

Yasuoka creates an image of himself as an outsider, one able to observe the unfolding of history around him and capture that unfolding in a form of recreation, of reconstruction of himself and that very history. Heitzman creates an image of himself, as well, as one sympathetic to the image Yasuoka has built, and as one able to point out the artistic, literary merits of that image. The better to do so, Heitzman establishes an intellectual context of theory and research, and does so intelligently and successfully, drawing on scholars of memory, of history, and of literature. Heitzman's research is extensive, sometimes even surprisingly so, and able to create a comprehensive situation of Yasuoka's times and travels. His research is also personal—here, too, sometimes surprisingly, even touchingly so—especially when he recounts his meeting with Yasuoka and his attendance at Yasuoka's memorial. The warmth with which Heitzman presents Yasuoka Shōtarō is human, humane, and contagious; at the end of the book, the reader has met two writers whose friendship and memories are valuable, provocative, artistic, and now, their own. This is the goal of good biography, to help the reader become more than merely familiar with the life of the subject: to make the reader wish for a chance to have met that person, at least once, to share a conversation. Heitzman's book achieves this goal through its readability, its research, its clarity, and its sensitivity to the things, themes, times, and trials of its subject, Yasuoka Shōtarō, who emerges as a living memory, and the creator of stories worth reading for their inherent value but also for their own presentation of the living memories of Japan's *national* life in this enduring, evolving postwar.

The Typographic Imagination: Reading and Writing in Japan's Age of Modern Print Media

By **Nathan Shockey**. New York: Columbia University Press, 2019.
xi, 314 pp. \$65.00.

Reviewed by
Jonathan E. Abel

A tension runs through Nathan Shockey's well-researched book of essays on the topic of the medial transition to print culture; it is this: does the value of print material lie within its semantic content or within its market

value? Although at several points the book refers to this as a dialectic as though each side of the tension were in equal balance, ultimately Shockey is more concerned with the latter notion of books and print as media objects in the world rather than as conveyors of meaning. This is evidenced by the preponderance of instances in which he highlights that reading does not matter and where writing (in the sense of the noun not the gerund) does or simply is matter.

The introduction to the book, “The World Made Type,” lays out a clear argument that nevertheless will become difficult to prove because of its scale and the fact that it may function at the level of the unsupportable. The thesis claims that in the move from xylography (wood block print) to modern industrial print characters made from moveable type, a new consciousness was born (7). In this broad claim, the book resembles other books in Japanese Studies—from Carol Gluck’s *Japan’s Modern Myths* (1987) and Karatani Kōjin’s *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature* (translation 1993) to Victor Koschman’s *Revolution and Subjectivity in Postwar Japan* (1996) and Sheldon Garon’s *Molding Japanese Minds* (1998)—all of which narrate the formation of the modern subject; *Typographic Imagination* does this, not through the content produced by government politicians, elite intellectuals, or literati intended to sway the masses, but through the medium of print itself. Unlike the wave of subject formation polemics from the long decade of the 1990s, *The Typographic Imagination* is grounded in particular objects of the material world (the “historically specific economic systems” of the “staple commodity” of print (6–7)) as the root of social, intellectual, and ideological transformation. To prove this point through successive chapters, Shockey employs his formidable talents as a historian of the publishing trade, book and magazine culture, the proletarian movement, and orthographic reform. Yet the gap between the major theoretical claim (that subjectivity, consciousness, or “imagination” itself are founded on the medium) and the evidence (about the print industry and the sales as well as fictional stories about print which are, of course, themselves printed) is for me never quite satisfyingly bridged; and it may be that such a gap remains forever unbridgeable to my satisfaction.

Part One, “The Making of the Modern Media Ecology,” narrates the transition from the 1890s through the 1920s to a mass culture predicated on print. Chapter One, “Pictures and Voices,” traces the advent of mass culture to the reportage prevalent during the Sino-Japanese War. Through the embedded war photography of Ogawa Kazumasa and the textual work

of Kunikida Doppo, the new medium brought home a sense of veracity and immediacy about war news to the masses in a hitherto unprecedented way—creating “war as a media spectacle” (26) and “print as internal to the war” (26). Although Shockey engages in a bit of nonsensical discussion about how, because photographers could not shoot the “actual battles,” they “could never fully represent the war” (33), his point that such work created the spectacle-of-war and war-as-a-spectacle is well taken; or as the book puts it: “the new media...produced the war that produced them” (26). Doppo’s textual aestheticization of war worked in concert with Ogawa’s photographs when printed and circulated at scale to ever growing audiences. In Shockey’s story of how the publishing house Hakubunkan’s techniques for mass appeal (among which are the “synthesizing spirit” of the general interest magazine) were adopted by what would become the powerhouse publisher Kōdansha, we can see the new medium becoming a staple commodity in the sense of being requisite for daily life. Ultimately, it is suggested that the rise of the general interest magazine out of this wartime culture placed print culture in “a position of structural ubiquity” that becomes the ground for social thought (58).

This story of synthetic-interest publishing houses for the masses lays the foundation for chapter two’s discussion of the more elite, yet still market-driven bookstore and publisher, Iwanami shoten. Here Shockey is at his best, regaling readers with fascinating tidbits about the origins of bookseller and director Iwanami Shigeo’s empire. Although the chapter shows how the company through similarly knowledge-synthesizing and summarizing techniques “transformed the idea of ‘thought’ itself into a marketable commodity and sold philosophy to the public” (6), it never quite does the inverse of showing how this commodified thought in its object form of books or magazines actually molded Japanese minds. One of the best stories here is how the founder began his career by confusing the cachet of the philosophical idea with the market value of the idea packaged into a product. Another story about Iwanami’s idea of fixing the price of books in his shops at a below market figure and jettisoning the bargaining system (so pervasive in book shops of the previous era) connects bookselling with the scientific and economic rationalism à la mode in the era; an anecdote of famed author and poet Mori Ōgai making the gaffe of trying to bargain for a book in the store is amusing and telling if also somewhat spurious. The chapter further tells of the role of philosopher Miki Kiyoshi in this world of print through his writing of advertising copy for Iwanami’s bunko series of paperback pocket books.

This story is fascinating and states the tension of the book's dialectic most strongly: "The book [according to Miki] thus becomes both a bourgeois need and a medium through which to critique the very structure of that need" (80).

Chapter three, "The Topography of Typography," explains the rise of the bibliophiles, antiquarian booksellers, collectors, and archivists who dominated, organized, and classified this new mass culture. Through its discussion of the central place of the Maruzen bookstore in the hearts and minds of the literati and the founding of the Meiji Newspaper and Magazine Archive at Tokyo University in the wake of disaster and fires that destroyed much of material culture, the *Typographic Imagination* repeats again the fetish object value of books over the value of their putative contents. As such, this chapter (more than any other) emphasizes one of the book's themes: the thingness of the book; its object status over and above any information, aesthetic value, or knowledge contained within.

Part two, "Prose, Language, and Politics in the Type Era," narrates the ways in which the literati itself became enamored with this new object through discussion of the Shinkankaku-ha (chapter four), the debates about orthography, rōmaji, and Esperanto (chapter five), as well as the proletarian movement (chapter six). The purpose of these chapters is to prove the transformation of thought by the presence of typography. To do so, Shockey draws his formidable knowledge of the publishing world as well as his close reading skills to highlight how deeply engrained the materiality of print as a topic in print became for an entire generation of writers and thinkers regardless of their political leanings. So, for instance, he reads Yokomitsu Riichi's work as always already dealing with body in chapter four: Shockey asserts, "for Yokomitsu, the reconfiguration of grammatical and narrative structure is central to the formation of consciousness in the modern world"(138); on orthographic concern in chapter five, Shockey tells of intellectuals and bureaucrats' concern that orthographic shift "could disrupt the internal balance of meaning, sound, and signification in Japanese script"; and in chapter six the story of the print factory worker turned author Tokunaga Sunao is intended to show how profoundly print capitalism itself produced not just strikes but strike fiction. Yet ultimately to believe Shockey's telling is to take writers of the time at face value (as representing in writing their true thoughts and feelings). In addition, Shockey suggests that such literati could in some sense write not only *to* but also *for* the thought of the masses and that such

printed writing itself will have refigured not just language, but the minds of those who read it. The argument seems logical enough (and is supported by philosophers of language since at least Heidegger), but over the course of *The Typographic Imagination* it proves easier to assert than to demonstrate.

With its detailed account of the prewar mass print industry and culture, this book provides a clearly valuable contribution to Japanese studies, even though there are a few sticking points that make the main argument particularly untenable for me. First, the fetish for the object exhibited by the bibliomaniacs and bibliophiles who he discusses is sometimes echoed in Shockey's own practice; for instance, we can see this in the extended paragraph-long recounting of the metadata available through digital indexes about the publication history of Fukuzawa Yukichi's bestseller which bridged the divide era between wood block and typography. At such points, Shockey seems too close to the editors of *Kingu*, who, he tells us, imbue the magazine "with the magical powers of (a) shape-shifting fetish object" (56); perhaps this is why Shockey is so taken with the word "transubstantiation" which appears in various forms no less than four times in the book. Second, the case for typographic print itself seems a bit slippery. Despite discussion of print reproductions of photographs, the book is remarkably silent on photographic reproductions of print which also began to impact the print industry during this period. The story of photographic reproduction that superseded typographic technological innovation and enabled even cheaper printing by allowing printers (for instance) to use one typeset at a variety of sizes (through photo enlargement and reduction) rather than having to invest in multiple sets remains buried. Last, despite its erudition and scholarly breadth, Shockey has not referred to some important scholars working in a similar domain; it would have been useful, for instance, to be able to read about how Shockey situates his project in terms of those of Karatani Kōjin and Sari Kawana. These quibbles do not, of course, reduce the value of the positive contribution of the history told in the book; they simply make the voice of its author somewhat less persuasive than it might have otherwise been.

The final concluding chapter is punctuated by the inclusion of a facsimile page from a twenty-first century North American comic book which is not discussed. The page from Jillian Tamaki's *SuperMutant Magic Academy* features a teacher asking bored students:

What if I told you there exists a technology. It's portable. Efficient.
Beautifully designed. Affordable. This technology requires no electricity,

and the component parts are completely biodegradable. It is so durable it can last hundreds of years without upgrades. Best of all, this Technology is incredibly accessible....

To which one tired student with chin on hand replies: “You’re talking about a book.” The teacher responds, “Pretty cool, huh?” “Yeah.” “Sure.” Because Shockey does not give us a reading of the comic directly, he leaves us to make our own meanings from the cartoon. Here is mine: Shockey is like the curmudgeonly old teacher; and we (his readers) are in the position of the bored students, yawning at our teacher’s fascination with the story he tells of the once new, now old medium and its uncanny similarities to today. Shockey never says that the human right of access to our digital cultures today is the same as the problem of bourgeois access that his book recounts about the laborers of the print factory who could not afford the commodities which they helped produce in mass quantities. Today, such laborers are the functional equivalent of those who work in our e-commerce “fulfillment centers,” who can’t afford high speed internet for their children to be home schooled during the pandemic, and who have no hope of having their own consumerist dreams being fulfilled. And if that comparison is apt (and I think it is), then the entire argument of *Typographic Imagination* falls on its (type)face. Rather than a historically nuanced argument about how type changed everything; we are left with a universal—media shifts change nothing. Power hierarchies organized by capital around media from Heian through today (despite the advents of the typographic and the digital) continue to wreak havoc on the underclasses.

Unbinding The Pillow Book: The Many Lives of a Japanese Classic

By **Gergana Ivanova**, New York: Columbia University Press, 2018.
xi, 226 pp. \$75.00.

***Reviewed by* Anne Commons**

This is a very welcome addition to the rather limited amount of English-language scholarship on *The Pillow Book* (*Makura no sōshi*, early eleventh century), that famously unclassifiable compendium of essays, lists, and