



**Vote for this piece in our Reader Polls! [Click here.](#)**

**Books by Hariette Surovell available at Amazon.com (click on the title for reviews and ordering info):**

**[Lovestrokes: Handwriting Analysis for Love, Sex And Compatibility](#)**

### **Ten Beautiful, Sensuous Films Which Do Not Contain Explicit Sex**

As your basic Hedonistic film critic, I can really get off on a truly great graphic sex scene--like Richard Gere pleasuring Katherine Borowitz from behind in Mike Figgis' sizzling "Internal Affairs". I also see merit in the perspective of The Master, Alfred Hitchcock, who was sexually obsessed (think Kim Novak in "Vertigo") but blatantly refused to portray any intimate act on celluloid. Quoth Hitch: "If an actress wants to convey a sexy quality, she ought to maintain a slightly mysterious air." I began thinking of films which are incredibly sensuous and erotic but totally non-graphic. Just conjure up the image of Daniel Day-Lewis rapturously kissing Michelle Pfeiffer's satin slipper on her decadent leopard-skin rug in "The Age of Innocence"...

1) "Death in Venice" (1971). Luchino Visconti's cinematic vision of Thomas Mann's masterpiece is widely considered to be one of the most gorgeous films ever made, with the look of a Manet painting. Set in heavenly Venice, Dirk Bogarde plays a widowed world-famous composer, who, in keeping with his eternal search for beauty in art and in life, becomes lasciviously enthralled by an angelic, androgynous-looking young blonde Polish boy who wears sailor suits, frolics in the ocean, and returns Bogarde's strange, suggestive smiles.

2) "The Age of Innocence" (1993). Martin Scorsese's precise adaptation of Edith Wharton's novel, (which won a 1994 Oscar for Best Costume Design) takes place in 1870's N.Y.C., in elegant mansions filled with ornately be-jeweled and luxuriantly gowned women; in lavish gardens and at orgiastic feasts. Protagonist Daniel Day-Lewis is torn between his consuming love for the scandalous, experienced, worldly Michelle Pfeiffer (Countess Oleska) and his contempt for the naivete of his virginal fiancée, Winona Ryder. Without anyone even making an overt reference, but with double entendre aplenty, each actor in this sumptuous film is so carnally consumed that it should more accurately be titled "The Age of Sexual Obsession".

3) "The Dead" (1987). John Huston's rendition of a story from "Dubliners" shows us the virtue of simple pleasures...instead of Whartonian gourmet gluttony, an Irish family gathers together to derive joy and excitement from a perfectly-cooked slice of goose, a wedge of delectable plum pudding. The regal Angelica Huston has never looked as beautiful; snowfall has never seemed so sensual or so sad; the events and ambiance inspire Huston to tearfully tell her husband the heart-rending story of a deceased young man, the only one she had ever truly loved. More about romantic love than sex itself, the attention to detail makes this film's subtlety sublime.

4) "Gods and Monsters" (1998). Directed by Bill Condon, and starring Ian McKellan, Brendan Fraser and Lynne Redgrave (nominated for a Best Supporting

Actress Oscar for 1999), this exquisitely-detailed drama of a sensitive, thoughtful aging gay man's (McKellan) inspired but unsuccessful attempts to seduce his irresistibly handsome straight gardener (Fraser) is filled with pathos, sadness, beauty and eventually, transformation.

5) "Far From the Madding Crowd" (1967). The brilliant director John Schlesinger ("Midnight Cowboy") working with cinematographer-turned-director Nicolas Roeg have created a breath-taking adaptation of the Thomas Hardy novel about Bathsheba Everdene (Julie Christie), a "maddeningly beautiful" and independent young woman who inherits a farm in the lush English countryside, and of the three men: Peter Finch, an older, wealthy landowner who is possessive of her; Terence Stamp, a charismatic young soldier whose phallic swordplay is one of the classic scenes of cinema; and Alan Bates, a humble but loyal shephard--all of whom vie to worship her. Love, love, love and lust are the hallmarks of the second most gorgeous film ever made.

6) "The Story of Adele H." (1975). Directed by Francois Truffaut, it is the sorrowful true tale of Victor Hugo's daughter Adele, played by the unbelievably ravishing Isabelle Adjani when she was just 20 years old...and quite possibly the world's most beautiful woman. In the surreally foggy city of Halifax, Nova Scotia, in the late 1800's, the intensely passionate Adele Hugo tries unsuccessfully to win back the affections of her unworthy ex-lover, a decadent Army Colonel, as she writes feverish poetry and discreetly follows him, wearing scarlet satin gowns in covered carriages, to his trysts with other women. She even sends a prostitute to his quarters so she can enjoy him vicariously.

7) "Shall We Dance?" (1996). Masayuki Suo wrote and directed this story of a repressed businessman, Koji Yakusho who wants to...and succeeds...in learning to express his emotions, passion and joie de vivre by studying ballroom dancing. Splendidly-realized and captivatingly choreographed, Yakusho's graceful and gracious teacher was formerly one of Japan's premiere ballerinas, Tamiyo Kusakari.

8) "Black Orpheus" (1959). Marcel Camus' 1960 Best Foreign Language Film Oscar Winner is an amazingly vibrant and colorful re-telling of the tragic, passionate myth of Orpheus and Eurydice in (then) contemporary Brazil during Carnival, ending with the two lovers, Marpessa Dawn and Bruno Mello falling together, in an eternal embrace, into a giant flower. Will the two star-crossed lovers make love in the afterlife?

9) "Gabbeh" (1996). Iranian director Mohsen Makhmalbaf tells of the fable of Gabbeh, a lovely young woman from an almost extinct nomadic mountain clan. Gabbeh (Shaghayegh Djodat) travels with her family through luscious scenery, dreaming of the mysterious horseman who pursues her, howling love songs...with her tale of unfulfilled desire simultaneously being woven into vividly-hued tapestries by a wise elderly couple.

10) "Three Seasons" (April, 1999). The first American film to be shot in Vietnam since the war by writer/director Tony Bui, (and last year's Sundance Grand Jury, Audience and Cinematography Awards Winner) it tells of the fates of four strangers, as they love and survive in the hauntingly scenic old city of Saigon; in ponds where a young woman, Gnoc Hiep, harvests white lotuses while old women sing constantly; on a tree-lined street where a sweet young prostitute, Zoe Bui, (no relation to the director), whose suitor sees only her inner beauty, wears a white dress and a red scarf and dances ecstatically with upturned hands, twirling and swirling, as clouds of red blossoms cascade upon her.

**Hariette Surovell**  
[rp@panix.com](mailto:rp@panix.com)  
<http://www.matahariette.com>

**[Rate & Review the Corpse at InfoJump.com](#)**

5 (max)

**Subscribe to the Exquisite Corpse Mailing List:**

[ec chair](#) | [critical urgencies](#) | [burning bush](#) | [ficciones](#) | [stage and screen](#) | [secret agents](#) | [letters](#) |

[portfolio](#)

[current issue](#) | [search](#) | [submit](#) | [confab](#) | [archives](#) | [corpse mall](#) | [our gang](#)

©1999 Exquisite Corpse, All Rights Reserved  
If you experience problems with this site, please contact [webmistress@corpse.org](mailto:webmistress@corpse.org).