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# THE BEDLAM FILES

## Ain't Love Grand?

My taste in lovey-dovey cinema, needless to say, leans toward the freakish and bizarre, i.e. [THE MUSIC LOVERS](#) and [WILD AT HEART](#) rather than WUTHERING HEIGHTS or TITANIC. With that in mind...

## Thirteen Films to Make the Post Valentine's Day Blues Even Bluer



### 1. [SZAMANKA](#) (1996)

With this film Poland's late Andrzej Zulawski fully recaptured, and even surpassed, the rage and excess of his fabled 1979 masterpiece POSSESSION. SZAMANKA'S unspeakably deranged narrative involves a middle-aged architect involved with a schizophrenic young woman in an unrestrained primal scream of a movie that deals *only* with extreme actions and emotions.



### 7. [MANJI](#) (SWASTIKA; 1964)

Nobody else made films quite like Japan's Yasuzô Masumura, whose indescribably bizarre 1969 classic BLIND BEAST is a longtime favorite. This earlier effort is just as crazed, being the sumptuously photographed account of a housefrow who falls in love with another woman, touching off an indescribably labyrinthine series of complications. Pretty ballsy subject matter for 1964!



## 2. CRAZY LOVE (LOVE IS A DOG FROM HELL; 1987)

This whacked-out yet heartfelt Belgian import began life as a short adapted from Charles Bukowski's story "The Copulating Mermaid of Venice, CA." Two more segments were added to stretch the film to feature length, a conceit that works surprisingly well in relating the tale of a sensitive young man who, unable to find an outlet for his romantic yearnings, eventually attains fulfillment in the arms of a corpse.



## 3. MAITRESSE (MISTRESS; 1976)

This sickie hailed from France's great Barbet Schroeder, back when he was at the top of his game. Gerard Depardieu plays a petty thief in love with a most fetching dominatrix (Bulle Ogier); he's repelled at first, but finds himself drawn into her weird world of chains, whips, cages, sexual organs



## 8. BEAUTY AND THE BEAST (PANNA NETVOR; 1978)

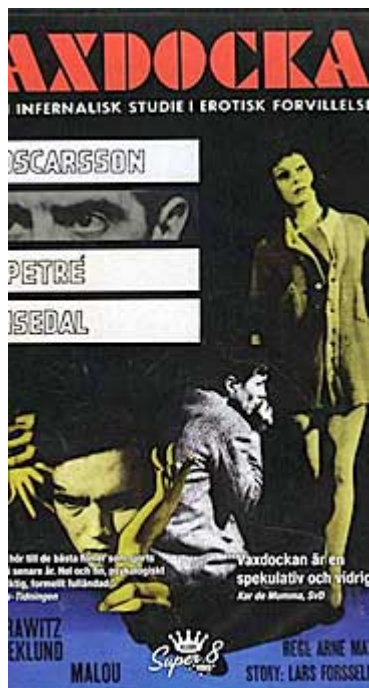
This Czech take on age-old Beauty and the Beast love story really brings forth the gloom and darkness of the original fairy tale by Gabrielle-Suzanne de Villeneuve. With impressive visual design and a powerfully stark atmosphere, the film is a veritable gothic wet dream, from the haunting organ score to the artfully decayed, cobwebby sets to the authentically beastly Beast.



## 9. LA VIE NOUVELLE (A NEW LIFE; 2002)

The setting for this French provocation is an unidentified poverty-stricken environ where a young woman is sold into prostitution, and a man is driven into a near-feral state of erotic obsession by her. There's no narrative to speak of in this film, which operates almost entirely through a succession of powerfully disquieting images, underscored with a vivid sense of animalistic psychosis.

nailed to boards, etc. A fun film if you're in the right mood.



#### 4. THE DOLL (VAXDOCKAN; 1962)

A most confounding Swedish masterwork about a man's love for a mannequin. It's neither a horror thriller nor an erotic drama (although it was advertised as both) but, rather, an art film that turns its frankly ridiculous premise into a thoughtful dissertation on the corrosive effects of loneliness and misplaced affection.

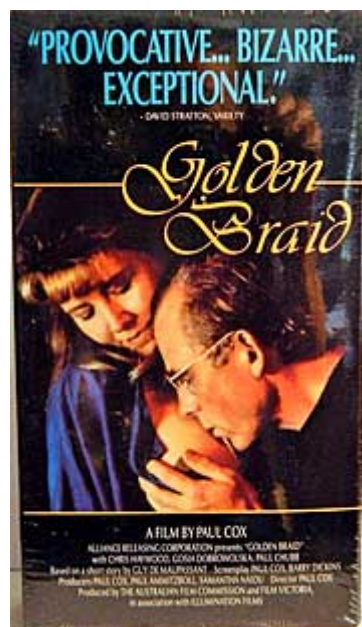


#### 5. THE DARK SIDE OF THE HEART (EL LADO OSCURO DEL



#### 10. GRANDEUR NATURE (LIFE SIZE; 1974)

Another real man-fake woman love story, this one a French made reverie with Michel Piccoli as an apparently normal middle aged man engaged in a passionate love affair with a blow up sex doll. The film can't hold a finger to THE DOLL but deserves points for audacity, and a performance by Piccoli that sets new standards for daring.



#### 11. GOLDEN BRAID (1990)

An oddity from Australia's Paul Cox, adapting a Guy de Maupassant story about a man in love with a braid of blonde hair. Said braid, found in an antique dresser, inspires numerous bizarre hallucinations and causes irreparable damage to his relationships.

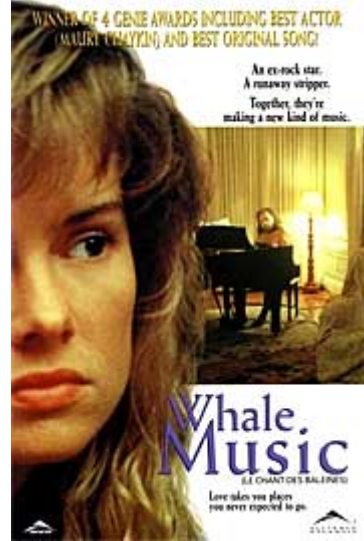
## CORAZON;1992)

This Argentinean oddity centers on a poet looking for love, but under no circumstances will he accept a mate who “can’t fly.” He eventually finds a gal who can indeed fly, but she continually rejects his advances, which include ripping his still-beating heart from his chest and offering it to her. He also chats with the angel of death, gets berated by his dead mother whose voice emanates from the mouth of a cow, and hangs out with a buddy whose apartment is accessible via a giant walk-in vagina. Yes, it’s that kind of movie.



## 6. X, Y (1971)

This little seen digitally lensed mind-roaster is among the darkest depictions of male-female dynamics you’ll ever experience. It’s about a NYC based topless dancer who collapses one night and comes to believing she’s a man; the focus is on his/her relationship with his/her meathead boyfriend, which grows increasingly twisted.



## 12. WHALE MUSIC (1994)

A Canadian import starring the late Maury Chaykin as an aging rock star patterned on Brian Wilson (and initially set to be played by John Candy), holed up in a seaside mansion where he somehow finds love with an attractive young woman (Cyndy Preston) who doesn't seem to mind that he's 1). twice her age 2). morbidly obese and 3). crazy. Hardly a convincing movie romance, but the British Columbia scenery is breathtaking, and the film overall exerts an undeniable geek show fascination.



## 13. WEIRD WEIRDO (LE GRAND CEREMONIAL; 1969)

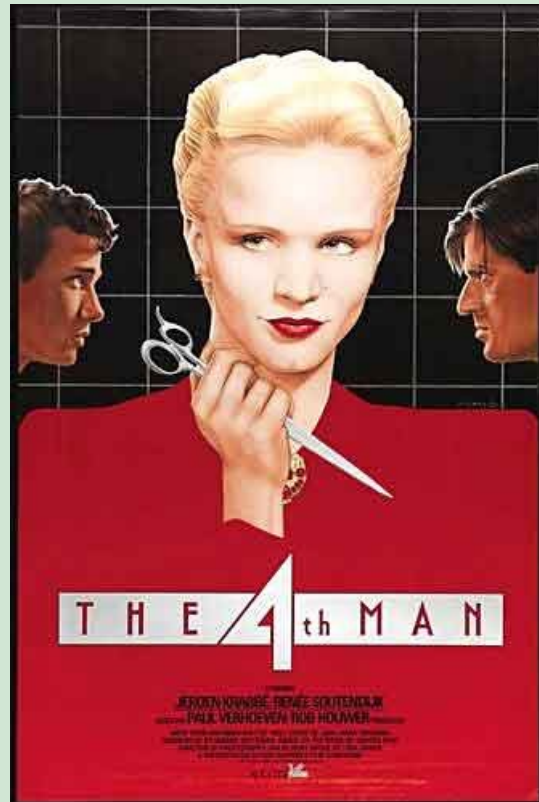
A film adapted from what has been called the weirdest play ever written by Spain's Fernando Arrabal, courtesy of the French counterculture



maestro Jean-Pierre Jolivet. The film might be a complex allegorical portrait of male-female relations or possibly just a sustained bad joke, being a romance between a mother-obsessed psychopath and an unrepentant masochist that entails a great deal of sadomasochistic outrage and a most unlikely love-conquers-all finale.

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## Promising Unmade Movie Romances

(From an upcoming article I haven't yet titled.)

**THE ANGELS:** A [Ken Russell](#) project, loosely based on the play JULIETTE by [Georges Neveux](#), about a man's search for the ideal woman that (in screenplay

form) was said to go “further in sheer wild, sexy pandemonium than any of his previous films.”

**THE ENGLISH SPEAKER**: A dramatization of Sigmund Freud’s famous case study of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century hysteric [Anna O.](#) by [Terence Malick](#), whose early 1990s screenplay transformed the case into an outrageous love story between Anna and her shrink.

**INFERNO**: One of the most famous unmade films of all time, the subject of a documentary (2009’s HENRI-GEORGES CLOUZOT’S INFERNO) and a so-so [Claude Chabrol](#) feature (1994’s L’ENFER). Clouzot’s original, initially set to be made in 1964, definitely had promise, being a hallucinatory depiction of jealousy and obsession on the part of a man who’s convinced his wife is unfaithful.

**THE OK DOLL**: Apparently you can never get enough man-doll romances. This one, an early Twentieth Century set historical reverie about a lovesick painter who after being dumped by Gustav Mahler’s widow carries on the relationship with a doll created in her image, was supposed to be made by England’s [Peter Greenaway](#).

**WINTER’S TALE**: An adaptation of Mark Helprin’s epic fantasy-romance novel that was to be directed by Martin Scorsese and scripted by COCOON’S Tom Benedict. The novel was eventually adapted for film by Akiva Goldsman, but I think I’m safe in opining that Scorsese’s version would have been better.

I'm done reading. To the website!

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