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The remaking of the face of the family through adoption is visible in the groundswell of support for and Herculean efforts of social workers to locate adoptive families for special-needs children in foster care. Recent studies of the success of these efforts strongly suggest both that significant segments of the special-needs population are more likely to thrive in non-traditional family settings and that couples committed to creating new concepts of family design are more open to adopting special-needs children. The idea that adoption agencies may devote resources to attracting gay and lesbian couples or single individuals to adopt special-needs children has inspired those opposed to the formation of such families to lobby for the codification of marriage-based preferences in the adoption of special-needs children. In one popular iteration of this stance, legislation should mandate a preference for heterosexually married couples in all placements of children out of foster care. Unmarried couples and single individuals should be permitted to adopt only the most difficult-to-place children and only after searching scrutiny of their motives for parenthood. In Michael Arditti's *Pagan's Father* (originally published as *Pagan and Her Parents*), a single gay man becomes the target of a legal system incapable of considering him a proper parent of his deceased friend's child, despite all indications that he has been a loving and responsible guardian since her birth. This paper will reflect on how Arditti's novel is a mirror of contemporary controversies in special-needs adoption through its skillful description of the numerous legal and practical obstacles faced by determined adoptive parents who, emerging from the fray, prove themselves to be precisely the kind of ideal parents the legal system presumes they cannot be.

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