

menting on the wind: "It has damaged the crops and covered them with sand, filled up the ditches and made it very unpleasant, but our Heavenly Father must know what this wind is for."

## Moral Tales for Our Times

GEORGE D. SMITH, JR.

*Chloe in the Afternoon*, a film by Eric Rohmer.

*Chloe* is the last and one of the most evocative of Eric Rohmer's "Six Moral Tales." The previous stories include *La Collectionneuse*, *My Night at Maud's*, *Clair's Knee*, and two shorter works for television.

These films, in contrast to the standard action movie, portray internal moral conflict involving decision more than action and verbal more than physical expression; they are literate and philosophical. Rohmer's stories are usually about a man who has made a decision to be true to one woman being tempted by another. The character then struggles with a moral choice which becomes more and more intense.

In *Chloe*, a happily married man is shown in a comfortable, somewhat uneventful existence. His wife teaches school and the evenings are spent quietly; he reads while she corrects papers. The duration of silence, brief smiles and small talk is punctuated by the ticking of a clock. He plays affectionately with his children in the morning before going to the office where things seem pretty much under control: two attractive secretaries, a few phone calls and ample time to walk about Paris in the afternoon.

Strolling after lunch in the afternoon is tempting but harmless. It is a time for introspection, for reflection upon his relationship with women, defining his sense of maleness. He catches the eye of one striking Parisienne after another—but only for a moment. In a literate ambiance he narrates his thoughts to us—how stunning each passing woman is, how he is reminded of past days when he might pursue and win the affections of such women. Now, he assures himself, he is satisfied with a glance, sufficient to indicate that there might be a mutual attraction. He tells himself, perhaps trying to convince himself, that these fleeting moments of eye contact along the avenue only serve to remind him of how much he loves his wife. Further, they make him love her more.

Enter Chloe, previous lover who unexpectedly reasserts herself in his life, showing up at his office and eventually accompanying him on his walks in the afternoon. He finds an interest in Chloe somewhat akin to the brief visual engagements with the various anonymous females he sees on his walks. But he has known Chloe, she knows him, and she is there repeatedly, persistently. At one point while visiting Chloe at a dress shop where she is temporarily working, he watches her change clothes. She is strong willed and invites him to make love to her. He is tempted but resists.

The story is subtle and the tension builds casually. Boy meets girl, but a lot happens before he does or doesn't get her. The involvement is internal, a test of

will. The presumption of an underlying moral commitment creates tension which would not exist in an amoral story where attraction to a woman would find easy resolution.

Without understanding the protagonist's moral commitment, and perhaps impatient with the internal, cerebral "action" that takes place as he faces a conflict between his loyalty to his wife and the continuous beckoning of Chloe's body, some viewers have interpreted his resisting temptation as a lack of decisiveness or masculinity. His reaction to Chloe is certainly atypical in contemporary society. He shows restraint even though he finds Chloe appealingly tempting. Because he delays his decision until the last possible moment, his decision is made more difficult—and the movie more entertaining.

Chloe carries a vivid message for those who presume a moral dimension in their lives.

## Opposition in all Things

GEORGE D. SMITH, JR.

*A State of Siege*, a film by Constantin Costa-Gavras and Franco Solinas.

At the time that Costa-Gavras' new film, *A State of Siege* was cancelled at the American Film Institute's inaugural festival at its new movie theater in Washington's Kennedy Center, it was described as "rationalizing political assassination," and thus conflicting with the spirit of an event honoring the late President Kennedy. However, a further reason is evident—that it insinuates American undercover agents in the uncomely role of advisor-trainers of repressive police in a South American dictatorship.

It is ironic that the appearance of this film and its rejection by the festival in Washington coincided with growing embarrassment of exposed illegal political repression within the United States. The necessity of political opposition, desirable without political violence, is the reality brought in focus by both this film and the network of political espionage and repression being unraveled by the Watergate hearings.

Costa-Gavras expresses his moral outrage at American involvement in the internal affairs of Latin America, using as a basis for the story, the 1970 kidnapping-murder by the Tupamaros, Uruguayan urban guerillas, of Don Mitrone, a United States Agency for International Development official, ostensibly assigned to advise the Uruguayan police in communications and traffic control, but subsequently reported to be involved in Uruguayan internal security and closely associated with those responsible for the systematic torture and liquidation of the revolutionary opposition. Much of the film's direction was conceived after talking to people involved in the kidnapping and listening to tapes of Mitrone's interrogation by the Tupamaros.

The result is a combination of documentary and fiction, difficult for the viewer to distinguish. Costa-Gavras has said: "The movie is about political violence, rather than about political assassination. It tries to speak about violence from