

Peter Pagnamenta & Momoko Williams, *Sword and Blossom: A British Officer's Enduring Love for a Japanese Woman*. New York: Penguin Press, 2006. xii + 345 pages.

Sword and Blossom is a love story between a late Victorian British Army officer and a Japanese woman he met while serving in Japan; the story is based on letters primarily written by the British officer. Authors Peter Pagnamenta and Momoko Williams provide us with an excellent look at early twentieth-century life in Japan and a fascinating analysis of the British–Japanese military alliance that made this relationship possible. Following the fortunes of the British officer, Brigadier General Arthur Hart-Synnot (AHS), takes readers on a historical tour of the Second Boer War in South Africa (1899–1902); reviews life at the front in Manchuria during the Russo-Japanese War (1904–5); involves us in tours of duty in Hong Kong, India, Burma, and Japan; and gives us a front-row seat to the horrors of World War I in France. Masa Suzuki, who met AHS at the Officer's Club in Tokyo in 1904, gives us a clear view of family life and the status of Japanese women in the late Meiji Period (1868–1912).

After the ratification of the Anglo–Japanese alliance in 1902, the British sent ten promising young officers to Tokyo to learn Japanese so that British and Japanese military officials could begin conversing with each other. AHS volunteered for the mission and soon became amazingly fluent, acquiring near-native writing and speaking ability. A genuine scholar, he de-

veloped a deep appreciation for Japanese history and culture when he met Masa, a clerical worker at the Officer's Club who was the daughter of a lower-middle class tradesman. Masa and AHS were immediately smitten and were soon living together in AHS's small, private apartment.

Because AHS was proficient in Japanese, he and Masa developed a hot-and-heavy correspondence through which the two shared their love and made fascinating observations about their lives and times that will surely fascinate today's readers. AHS provides brilliant depictions of the Russo-Japanese War and colonial postings in India, Burma, and Hong Kong. We even view English gentry life at AHS's family estate in Ireland and witness the destruction of the House by the Irish Republican Army during the Irish Civil War of 1916. Fortunately, AHS was stationed in Japan for long intervals between other assignments and was thus able to live with Masa. Their love relationship endured, despite the racial prejudice and social snobbery they experienced. They became parents of two boys (one died very young), and Masa even joined AHS in Hong Kong while he was posted there for two long tours of duty. AHS begged Masa to marry him, but her family wanted her home to care for her aged mother and feared that she would be racially stigmatized abroad. Masa's refusal, despite her intense love for AHS, was a move she would later deeply regret.

Like the *Madame Butterfly* story, this relationship was ultimately doomed. AHS always came back to his Masa, but his military duty and other assignments meant long, painful separations as well. AHS was considering retirement from the army in 1914 and a permanent life with Masa and her boys in Japan, but World War I got in their way. He was severely wounded and had both his legs amputated. He needed daily care and could not make the long boat trip to Japan. Luckily for him, he was able to marry his older British nurse who cared for him until his death in 1942. Masa was heartbroken that her lover married someone else; but they eventually reconciled, and he maintained his financial support for her up through the start of World War II.

Kiyoshi, the surviving Anglo-Japanese son of AHS and Masa, grew into a brilliant athlete and scholar-author. He even met his father in France shortly before World War II when both were living there, but Kiyoshi died a tragic death at the hands of the Russians at the end of the war. Masa died in the 1960s.

Both Masa and AHS saved each other's letters, but Masa's letters were lost during World War II. AHS's letters to Masa, however, survived, and authors Williams and Pagnamenta combed hundreds of them to provide a marvelous picture of this relationship as well as an excellent history of this critical period. The book is clearly and beautifully written. The only drawback is that, because her letters did not survive, Masa emerges as a rather hollow individual: we see her only through AHS's eyes. This book would

serve as a great supplement for a course on modern Japan or early modern Asia. After all, who can resist a love story—especially one when, reading it, so much else will be learned?

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