

<https://www.bookwitty.com/text/interview-author-pauls-bankovskis>

Go

MAY

JUN

JUL



25

2018

2017

2019



1 capture

25 Jun 2018

About this capture

We think that you are in **United States** and that you would prefer to view Bookwitty in **English**. We will display prices in **United States Dollar (USD)**.

Ok. Thank you

Modify Country and Language

Please note that we are not able to fulfill any orders at the moment. We apologize for the inconvenience. In the meantime, feel free to enjoy the content on our site. Also, join [this mailing list](#) to get notified when our service is back.



## Interview: Author Pauls Bankovskis on Latvian Identity and Science Fiction

By [Olivia Snaije](#)

May 24, 2018

Wit

(2)



In his lifetime, Latvian author Pauls Bankovskis has lived through enough historical changes to provide ample material for his novels.

<https://www.bookwitty.com/text/interview-author-pauls-bankovskis>

Go

MAY

JUN

JUL

25

2017

2018

2019



About this capture

1 capture

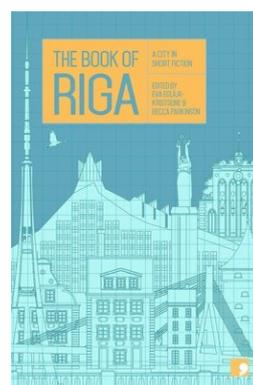
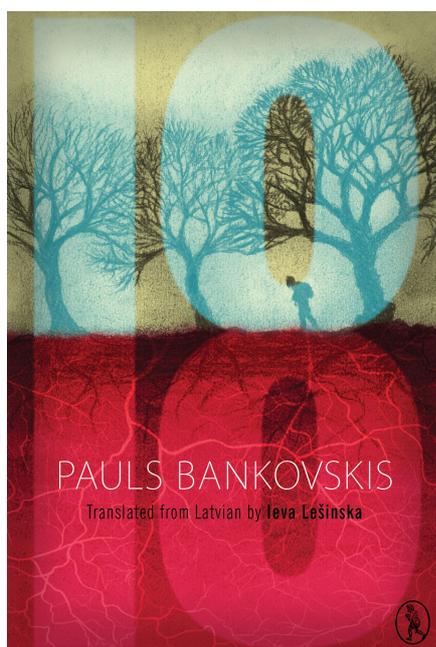
25 Jun 2018

which had been occupying Latvia uninterrupted since 1944. This set into motion a process that ultimately led to Latvia freeing itself, but not before non-violent protests were held, and blood was shed.

“My formative years were during the Soviet occupation,” said Bankovskis. “I began my studies at university because otherwise I would have been conscripted into the Soviet army. It was really a very messy time. Everything was happening at once—an economic crisis, Soviet soldiers still here, everybody feeling they were in front of an unknown future, and all this before the Internet. The last Soviet soldiers left in 1994.”

In all likelihood because of Latvia’s painful history of invasions, occupations, and wars, like most Latvian authors, history is usually present in Bankovskis’ work and he doesn’t shy away from uncomfortable subjects either, such as collaboration, or the massacre of Riga’s Jews. But what is uncommon about his writing in a nation where the historical novel genre is customary, is that he has increasingly started to insert elements of science fiction and fantasy into his work.

He has just finished the draft of his newest book and describes it as an intersection where “history meets my love for science fiction and fantasy. I wanted to find a point from where I could look back at history and the present, so I jumped into the future. It’s the first time I’ve done this and it’s really interesting and I’m enjoying it.”



There are aspects of time traveling in his book [18](#), recently translated by Ieva Lešinska into English. Published by [Vagabond Voices](#), it is part of [We.Latvia.The](#)

https://www.bookwitty.com/text/interview-author-pauls-bankovskis

Go

MAY

JUN

JUL

25

2017

2018

2019



1 capture

25 Jun 2018



About this capture

1918, the year Latvia had previously proclaimed its independence, before the Soviet invasion.

“People always ask me how I ended up with the most important date. This all started with a chain email exchange between all of us [writers]. Somehow during the exchange we ended up with a time frame. Maybe no one wanted this year...but in retrospect I would consider myself crazy to choose it..”

The one question that Bankovskis wanted to address, and one that he says remains relevant today, is “do we need our own state? This is self-evident for British people, in France and even in Italy, which is quite young. Latvians are still asking themselves this question in the 21st century. Even as a member of the European Union and with everything that is happening with Russia and in the Ukraine. Throughout the novel I wanted to create a character who has no answer to the question and then gradually becomes aware of the fact that he *does* need his own country.”

The present-day protagonist in *18* finds a digital camera in the pocket of his grandfather’s overcoat. It’s a mystery, as are the photographs, which are out of focus and suggest the same landscape but not the same period of time. Simultaneously, almost one hundred years earlier, a Latvian soldier who has deserted the army, wanders through a country in chaos precipitated by the Russian Revolution. As he travels, he ponders on time, space, freedom, and humanity. Towards the end we discover the connection between the protagonist and the soldier.

Bankovskis continues to examine Latvian identity in one way or another in all of his work. Language is one defining factor, he says, because even if language is not used “in a political sense, the roots of our language are very important. It’s one of the oldest in the Indo-European branch and Lithuanian is the only other. We still have many words that are directly connected to Sanskrit.”

(One of his favorite authors is the American [Ted Chiang](#), whose “Story of your life”, a science fiction novella, is in large part about linguistics.)

Another theme with ancient roots that Bankovskis has delved into is religion. One of the last regions in Europe to become Christian, Latvia’s largest congregation is now Lutheran, but Catholics and Orthodox Christians retain an important presence.

https://www.bookwitty.com/text/interview-author-pauls-bankovskis

Go

MAY

JUN

JUL

25

2017

2018

2019



1 capture

25 Jun 2018



About this capture

*Secrets*, Bankovskis wrote about the *starovery*, or [Old Believers](#) who “ran away from persecution to far away districts in the woods in Latvia. They are still present here in a tightly knit community and my novel is centered on it. When the book was published, my phone rang and somebody said ‘is your name such and such? We are calling from the society of Old Believers and we would like to invite you to discuss your book.’ I thought uh oh, I’ve done something wrong. When I went there, I entered a small room with a round table and there were several serious men sitting there with beards, my book was in the center of the table with many notes in it and they wanted to know how I knew so much [about them]. At first I was very scared. But they were happy that someone had taken an interest in them.”

*Secrets* and mysteries sometimes extend into the supernatural world for Bankovskis, as in his short story, “The Night Shift”, translated by Mārta Ziemelis. “The Night Shift” is included in a collection of stories entitled [The Book of Riga](#). It begins with a discussion between public transportation ticket collectors about a dreaded and mysterious bus that is possibly a shapeshifter:

“This group of people talked about things they hadn’t experienced themselves. The things they said were stories that had been retold countless times, tossed back and forth and pondered repeatedly.”

This retelling of stories is also the subject of Bankovskis’ forthcoming novel in English, *Red, Rats and Rock’n’Roll* with [Jantar Publishing](#), translated by Richard Kalnin. Set in Soviet-occupied Latvia in the 1980s, he sought to recreate “the claustrophobic feeling which came from a systemic lack of information. There were only rumors but there was no evidence and people compensated by gossiping and story telling. In the end you never knew what was real.”

But reality doesn't seem to be a place Bankovskis particularly likes for his books. For the moment he is giving reign to his passion for science fiction and is enjoying projecting himself into the future, distancing himself from current-day Latvia. He says he never suffers from writer’s block and likes “to do unconventional things. This motivates me, to try something new.”

## Tags

https://www.bookwitty.com/text/interview-author-pauls-bankovskis  MAY JUN 25 2018 2017 2019 JUKOVSKIS     

1 capture  
25 Jun 2018 literature

## Olivia Snaije

Olivia is a Paris-based journalist and editor.

**Follow**

### Found this article relevant?

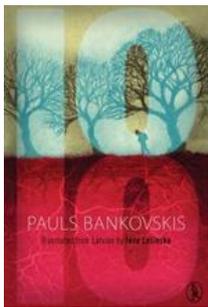
kaji muxin and Zoo Flix found this witty

**Wit**

(2)



### Related Books



**18**

Pauls Bankovskis  
Paperback  
**Unavailable**



**The Book of Riga**

and Juris Zvirgzdins  
Andra Neiburga Ilze...  
Paperback  
**Unavailable**

**Link a Book**

https://www.bookwitty.com/text/interview-author-pauls-bankovskis

Go

MAY JUN JUL

25

2017 2018 2019



About this capture

1 capture

25 Jun 2018

Write a comment

### 3 Related Posts

Olivia Snajje

on March 6, 2018



## Interview: Latvian author Osvalds Zebris on Courage and Moral Choices

Latvian author Osvalds Zebris, whose forthcoming novel, *In the Shadow of Rooster Hill*, takes place in Riga in 1905, talks about courage, moral choices and national identity.

kaji muxin, Sidonie Mézaize, Salander and one other person found this witty

Wit

(4)

<https://www.bookwitty.com/text/interview-author-pauls-bankovskis>

Go

MAY

JUN

JUL



25

2017

2018

2019



About this capture

1 capture

25 Jun 2018

Olivia Snajje

on February 2, 2018



## Soviet Milk: an Interview with Latvian author Nora Ikstena

An interview with Latvian author Nora Ikstena about her book, *Soviet Milk*, which is the autobiographical story of a doctor and her daughter under Soviet rule.

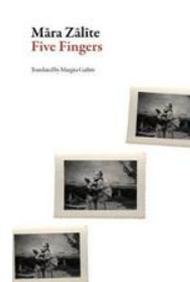
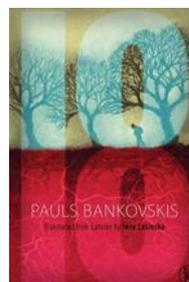
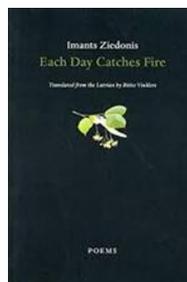
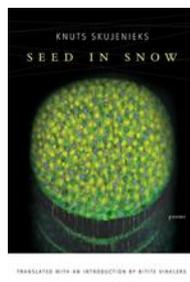
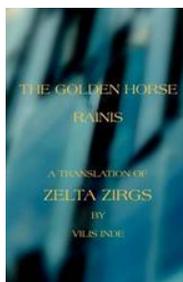
kaji muxin, Salander , Damien and 7 others found this witty

Wit

(10)

Olivia Snajje

on March 13, 2018



## Poetry and Literature From Latvia: 16 Books to Get You Started

16 Books

https://www.bookwitty.com/text/interview-author-pauls-bankovskis

Go

MAY

JUN

JUL

25

2017

2018

2019



1 capture

25 Jun 2018

About this capture

its 100th anniversary of re-found independence while still searching for its identity.

kaji muxin, Salander , Bookwitty and one other person found this witty

Wit

(4)

Link a Post

## Read Next



Bookwitty Interviews

<https://www.bookwitty.com/text/interview-author-pauls-bankovskis>

Go

MAY

**JUN**

JUL

◀ 25 ▶

2017

**2018**

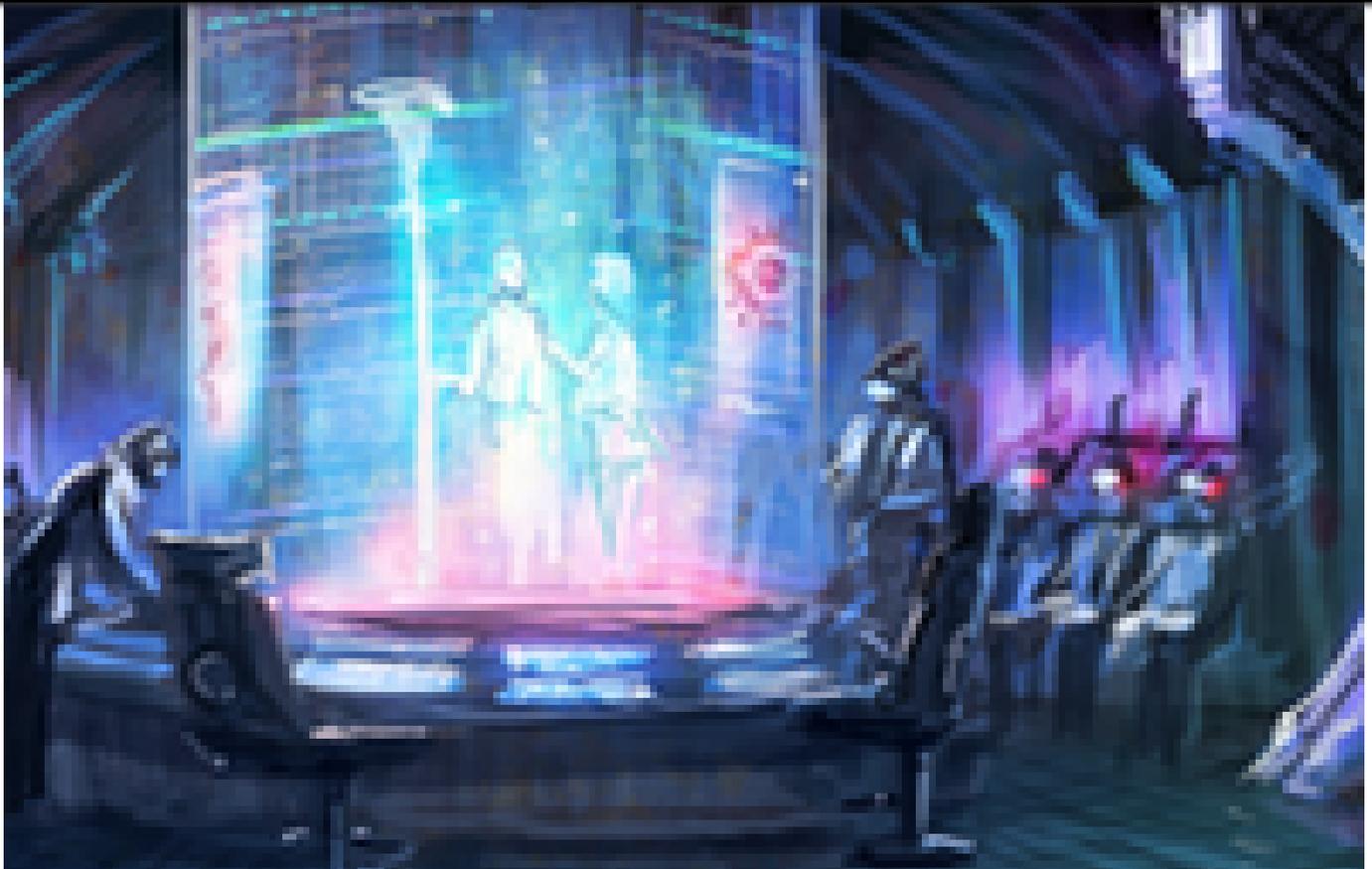
2019



1 capture

25 Jun 2018

About this capture



Science Fiction



The 2018 London Book Fair

<https://www.bookwitty.com/text/interview-author-pauls-bankovskis>

Go

MAY

**JUN**

JUL

◀

**25**

▶

2017

**2018**

2019



▼ About this capture

1 capture

25 Jun 2018



## European Literature

https://www.bookwitty.com/text/interview-author-pauls-bankovskis

Go

MAY

JUN

JUL

25

2017

2018

2019



1 capture

25 Jun 2018

About this capture



Pauls Bankovskis

Need Help?

Shipping & Returns

Join the Team

Careers

Share

Get to Know Us

Your Link

Copy

https://www.bookwitty.com/text/interview-author-pauls-bankovskis-on-latvian/5af2927

https://www.bookwitty.com/text/interview-author-pauls-bankovskis

Go

MAY

JUN

JUL



25

2017

2018

2019



1 capture

25 Jun 2018

Get in Touch

About this capture

Contact Us

### Bookwitty Partner Network

Partner Network

Affiliation Program

eCommerce Solutions

Book Distribution

### Follow Us



[Sign In](#) or [Create Account](#)

 [US](#)

Language: [English](#)

Currency: [USD](#)

[Terms of Use](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

[Use of Cookies](#)

© 2017, Bookwitty.com, Inc. or its affiliates

