Nora Ikstena: I had a very interesting episode when I went, I was 28 years old, I went to New York. I had a writing grant, and what I did, I printed out the excerpts of my first novel, *Celebration of Life*, translated by my friend Banuta Rubess, and I just, you know, I looked for the addresses of the biggest publishing houses in New York, and I put these excerpts in envelopes, and I sent them. And of course I didn't have any answers, but I had an answer from Soho Press, and the editor, yes, an editor wrote that he wanted to meet me. So we met in the downtown in a pub, and then he said that he went to see this crazy girl from this unknown country who just, you know, putting her excerpts in English and just, you know, sending to the biggest publishing houses to New York [*laughter*]. And then he said to me, “Nora, let's talk now seriously. If you want to be a famous writer, you need to stay in New York and you need to start write in English.” And now I'm saying “Hello Soho,” [*laughter*] still writing in Latvian.

Colin Gioia Connors: Nora Ikstena is one of Latvia’s best known writers today. After her meeting with the editor from Soho Press, she returned to Latvia and published her first novel, *Celebration of Life*. Against the expectations of the Soho editor, it became a best-seller and was translated into several languages. Since then, Nora has published nearly a book a year, including novels, short stories, and biographies. She has won numerous awards for her writing, including the Order of the Three Stars and the Baltic Assembly Prize. Her most recent novel, *Soviet Milk*, has been her greatest success to date. The novel won the Latvian Literature Award for best prose and was so popular in Latvia that people lined up at libraries to get a copy. In order to meet demand, libraries across Latvia instituted a 24-hour loan policy for the book, a policy they had never needed before. Since its first printing in Latvian in 2015, the novel has achieved international fame and has been translated into over 20 languages. Hello Soho, indeed.

*Intro music starts*

Welcome to Crossing North: a podcast where we learn from Nordic and Baltic artists, scholars, and community members to better understand our world, our communities, and ourselves. Coming to you from the Scandinavian Studies Department and Baltic Studies Program at the University of Washington in Seattle, I'm your host Colin Gioia Connors.

*Intro music ends*

The novel *Soviet Milk* spans the history of the Soviet occupation of Latvia from 1944 to 1991. This 47-year occupation undeniably had traumatic consequences for the entire nation, but it can be difficult for individuals who lived through the occupation to communicate that
trauma to younger generations who grew up after the fall of the Soviet Union. Many contemporary Latvian novelists have written about the Occupation, but Soviet Milk struck a national nerve in a way that previous novels had not, a nerve that, for many readers, brought old traumas, feelings, and memories to the surface. I sat down with Soviet Milk author Nora Ikstena for an interview last year following a series of lectures she gave at the University of Washington. Our conversation brings up specific scenes in the novel, so if you are concerned about spoilers you may want to read the novel before you continue listening to the rest of this episode. Nora described her initial book tour through Latvia as more of a psychotherapy session for her readers than a traditional meet-and-greet.

Nora: I was going around for three years, I was going around to, I was in almost all libraries in Latvia, and that was like you said, that was like a psychotherapy thing, so, because people were, you know, telling their stories. And it was like it was not like reading, like meeting writer, because they were standing up and then telling their stories. And I really felt that the book is like healing for them, not only at the book, yes.

Colin: Were they coming and telling their story directly to you, or were they standing up and —

Nora: Yes, they are standing up and telling it publicly. And that was very surprising. That surprised me a lot because, as I said, Latvians are introverts, so they are not used to speak about their traumas or their experience, yes? And that was so nice, I mean, old people like seventy years old, yeah, standing up and telling and then again and again and again. So I was like, you know, I was like a medium between them, yes? It was—it was a great feeling, yeah.

Colin: What made Soviet Milk such a touchstone for the nation? Part of the answer is not only what the book has to say, but how it says it. The novel is narrated in first-person perspective, but from the dual perspective of a mother and her daughter. The narration almost gives the impression of a dialogue between the two characters as each entry from the mother or the daughter is set in relief against the other and the narration switches back and forth between the two voices.

Liina-Ly Roos: We could say it’s kind of like maybe almost like a diary, but not exactly; we don’t know if these people are actually speaking to each other or not, but we as the readers get their perspective, their narrative, constantly switching between the mother and the daughter and about their memories living in Soviet-occupied Latvia, basically.

Colin: This is Assistant Professor Liina-Ly Roos, an expert on Baltic literature and film.

Liina-Ly: The mother is born in the 1940s, just during the occupation when Soviets invaded Latvia. The daughter is born at the end of the 1960s, and both of them start their narratives with saying, ‘I don’t remember, really, the day I was born, but I think I have this bodily memories of what was happening then.’ Because this time in Latvian history is so important and they they feel like they kind of have a memory of it, even though they might not be able to exactly express what that memory is. And so basically the whole novel is this imagined dialogue between the mother and the daughter. And the present day of the narrative, we could say, is about the end of 1970s/1980s as the daughter is growing up in Latvia, and her mother is experiencing really severe depression because—well, there’s probably other reasons for the depression, both psychological and social circumstances that the mother has to suffer from, and the child is trying to help—the daughter is trying to help the mother but it’s not really possible. And so—spoiler alert—I guess...I don’t know, can I say it?

Colin: Go for it, I can always edit it out [*laughs*].

Liina-Ly: That’s true. [*laughs*] So the mother tries to commit suicide several times, and for a few times it doesn’t succeed, but in the end she does succeed. So the novel ends actually in the year where Latvia regains its independence and the mother has already committed suicide, so it’s really kind of sad in the in the sense of this personal story of the family but on the other hand it has a happy
ending for the more collective memory because it remembers, again, this very emotionally high time of Latvian history, Latvian society, but it is, like, made more complex by this traumatic memory.

Colin: The dual narration between the mother and daughter presents a story that speaks across generations, and across the wide range of experiences of those who grew up during the occupation. The novel balances the personal memories of individuals with the collective memories of a nation made to drink the kool aid, or milk, as it were. This is Nora again.

Nora: About the ‘mother’s milk’ or ‘Soviet milk.’ The reason why—why I changed the title to English market, everybody asks me why I did it because the original title is Mother’s Milk: First I think that this symbolic thing in this novel—the mother’s milk—the daughter is not getting her mother’s milk because it’s poisoned, because the mother thinks it’s poison. But it’s not just this mother’s milk, I think it is this milk of our poisoned homeland: what we were supposed to drink during Soviet times. And I think this metaphor of milk, metaphor of mother’s milk, metaphor of homeland milk, it shows this way how—how it was in Soviet times. And Soviet Milk? It works very well, actually, in—in English market. And I had so, so many stories, so many reviews, so many, so interesting reviews about the book that the people are saying that actually they knew statistics about what happened under iron curtain, but they don’t know the real stories what happened behind it, so, they don’t know these real personal stories: what was the life in the, in—in Soviet Latvian at that time?

Colin: Nora was born during the Soviet occupation, and many of the details in Soviet Milk are based on Nora’s own life and people she knew. The novel takes a deep dive into the trauma that many Latvians experienced under Soviet rule by exploring these memories and the way that one person’s experience touched the lives of everyone around them. The story challenges popular narratives of resistance by reminding us that while so often in literature resistance is heroic, in reality often it is not.

Nora: Living under the Soviet regime was a depression by itself, yes, and of course many people didn’t survive, so they didn’t—they didn’t want to—to take it as granted, yes. Of course there were people who—who wanted to live happy lives and who are cooperating with the regime, but there are people, there were people who didn’t want to do that. And in this particular story, can you imagine that the father of the mother: he was deported to Siberia. Then there was a letter saying that he...he died in Siberia. And then afterwards when my—when my personal grandma made a new life, so, he went back. And it was—it was a tragedy for him, it was a tragedy for a daughter, for a child, and also for my grandmother. And he didn’t survive. He drunk himself to death because he thought that the wife and daughter is waiting for him. But that’s how—how the life was, so, I mean, we—we are strong, and we, hopefully we think that we are strong, but we don’t know how we can react under circumstances like—like this.

Colin: Ikstena’s characters all react differently to the difficulties of living and working through an extended period of uncertainty. The novel’s central mother-daughter relationship is, on the one hand, strained by the trauma of the Soviet state, and on the other hand, sustained by the unwavering love of individual Latvians. Both mother and daughter, unnamed in the novel, face unique challenges. Once again, this is Liina-Ly Roos.

Liina-Ly: The mother works as a gynecologist, and she decided to study medicine because she was really interested in bodies in general and, just like, where they come from, and was grappling with this question: why are we born here, and like, what are the conditions where we are born into, and how unfair some of these conditions are for different people, right? So, like, if we think of the mother, who is growing up in the 50’s and the 60’s, she knows that something else is going on in the rest of the world and in Western Europe or America, but she has to live in Soviet Union where she cannot have the freedom to say what she thinks and so forth, and her father was arrested—has been arrested by the Soviet officials, and so on. So she is really, I think in a really interesting way, tries to understand, yeah, why are we born to this world? And so she goes to medicine books and starts reading more and more about it and decides to become a doctor. And so she becomes a gynecologist which means that she actually helps women to bring new babies into
this world and she constantly then is again troubled by this notion: “I'm helping people to bring new people into this world,” into the so-called “cage,” as she feels like she is living in, in the Soviet Latvia.

Nora: When I'm thinking about this time I always have this double feeling because I remember my own memories, my youth memories, my childhood memories, and I have some nostalgic feeling also towards this time because it was my—it was my childhood, it was my youth, and it was the funny things, too, in it. So it was not just a tragic story. And what you said, also, about the self-irony—I, this is, also, I mean—we have such anecdotes about the Soviet times, so that we—we can we can laugh like hell! So for example, I remember my grandma, she was watching news, and then always Brezhnev appeared with with his speeches. And Brezhnev had a very bad prothesis, so and, and the way how he was talking was a very funny way, and always you know, I remember in my childhood that my grandma said, “Oh my god, he will lose his prothesis now, I know! I know this time he will lose [it]!” [*laughter*] And it was like—[*laughs*] you know, it is like such a funny thing, yes. And that's, that's, that's how we were laughing about this, you know, episodes of this, of this, of this stupid regime, yeah.

But from the other hand I have this feeling that we were living, really, we were living in a cage. And in my books there is a metaphor with a hamster in a cage, and the hamster is eating up his children because he doesn't want for them that they face what he lives through, yes. And always the people are saying that it is a very horrible episode in my book, but I think it was, it, it was true, it was true because this mother who is—who wants to save her daughter from this poisoned milk, from her own poisoned milk and this poisoned milk of homeland, she, in a way she wants to save her daughter. And that, that's how it was. I mean all the, like yesterday, we were talking about the KGB deportations and everything, it—it influenced so much people's lives so that it was a very, very tragic history. And, and, now—I mean, when I'm thinking about it—the hundred years we went through—such a, such a very, very difficult history, and we are still there! And that's, that's amazing and we are speaking, you know, our language. We are independent— independent state, and we are in Europe again. So it's a—it's an amazing history.

Colin: Soviet Milk is one of 13 new historical novels that tell the story of Latvia in the 20th century. These novels were written by 13 authors and published as a series called “We. Latvia. The 20th Century.” The series editor worked closely with the authors to ensure the historical accuracy of each novel, but as many of the novels were based on the personal memories of the authors, this sometimes led to conflicts where personal memories and experiences were not to be independently verified.

Nora: They had very, very good and very clever historical editor, and he was going through our manuscript and looking for, you know, small details like looking that the authors are not lying about the history. And we were so upset with him because he was writing like ten emails a day to each author after editing—editing the text. And with my novel it was like this: so he wrote me, “One of your main heroes, [the] daughter, cannot be unconscious before the Kuindzhi work in St. Petersburg, in Hermitage, because it was not in Hermitage; it was in Russian Museum of Art.” And I was so upset because this is my personal memory. I remember it that I was unconscious before the Kuindzhi art in Hermitage, not in the—the Art Museum in St. Petersburg. And I was [*laughs*] going through the archives at that time, and then I found out that for one year Kuindzhi [s Moonlit Night on the Dneiper] was exhibited, on display from the Art Museum of— St. Petersburg Art Museum to Hermitage. And then I wrote to him... “Yes, your personal memory wins.” So!

You know, we were discussing about this because I think for novels like this you need to be precise in details. You cannot use details which are—I mean, you look stupid, yes? But actually— I'm not, me personally as an author, I'm not from those authors who are like, you know, “This is my text. Don't touch it,” yes? I am working with my editor very carefully and I like all the advices of what she gives me. For example, the main hero of in my novel is a doctor gynecologist, so, and my mother's very good friend, she's still—she's still working as a gynecologist, so I was, you know, talking with her how it was in Soviet times. How was the details, how was this horrible things with abortions when the—can you imagine that the doctors made like 10 abortions or 15 abortions a day? So and then they went home and they were drinking themselves till death because they knew what they did, yes? And all these small details which are
very, very important because—I had the reading in Minneapolis where the one doctor came—Janis Dimants—and he said to me, “Wow, I was reading it. How, how do you know all of this?” I said, “Yes, I had advisors.” So you cannot just, you know, write fiction about life [*laughs*].

**Colin:** The novel's commitment to remain within the boundaries of the historical occupation is a large part of its appeal. Without such a grounding in historical fact and autobiographical accounts, a novel like Soviet Milk risks straying into dystopian fantasy. But sometimes the dividing line between reality and fiction is hard to find, especially when real actions by the state seem to be lifted from the pages of some of our most famous literary dystopias.

**Nora:** And I think that for readers is very important to have all these small details of history, small, like, very alive details. For example there is a hero, Winston, who comes of course from 1984 by George Orwell, and the history goes back like this: I discovered that the first translation of 1984 into Latvian was published in 50's in Sweden in an exile publishing house. And then somebody took the book to Latvia, and then afterwards the KGB took the book, and then they, you know, locked it in a special archive. And this archive is—was located at that time in a church in a city where I still live—in Ikskile. It's a small city near Riga. And then what the KGB did, they just took off the covers because they didn't want to show the author and the title of the book, and then—can you imagine this young doctor woman in my book, that she is getting the text without the author, not knowing anything about George Orwell, not knowing anything about 1984, and she just reading the text and realizing that she lives in this text because it is what it is about.

**Colin:** I sat down with Assistant Professor Liina-Ly Roos to discuss how Nora's novel manages to walk this fine line between dystopian reality and dystopian fiction and still balance so many complex memories with grace and humor.

**Liina-Ly:** One thing that I have noticed in both Estonian and Latvian literature in the last five years or so is that writers really like to incorporate the perspective of the child, of somebody who grows up just like this, who's born in the 60's. And we do get the mother's perspective, too, but still I think the child, I would say, is the main character of the narrative because, I don't know why, it seems like it's more from her perspective. And we get the mother's experience in a very intimate way as well, but it is through the child's perspective. And so there have been a lot of discussions because the way that writers use the child's eyes is to show the ordinary life of Soviet Union, Soviet occupation, and it is really interesting for the generations who didn't grow up in that time, because first of all it helps them to realize how traumatic it was, because the child is very aware of how badly this has affected the mother's life and how did—how much the depression, I think definitely, is...is impacted by the Soviet occupation. Depression is—has a lot of psychological issues, too, of course, and it's not only about social environment, but oftentimes the environment can just impact it so much more, and we see that from the child's perspective. But on the other hand she is living an ordinary life, an ordinary childhood, whatever that means, right? And of course not everybody in the Soviet occupation maybe was able to have a happy childhood, but a lot of people did, and I would argue that even this child in a way had a happy childhood just because she had her grandparents, she had her schoolmates, she was—she was kind of enjoying sometimes just walking through the forest like a regular child perhaps would, right? And so even though she's aware of this traumatic reality around her, she's also just a child. And I think that's really important for the way that people remember the Soviet occupation because in the 1990's a typical kind of grand narrative of cultural memory was, “We were victimized. That's all. It was all awful, there was no happy days. Nothing.” And Soviet occupation, the whole 50 years, was seen as this long disruption of a linear history of the nation-state, right? And so basically the danger with that kind of thinking was that those who were born during the 50 years, their memories, their experiences don't really—they're not as important unless they're this, like, something that contributes to the narrative of only trauma, right? Otherwise nothing that happened was really significant. So we have to go back to 1940/1939 when Estonia was first invaded, or Latvia was first invaded, and we have to, like, build our country up from that point—which is not possible. You can't just ignore 50 years. And so I think that the way that Ikstena uses the child's everyday, the ordinary life, shows us that there were traumatic experiences, and they were very difficult, but there were also ordinary days. There were also people who went about their life. They resisted in some small ways, but they sometimes had to make very difficult choices:
decide where to give in and where not, just in order to survive their life, right? And I think that that's what really, yeah, makes this last eight or five years of literature in Latvia really interesting and different from the 1990's.

And just to add to this topic of happy childhood: Estonian president a couple years ago said, “It’s not possible that anybody had a happy childhood in the Soviet occupation.” And that's kind of an interesting way of, like, an official authority to say how one is supposed to feel or even remember feeling—who can say actually what somebody's emotions were at that moment, and if somebody did feel happiness, are they just supposed to pretend that they didn't? What does it mean for the national memory or for the collective memory? So I think that, again, that's why Soviet Milk is really good, because it shows that there were a lot of complex narratives of memory for people. So there's almost like this other level to that concept, too. So on one hand we have this balance of being aware of the traumatic reality but living your ordinary childhood, which can also be happy and shouldn't be forbidden to be happy by anybody in the—from the future, but then you have also this utopian idea—ideology of the Soviet Union, that all the children are happy, and are on the children's magazines on posters all over the country. There’s a lot of smiling children, and the communist youth, and the pioneers, right? Like all these organizations, children are very important for the politics of Soviet Union, and the ‘smiling child’ is very typical for one to see. So I think that adds another layer to this because—so lots of people probably have written about it already, but one historian writes about emotions and these in Eastern Europe says that sometimes the feeling of despair or depression was just a way to resist this kind of utopian ideology of politics of emotions from the Soviet Union. So you have that there, and then you have the trauma and the reality and the real sadness that comes from losing somebody close to you or losing your freedom, and then there's the ordinary life that's still happy sometimes. So it's like three different kinds of emotions constantly playing with each other and sometimes impacting each other. So it's this, like, double life that Nora talked about here comes up, I think, really interestingly with this emotions.

And then secondly thinking about the double life and what she said about ‘mother’s milk,’ or the ‘Soviet milk,’ the milk as a poisoned milk of homeland made me think of how motherhood and mothers were depicted in the Soviet politics, too. Again, this ‘good mother’ was this very often used trope to say every woman in Soviet Union has to be a good mother. They have to be—and [*sarcastically*] their children are these ‘smiling children’ who are happy with the Soviet politics, and the mother is a strong woman who works in the factory and has this wonderful children. And I think that now, this mother in Ikstena's novel also understands the troubling double-sided-ness of that image. Of course she wants to help people to have babies who want to have babies, but then what does it, like—is she kind of helping to create this image of a ‘good mother’ because mothers are so valued in Soviet Union? Like, should one just not have children as a resistance to the Soviet politics? I think that is a question that's in the head of the mother, although she doesn't explicitly express it that way, but she very much grapples with what does it mean to give birth to this cage or to help people give birth. So this doubling images of motherhood are also very important.

Colin: Can you give more context on why the prime minister said this thing that you can't have a happy memory under—

Liina-Ly: Why the president—

Colin: —err, the president.

Liina-Ly: I think that it was 2016 when she said that. And people are trying to understand what it means to have a traumatic memory for a nation. People—Russia, for example, has still not really acknowledged the traumatic experience that it caused for so many countries that it occupied. So I think that especially those people who are on more official positions for a country and have some sort of a say to how do we identify ourselves a nation, which always has a memory. Like memory has such an important part for a nation-collective-unified-whatever identity, but, and so I think that these people just feel like they have to present some sort of singular narrative, and yeah I think that's the main reason why the president felt the need to do that. Perhaps it's also a reaction to the writers
starting to write from the perspective of the children, right, as I mentioned, the last, almost a decade, I would say now—so many different stories that present this ordinary life of a child. Maybe that's also another reason why president felt like—but this was not, you know, maybe it's like a worry that it's gonna go to the other extreme and people are gonna believe that Soviet Union wasn't that bad, because there are people who say that, unfortunately. Somebody just recently asked me, “But was Soviet occupation that bad, really?” And I wanted to say, “Have you not read... history books?” So then I wanted to go to the same space almost as the president and say, [*emphatically*] “Think about the tens of thousands of people who died! Think about all these traumatic experiences!” —while I as a researcher always want to, kind of, not only talk about the trauma but also talk about the normal life, the ordinary life. It's a very—the balance is important. [*laughs*] I think Nora Ikstena's book tries to—tries to find the balance, and that's maybe why this two-narrator form of the book is really helpful. And speaking of, kind of maybe, a multi-voiced discourse—a lot of the previous novels—I'm more familiar with Estonian literature but also I've read quite a lot of Latvian, and there's a lot of similarities—when novels that were depicting similar kind of time periods, traumatic Soviet occupation, also Nazi occupation before it for three years, there are oftentimes dialogues within narrative, but it's often between the perpetrators and the victims, trying to understand each other, trying to understand why the perpetrator would choose to, let's say, say that their neighbor should be sent to Siberia because they want their house. That's what happened, too. It's very important that novels were starting to show that not all Estonians were victims, not all Latvians were victims, there were also perpetrators among them. So there's a lot of, kind of, multi-voiced narratives between these different positions, but why Nora Ikstena's book is—is—differs from that is that it puts into dialogue two people who are both in a way victims of the system of the oppression but experience it in a very different way and they also resolve—it resolves itself to them in a very different way. So yeah, the balance, balance of memories.

**Colin:** What's the effect of not having names for these characters?

**Liina-Ly:** Perhaps it is, yeah, it would be hard to say. Is this—this does not represent the story of everybody in Latvia. But I think that because she uses so many different characters who mother and daughter are meeting, and this kind of dialogue between generations, it helps people to recognize certain things from their life, I think, —either the daughter's experience or the mother's experience. So I think that perhaps kind of serves a therapeutic value for the readers, but I think that perhaps one of the values of the novel, too, is that even though it can speak to a lot of people in Latvia, it does not attempt to represent the grand narrative of collective memory. It's just a story of a family at the same time. So I think that's really nice during the time when it could be tempting to find some sort of a single unified narrative, which always excludes some people. But I think I like that she wants to have the facts and details of history correct even if—even if this is not autobiography, because it is such an important story for Latvians, for other people who were occupied by Soviet Union, that that is what makes it more relatable to people, that they realize this kind of story could have very easily happened and probably did to many of them, or as we said earlier, people recognize certain details or certain parts of these stories. But if they saw, “Okay, this is not possible, this couldn't have happened because this painting was never in the Hermitage,” then it kind of, perhaps, takes some of the recognition away because then you think, “Okay, maybe this is all made up. It's just a dystopia.” [The] difference between reality and dystopia, I guess. [It] is important.

**Colin:** Right, then you have that question of is this just that political propagandic response, either for or against, because we're dealing with very—with memories that get used in political ways, and that has consequences for people's lives.

**Liina-Ly:** Absolutely, and one very famous memory theorist, Pierre Nora, said this term, 'sites of memory,' right, that people—that there are these certain sites of memory that people have in their collective memories of nations or families or even personal memories, but recent theorists who work with memories a lot say it's a little bit not as correct to say a 'site of memory' because often the way it's used is like a very national, rigid site of memory which has not changed, and that's where we get this grand narratives that exclude certain people's experiences, such as that there's no happiness or that there's only happiness, right? And instead we should talk about 'dynamics of memory' or—because memory is constantly fluctuating, right? And I think that's where we get to this balance.
And who can say what is balance? But I think a novel that shows memory that is in fluctuation is the best kind of novel to deal with memory because it doesn't claim that it has all the answers, or doesn't claim some sort of grand narrative. It's just about people's lives.

[*Outro music starts*]

**Colin:** To learn more about Nora Ikstena and her writing look for the link in the show notes and on our website to her profile on Latvian literature, where you can find a catalogue of her publications, translation, and reviews of her work. Special thanks to Liina-Ly Roos, who completed her PhD in 2018 at the University of Washington. She recently accepted a position as Assistant Professor in Scandinavian Studies in the Nordic Unit of the Department of German, Nordic, and Slavic at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Crossing North is a production of the Scandinavian Studies Department and Baltic Studies Program at the University of Washington in Seattle. Today's episode was written, edited, and produced by me, Colin Gioia Connors. Special thanks to Visiting Lecturer of Danish Kristian Næsby. Today's music was used with permission by Kristján Hrannar Pálsson. Links to his music can be found in the show notes for this episode or on our website. Visit scandinavian.washington.edu to learn more about the podcast and other exciting projects hosted by the Scandinavian Studies Department. If you are a current or prospective student, consider taking a course or declaring a major. If you liked this episode, sign up for SCAND 152A: Introduction to Latvian Literary and Cultural History, and while you're at it, sign up for a Latvian language course, too. The University of Washington is the only university in the country to offer language courses in all three Baltic languages: Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian. You can find complete course listings for the Scandinavian Studies Department and Baltic Studies Program at scandinavian.washington.edu. Once again, that's scandinavian.washington.edu.

[*Outro music ends*]

**SHOW NOTES**

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Learn more about [Nora Ikstena](#).

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