of the most popular private bookstores in the interwar Kaunas not only sold but also published books on various topics and genres. The bookstore did focus more on certain topics - more publications were dedicated to agriculture, pedagogy, geography, and foreign language learning. The bookstore also contained several board games. Today, the building leads a different life.

38 FORMER POPULAR LITERATURE BOOKSTORE "ŠVIESA"

A. Juozapavičiaus pr. 43

Juozas Gineika, who has been immersed in books since childhood, saved up and bought a two-story modernist house in Šančiai in front of the church and post office, which soon became one of the most popular bookstores in the interwar Kaunas. J. Gineika sold popular literature, textbooks, stationery, and toys on the first floor, and lived on the second. He published many beautiful, valuable books and popular publications, as well as a series of Lithuanian and Latvian comedies. And where do Šančiai residents buy their books now?

39 FORMER BOOKSTORE SEP-TYNIOS VIENATVĖS

M. Daukšos g. 31

The books of Kęstutis Navakas (1964–2020) can be read as one large metaphysical map of Kaunas. The dust of Kaunas asphalt and the velvet of fantasies, tobacco smoke and shards of reality are thickly intertwined in his poems and prose. Although the poet was a true Žalialaknis local, if we had to choose the place that could accommodate such a personality, it would be this bookstore, which operated from 1996 to 2005. Too small to survive, too big to ever be forgotten. Of course, it was described most accurately by K. Navakas himself, who may have been sitting in Sufferio būdėlė (another equally important spot of bohemian Kaunas) at the time. "A rostrum turned into a table for the cash register stood in the cellar of the bookstore (it was one of its premises).

The rostrum was old, Soviet. I don't know on what basis, but I would bring them from the attic of Kaunas University of Technology, which was full of things that were no longer useful for technology. Once, very important people gave speeches from these tribunes, pausing to sip from the carafe standing right next to them."

40 FORMER KONRADAS/TULPĖ CAFE

Laisvės Ave. 45

A cafe that has changed faces, owners and names during its lifetime operated in the main artery of the city center for 83 years and was forever inscribed in the map of bohemian Kaunas. More than one striking story occurred there, visitors could listen to live jazz performances. As theatre director Gytis Padegimas remembers in Sites of Memory project, "One could say that bohemianism in Kaunas unfolded most distinctly in Konradas cafe." It even had its own different hours for writers, politicians and local ladies." The younger generation writer Aleksandra Fomina remembers the last stage of the cafe's life and the first stage of the "new Kaunas", "Tulpė was a very important place next to which was a shop that sold pirated cassettes. It was manned by this guy with a permanently sad facial expression, whom we named Brother Rabbit."

41 FORMER CAFE LAUMĖ

Laisvės al. 61

"Coffee was just something on the side. The most important thing was to see, hear or reach some conclusion during a discussion; to learn something or make a declaration together. ... The cafe hosted the premieres of artists' works. If anyone wrote a poem, they were able to read it out loud in that company of people and receive criticism," poet, translator, chief editor of Nemunas, Erika Drungytė, talked about this legendary place in Laisvės Avenue - which inspired many creative feats and has seen several different eras - to the Guide to the Bohemian Laisvės Avenue, which is featured in the Sites of Memory project, where more such memories can be found.

42 KAUNAS CENTRAL BOOKSTORE

Laisvės Ave. 81

The bookstore building designed by architects Algimantas Mikėnas and Marija Matuškaitė in 1955-1956 remains one of the best examples of the architecture of the time. The interior reconstruction done in 1980-1983 attracts the curious 21st century visitors. In addition to furniture or wooden constructions of the ceiling reminiscent of the period of reconstruction, visitors can evaluate the tapestry created by Lucija Banaitienė in 1982. The bookstore is full of different genres of literature and periodicals. It hosts cultural events: meetings with the authors, book launches and even performances or exhibitions.

43 KALBŲ CENTRAS BOOKSTORE

K. Donelaičio g. 61

During those rainy and cold days of the second quarantine, at the beginning of the spring of 2021, quite a few passersby in the Old Town stood in a line that 1001 knyga bookstore (specialized in art publications) has never seen before. Unfortunately, the line signaled the closing of the bookstore... Yet, there are some good news! All the books you didn't manage to buy at the cozy store at the intersection of M. Daukšos and Vilniaus streets, were moved to the bookstore in the city center.

44 ŽMONIŲ KNYGOS SECONDHAND BOOKSTORE

M. Valančiaus g. 16

"You can buy, sell, trade or rent books," the place introduces itself playfully on the internet. You will find what you have been looking for in the bookstore, which, despite being small, fits a whole lot of stories, and perhaps will supplement the novel you acquired with a vinyl record.

45 V. STANIULIS' ANTIQUE BOOKSTORE

Vytauto Ave. 58

This bookstore founded by the most famous Lithuanian bibliophile and antique book dealer, who has been collecting books since adolescence, and his wife, operated at the Kaunas Cultural Center from 1993 and a few decades ago moved across the street. The bookstore has over 10 thousand books. The oldest one, in Latin, dates to 1677. Imagine: you purchase a book here and then start reading it right there, on the steps of one of the most beautiful houses of Kaunas. Unfortunately, you will not be able to buy a book from the owner's hands. The fellow bibliophiles buried Vidmantas Staniulis in early 2021.

46 KAUNAS VINGAS KUDIRKA PUBLIC LIBRARY

Laisvės Ave. 57

This library or, more precisely, the central branch of an institution with a wide network in the city, has been operating in the former bank building since 1925. It has been recently renovated to meet the needs of a wide range of readers. Vincas Ruzgas, the first head of the reading room, was a real book enthusiast and made great efforts to popularize reading in society. Exhibitions of foreign literature were regularly organized in the library, which also hosted a Pedagogical Museum. To make it even more difficult for Kaunas residents to avoid reading, V. Ruzgas invented mobile libraries that would appear at just the right time in a place with a larger crowd of people. V. Kudirka library continues this tradition and makes sure that the printed word reaches even the most remote corners of Kaunas.

47 KAUNAS COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

Radastų g. 2, K. Donelaičio St. 8

Kaunas studies are a real thing, not something we made up. You will be able to find everything that has been written about Kaunas (we recommend the Žalialaknis almanac Fountain) in this department of Kaunas County Public Library. And it is only one of them! The postmodern building reminiscent of a castle has thousands of books. It also hosts exhibitions, film screenings and other events. The Old and Rare Prints Department located in a historical building on Donelaičio Street is a real treasure trove of thousands of secrets for those who know what they are looking for.

48 KAUNAS ARTISTS' HOUSE

V. Dutvinskio g. 56

This interwar period villa, which never became a Vatican nunciature, has been dominated by art for half a century now. Over 300 events are held here every year, including the rather popular poetry slams. The building accommodates the Kaunas branch of the Lithuanian Writers' Union and an open art and cultural publications' reading room on the first floor.

49 KULTŪRA CAFE

K. Donelaičio g. 16

Located in Kaunas Picture Gallery, the cafe is not only surrounded by street art, but also has an artistic interior that inspires you to immerse yourself in the pages of a book, maybe write or sketch. Posters from historical exhibitions and other unexpected interior details will restore your tired brain.

50 KAUKAS STAIRS

Žemaičių g. / Kauko Aly.

If there is a place in Kaunas where the constant movement up and down does not go against the aura of frozen time, then that place is these stairs designed by architect Stasys Kudokas. They are reminiscent of the golden age of Kaunas and invites you to rush without hurrying. And now, let Judita Vaičiūnaitė's poem, dedicated to these stairs, speak.

Bunches of garberries, the pods of golden wattles, magic whistle, in silence from the sunny precipice the echoes return through the bushes no longer reachable height is sinking deep into the fountain where the clearest spring flows under the granite masks of bulls ...

51 PETRAŠIŪNAI CEMETERY

M. Gimbutienės g. 28

If you would like to pay tribute and bow to the many masters of the word that lived and created in Kaunas (or perhaps returned here only after death), you should visit Petrašiūnai cemetery. "As long-awaited guests / we come into the world / only to disappear after a moment / from here! To remember this journey / on this earth I leave a song / the suffering of which has hope / yet its smile contains suffering," poem by Petras Babickas reads on a monument dedicated to him.

52 LAISVĖS AVENUE

People sang about it, cried about it, walked on it and waited. Some had their first dates there, some rushed to their studies, others came for doughnuts, yet others for coffee and all of them were welcomed by linden trees. Then and now. Whoever wants, can sit down on the benches lined up under the lindens, and if you sit down with a book in your hands, time will pass by in an instant. Suddenly, the night falls, time to get acquainted with Rachelė, a character from Ina Dukulytė's novel Young Ladies from Laisvės Avenue. "Lit by the full moon, Laisvės Avenue was quite cozy. The dark facades of buildings were decorated with garlands of frosted lindens, some shop windows were glowing with Christmas decorations. ... After driving a bit further, she saw the neon signs of cinemas, jazz music was coming from some restaurant, you could hear

