

The Sagas
Eric Pepke 23 January 2019

I need to write a book. I cannot do it, so I am writing these sagas instead.

The book will not be about me. I am just the tiniest pinhole. All I can do ever do is focus an image of the world onto a rectangle. This is far too big a job, and there is no way I can ever do it. I tell myself I will some day, knowing it is a lie.

The book will be through me. It will be about my experience as an American political prisoner, and how I learned that nothing I once believed about America ever existed and about how nobody cares.

I cannot write the book. Instead, like C.M. Kornbluth's wino doctor, I play a cruel game with myself. I pretend I secreted away a bottle but forgot where. I search frantically until I am nothing but a pair of bloody knuckles pounding the wall. That's all I ever was: a pair of bloody knuckles pounding the wall. I do it anyway, because that is all there is to do.

The only difference is that it is not an imaginary bottle. It's humanity, not only my own.

I tell myself, if only I could look once again into a dog's eyes, I might remember believing love and trust were real. If only I could write a Perl script to turn the facts I know into a yEd picture, I might see a pattern. If only I could go to law school to get a JD, I might be able to help some people who want to be helped. If only one friend I respected has stayed and not betrayed or abandoned me, I might feel part of some species. If only I could go far enough that the government could not drag me back again arbitrarily, I might be able to think. If only there were an independent press anywhere in the world. If only Americans cared about their own civil and human rights. If only. If only. If only.

I know these thoughts are futile. I know my sense of futility might be wrong, but still I know I'm right. But what else is there to do? Thomas Disch's heads expound until they rot, even when all there remains to say is how it feels to rot and how pointless it is to say so. What else can a head do?

Since I cannot write the book, I'm writing this. I don't know what it is. Maybe it's a harbinger of the book. Maybe it's part of the book. Maybe it's everything that is not the book, and it leaves a book-shaped hole. I have no idea.

I don't know exactly whom I am writing this for. It might be myself in the past, when for some reason, I wanted to help people. I wanted to fight for civil rights, but I didn't know just how bad things were. I didn't know how terrible the law and the government were or what to say about them. I didn't yet know that nobody cared about their own rights. No matter how many stories of injustice and videos of police shootings I saw, I thought they would not happen to me. (Do you think that about yourself? It's wrong.) I didn't know that the only result of my efforts would be my reflexive destruction by the inhuman machine by the all-too-human government. Do I imagine I can send information back in time to warn or arm my former self?

Or do I want to leave a message for my future self? Do I want to tell myself to write a book and how to write it? Or do I want to tell myself not to write a book, lest the government notice and do it again? Do I want to show I have nothing to lose or nothing to gain or both? It's a mystery to me.

Or is this a message in a bottle for a fish or the smoke from a burnt offering for the nostrils of a deity? Will there be a future historian or archaeologist trying to figure out just what went wrong and why nobody stopped it when they still could?

I don't know any of this, but I am writing anyway.

We get a lot of sagas in prison. One of the DOJ-recognized religions is Asatru, roughly the old Northern European people like in the Led Zeppelin song, the ones who really didn't have horns on their helmets, because who wants to go into battle with handles on your head?

Of course, in prison, it isn't really Asatru. It's Odinism, cooked up by Elsa Christenson, the husband of a paleo-Nazi, to give neo-Nazis something to pervert into an ideology of hate. It's great for people who think that Christianity is too Jewish.

In any event, a lot of books about sagas and runes come in from various Asatru ministries. The Wiccans tend to snap up the rune books for Dungeons and Dragons. I read the sagas.

People are impressed by the word "saga" and think it means something big and mythological. That isn't really true. Sure, there are some parts about ugly female giants, and they sew rings on their tunics, but most sagas are short and almost trite. They are a little bit like this:

Bignose was the name of a man. He came from somewhere cold and now lives in Bignosia. He had a knife. He went around sticking it into living things, and they died. One day a sheep bit him on the knee and he died. The end.

For some reason I do not understand, I like sagas, so I thought I'd try some of my own.

Eric Pepke was the name of a man. He cared about civil rights, even for people with different skin colors. He wrote about them. The government didn't like this and decided to destroy him, and so they did. As he lay dying, he discovered that none of the people cared about their own civil rights. He wrote more anyway. The end.