

the only active doers of good here. Thomas always asks for "the whole story," the *summa*, as it were, and it is he who produces those electrically lit holy statuettes, or brings the light of Aristotelian reason into Christian faith. He is, like Saint Thomas, a man of various skills and knowledge, his Italianness suggested by the plastic spaghetti, as well as by real ones he feeds

to George. And there is also a reproduction of the *Mona Lisa* on his refrigerator, which connects the greatest medieval mind, Thomas's, with the supreme Renaissance one, Leonardo's. The eponymous *Mona Lisa*, of course, is the aloof Simone, whom George describes as a tart but a lady, and, beyond that, feminine nature itself, underscored by Nat King Cole on the

soundtrack at the start and finish of the film, as he sings, "Are you warm, are you real, *Mona Lisa*? Or just a cold and lonely lovely work of art?"

The mostly but not exclusively fairytale symbolism lurks in almost every aspect of the film. Thus the villain's name is Mortwell, dispenser of death; his chief henchman, a sadistic black pimp, is called Anderson, with indu-

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## THE RIGHT BOOKS / CHILTON WILLIAMSON JR.

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ACCORDING TO Roger J. Magnuson, a trial lawyer in Minneapolis and the author of *Are Gay Rights Right?* (Straitgate Press, 2200 West 66th Street, Suite 190, Minneapolis, Minn. 55423; \$7), the word "rights" is, in the context, as much a misnomer as the word "gay." His well-argued, well-written little treatise is making its mark among state legislatures, city councils—even the sodomite camp—across the country. After remarking the degree to which the "gay-rights" movement "shows the mystifying power of language to forge a consensus based on language" (to play, that is to say, upon the power of the God-word "rights" and the devil-word "discrimination"), Magnuson proceeds to outline his fundamental argument, namely that, insofar as the test in question is one of behavior rather than of status, homosexuals cannot be considered a suitable subject for civil- or human-rights legislation, without legislating on their behalf legislative privileges rather than equal, or even compensatory, ones. Magnuson says:

Homosexuals can be characterized by what they do (sodomy) and with whom they do it (their own sex). What "gay-rights" laws ask for is a special privilege for homosexuals not generally available to other groups, like those which commit incest, adultery, bestiality, sex with minors, or, for that matter, any other criminal or anti-social behavior.

Without "gay rights," homosexuals have already all the rights enjoyed by all other races, religions, and classes in America: They have free speech, freedom of assembly, the right to adhere to the religion of their choice, freedom of travel, the right of *habeas corpus*, and so forth. What they do not have is the "right" to approbation, whether social or moral; the "right"

to have their "preference" accepted, or honored, or, for that matter, tolerated: a "plight" they share with all other citizens of the United States, who (in searching, let us say, for an apartment to rent) may find themselves "discriminated" against because they like Verdi on the stereo, or because (as practitioners of "straight" sex) they have children, or because they have pets, or because their prospective landlord does not like the cut of their jib. "Homosexuals," Magnuson argues,

have never been able to demonstrate a convincing pattern of discrimination that causes them substantial socioeconomic injury. . . . Their actions are not morally neutral. Reasonable people—for reasons of deep-seated moral conviction, of health, of psychological stability, or of common sense—may wish to take a person's homosexual lifestyle into account in their decision-making, all without the slightest tinge of bigotry or irrationality.

What homosexuals want is nothing less than the power "to coerce others into not taking into account [their] inclination to practice sodomy . . . even when those others, including parents, employers, or landlords, have contrary convictions. The result is expanding the privileges given to homosexuals and shrinking the rights of other citizens."

Because of the political value accruing to the status of unchangeability, it is a chief tenet of gay activism that homosexuality is genetically acquired, that homosexuals are simply "born that way." New research, however, has tended to disprove this theory; just as, in the past 25 years or so, research has disproved the notion—commonly held at the beginning of this century—that alcoholics are incurable. There is in fact in Minnesota an organization called Homosexuals Anonymous, which seeks to treat homosexual behavior the way Alcoholics Anonymous treats

alcoholics. (Imagine, Magnuson suggests, an "Alcoholics' Pride Day," or an "Adulterers' Pride Day," sympathetically treated by the media and for which all the local politicians show up.) The fact is that homosexuality can be cured, that "gay" people know better than anyone how little gaiety there really is in their lives, and that encouraging homosexuals in their vice is precisely like encouraging an alcoholic in his quotidian indulgence. There is, moreover, plenty of reason to believe that homosexuality, devastating to the homosexual himself, is damaging also to society, threatened as it is by a "subgroup of citizens with serious psychological and medical problems who, because they cannot procreate, must recruit." In so fundamental a matter as sex, Magnuson believes, society has every right to attempt to influence certain kinds of behavior, while discouraging—by criminalization, if necessary—certain others.

After almost twenty years of gay-rights activism the pattern seems to be clear: Elective groups, such as city councils, pass bills and ordinances "protecting" gays; these measures, outrageous in themselves, are stretched by the courts into the grotesque shapes latent in their inherent radicalism; an appalled citizenry votes for the repeal of the offending measures by overwhelming majorities. Certainly homosexuals must be protected in their constitutional rights; certainly "the homosexual is . . . a proper subject for the exercise of compassion on a personal basis," as Magnuson puts it. But the fact is that while, as a victim of himself, the homosexual is an object of pity, as a "victimized" aggressor against the society he hates, he is to be despised. And will be, as AIDS, cynical legislation, and gay rage have their ultimate effect. □