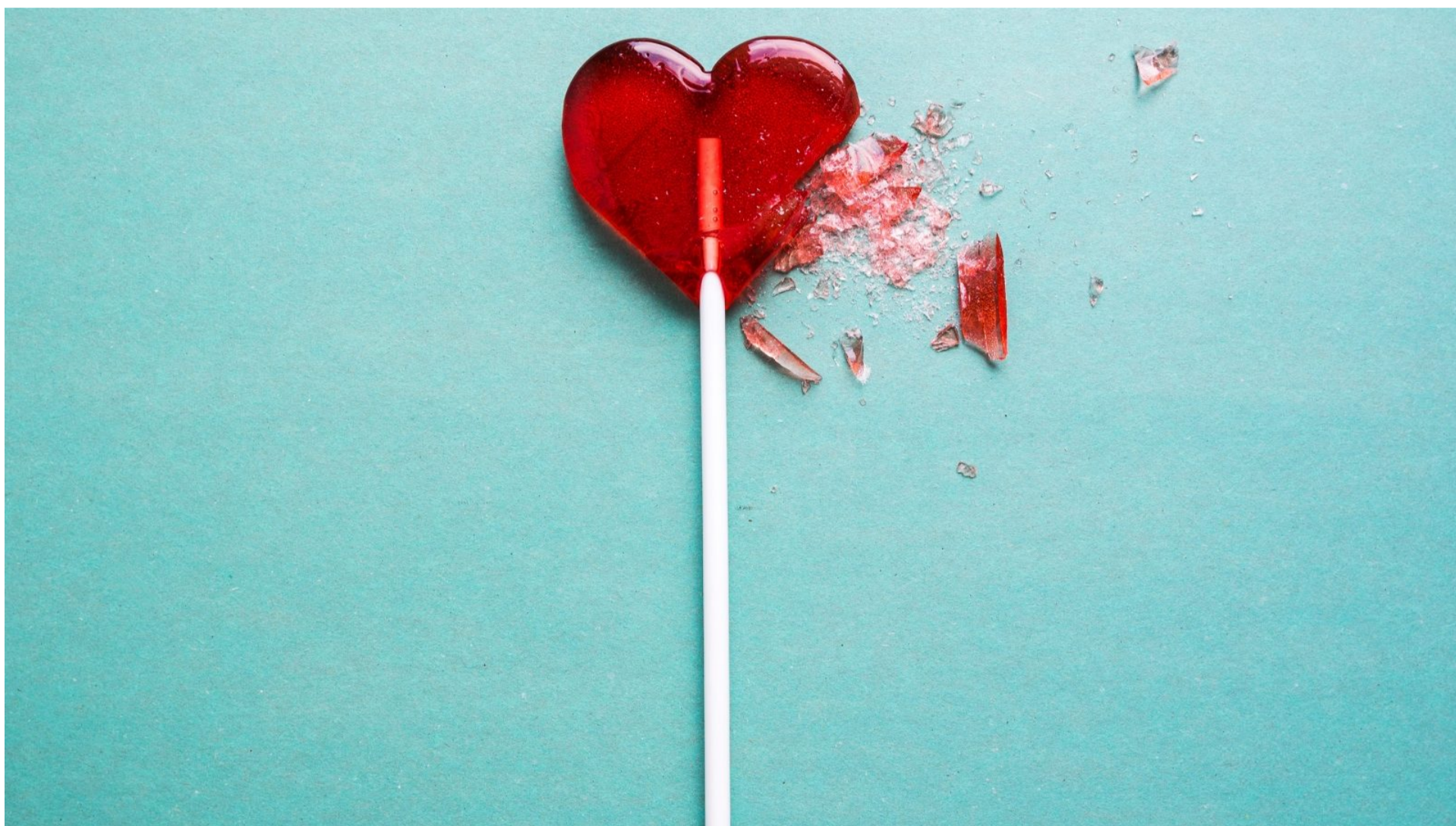


City Stories



Love Stinks! Recover with Breakup Fiction & Film

February 13, 2020

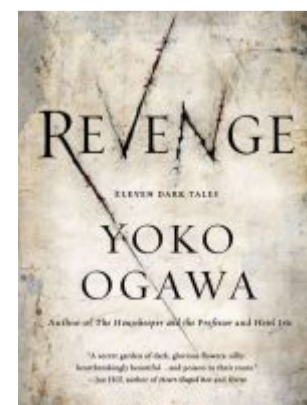
Not everyone is going to be excited for Valentine's Day. For those who have recently had their hearts broken, our faculty offer a few wonderful break-up stories, so you can curl up with a good book on Feb. 14th instead. We also included additional book, movie, and TV suggestions at the end of the post.

“Welcome to the Museum of Torture” by Yoko Ogawa

“One of my favorite break-up scenes in a short story takes place about a third of the way into Yoko Ogawa's story “Welcome to the Museum of Torture” from her linked story collection *Revenge*.

“The entire collection is filled with narratives of obsessive love, loss, disappearances, murder, and, of course, revenge. Ogawa writes with a detached matter-of-factness. Most often, her characters go unnamed. They live in close proximity to one another, but exist in a sort of placeless solitude. Their lives unfold within a prose style that can feel clinical and cold, but also full of wit, nuance, and beautiful attention to detail.

“Welcome to the Museum of Torture’ introduces us to a hairdresser whose boyfriend leaves her after she passionately describes her role as witness to a harrowing murder that has taken place in the apartment upstairs. While she gleefully recalls the sounds of the struggle and how important she felt as she was being interviewed by the police, the reader feels the boyfriend shrinking away from her in horror and disgust. As a reader, I felt mesmerized by the hairdresser's excitement, while at the same time, longed for her to be quiet and keep her enthusiasm to herself. She has no idea that she is offending her boyfriend, and the break-up happens almost silently, without her even realizing it



to herself. She has no idea that she is offending her boyfriend, and the break-up happens almost silently, without her even realizing it.

“Like many of Ogawa’s characters, the hairdresser finds herself suddenly alone, unable to share her passion with another person, while continuing to relish the beauty of what many of us might only see as horrific.”

– [Joanna Luloff](#), PhD, Associate Professor of English

Twelfth Night by William Shakespeare

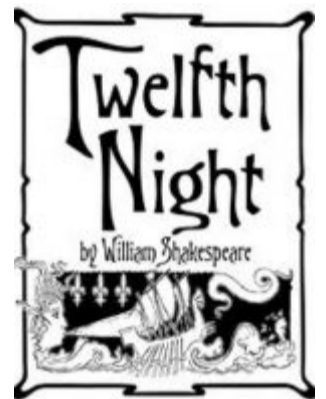
“All Shakespeare comedies end in multiple marriages—it’s a requirement of the genre. At the beginning of the festive comedy *Twelfth Night*, everyone is in love with the wrong person: Orsino loves Olivia because she is unavailable; Olivia falls in love with Viola (dressed as a man) after their first meeting; and Viola decides Orsino is her guy despite knowing he loves someone else. Malvolio, Olivia’s grumpy butler, is in love with his boss.

“The problem with these entanglements is that they are superficial and based on what the lover wants to see in their beloved, as opposed to what is really there. The funniest example is Olivia falling in love with a woman whom she wants to be a man. On Shakespeare’s stage, all women characters were played by boy actors, so in this case we have a boy playing a woman playing a man. Same-sex couplings were invalid simply because they did not lead to children (in those days) and thus did not sustain the social order.

“All the couples are sorted out by the end, except for Malvolio, who in addition to being a social climber is a kill-joy. He hates to see any having fun and doesn’t appreciate any of the joy in romance. My favorite line is when Malvolio is scolded for breaking up a party: ‘Dost thou think, because thou art virtuous, there shall be no more cakes and ale?’

“In other words, life should be enjoyed while we can. Sing a song, have a drink or two, and fall in love with the right person: the one who makes you happy.”

– [Cate Wiley](#), PhD, Associate Professor of English



Take Heart with These Other Recommendations in Fiction and Film

500 Days of Summer, a movie by Marc Webb, follows Tom Hansen, an architect who’s currently making a living as a greeting card writer. He meets and falls madly in love with Summer Finn, his boss’ assistant and a girl way out of his league. She will, of course, break up with him.

High Fidelity by Nick Hornby depicts the life of Rob, a record store owner who remembers the girlfriend who broke up with him by revisiting their music collection one song at a time. In 2000, the novel was made into a film starring John Cusack. Now Netflix is remaking it too, with a twist—their series stars Zoë Kravitz as Rob.

Marriage Story is not exactly an uplifting drama, but it could make you feel better about your relationship, even if it’s over. Directed by Noah Baumbach and starring Adam Driver and Scarlett Johansson, the movie explores the unraveling of one couple’s marriage.

The Taste of a Man by Slavenka Drakulić, in which Tereza, a graduate student from Poland, has an affair with José, a married anthropologist from Brazil—who happens to specialize in cannibalism. Someone literally gets eaten, but it's the metaphor of all-consuming love that stays in the reader's memory (almost like an aftertaste).

The Wedding Singer, a romantic comedy starring Adam Sandler and Drew Barrymore, presents the story of Robbie Hart, a wedding singer, who is jilted at the altar. All ends well, but not before Sandler sings a hilarious song about his evil ex-girlfriend at someone else's wedding.

By [Alicita Rodriguez](#), University Communications



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