

Analytical Intellectual Biography of Elizabeth L. Eisenstein

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Introduction

Scope statement

In her opening comments of *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe*, Elizabeth Eisenstein quotes Francis Bacon's famous aphorism, "We should note the force, effect and consequences of inventions which are...known to have changed the appearance and state of the whole world...printing, gunpowder and the compass."¹ Elizabeth Eisenstein devoted her professional career to "taking note" of the impact of printing. In that spirit, I propose in this paper to explore the works of Professor Eisenstein by means of an analytical intellectual bibliography.

The approximate chronological limits of the paper are the years 1959-2004. This period encompasses the majority of Eisenstein's professional writings, particularly her seminal work, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*. More specifically, Eisenstein identifies a chronological period of approximately fifteen years between the conception of the book and its publication in 1979, as ones when she was publishing preliminary articles "to elicit reactions from scholars and take advantage of informed criticism before issuing a full-scale work."² The works I will analyze include *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*, two of the articles which preceded its publication, its condensed version, *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe*, and the responses of

¹ Francis Bacon. *Novum organum*, Aphorism 129 in *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. 12.

² Eisenstein, Elizabeth L. *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), x-xi.

contemporary scholars and historians after publication of the book. I also will discuss the dialog or “conversation” regarding *The Printing Press*, which occurred in print between Eisenstein and Adrian Johns in *The American Historical Review* Vol. 107, Issue 1 [February 2002] and briefly explore the influence of Marshall McLuhan’s book *The Gutenberg Galaxy* on Eisenstein’s work because she identifies it as important to her thinking about “specific historical consequences of the fifteenth-century communications shift.”³

In addition, I will examine editorials and book reviews that she has written regarding publications by other researchers which deal with similar topics of book and print culture and the impact of printing technology on the experimental sciences.

Contextual background

Eisenstein claims when she first began to explore the “most important consequences of the shift from script to print” there was not even a “small literature available for consultation... [she] could not find a single book or even a sizable article, which attempted to survey the consequences of the fifteenth-century communications shift.”⁴ While this may help to explain the impact that Eisenstein’s book had on the history of the book scholarship of the time, it also demonstrates the evolutionary changes that were occurring in the field. As noted by Finkelstein and McCleery, “book history has emerged as a field of study in relatively recent times and... achieves its relative

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid. xi.

distinctness from both its emphasis upon print culture and the role of the book as material object within that culture.”⁵

Two schools of thought were in place during this time, that of the French *Annales* school of historians and that of the Anglo-American tradition of analytical or descriptive bibliography. The French school was found in Robert Escarpit’s *Sociologie de la Littérature* (1958) and in the original edition of Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin’s work *L’Apparition du Livre* (1958). The *Annales* school, headed by Febvre and Marc Bloch, rejected the traditional approach to writing history with its emphasis on “high politics, near-reverential attitude towards documentary sources...’story-telling style’...and fetishistic approach to ‘facts’ and events.”⁶ Instead, they “sought to forge a new ‘wider and more human’ history, which would integrate insights and methodologies from disciplines as diverse as anthropology, geography, sociology, economics and psychology.”⁷ Members of the *Annales* school engaged in an analysis of information covering much longer time spans and included the daily routines and ways of life of the ordinary citizen in addition to the elite. The emergence of the book as an object of cultural production and the concomitant rise of a print culture was perceived as a part of the evolution of this new social fabric.

While Escarpit’s work is notable for its “attempt to isolate models of book production, dissemination and reception from the accumulation of data in a manner taken up by Darnton [and others],” Febvre and Martin argue it was the shift in the language of the texts from the Latin to the vernacular which promoted the most significant changes;

⁵ David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery. *The Book History Reader*. (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 1.

⁶ Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin. *The Coming of the Book*, (London and New York: Verso, 1999).

⁷ Ibid.

they argue the printing press was only one of a number of factors involved in the social and cultural transformations which were occurring. According to Febvre and Martin “the unified Latin culture of Europe was finally dissolved by the rise of the vernacular languages which was consolidated by the printing press.”⁸ According to Grafton, as a result of this philosophical shift, “this body of scholarship produced complex--and sometimes controversial—conclusions about the spread of the Reformation and the relations between...the elite and popular culture.”⁹

In contrast, the Anglo-American tradition was founded in the technical analysis methods proposed by McKerrow (1927), Greg (1966), Bowers (1949) and Tansell (1979). The purpose of these rigorous bibliographic techniques was to identify the “most complete and least corrupted version of a text possible...to distinguish the interference of third parties and to establish the text which most accurately reflected the author’s final intention.”¹⁰ While analytical bibliography now has become a field of its own, two key components of bibliographic study have carried over into the modern discipline of book history. Firstly, is the “the recognition that a book is the result of a collaborative process” and secondly, the creation of a “detailed system for describing books on the basis of their production attributes, ...draws attention to the material object rather than its contents.”¹¹ The notion of the book as an object of cultural production was entering into mainstream historiographical practice. Finally in the 1970’s and 1980’s, new scholarly research into the history of the book by authors such as Roger Chartier, Robert Darnton and others created a “site of inquiry where historians, literary scholars, bibliographers, and others

⁸ Ibid. , 2-3.

⁹ Grafton. 2.

¹⁰ Finkelstein and McCleery, 2.

¹¹ Ibid.

[could] debate and collaborate, practicing a number of complementary forms of historical research.”¹² As Grafton argues, “no one did more to make this new field take shape than Elizabeth L. Eisenstein.”¹³

Focus, themes, and topics of Eisenstein’s writings

In her review of *Grub Street Abroad: Aspects of the French Cosmopolitan Press*, scholar Margaret C. Jacobs notes

“In her broad vision Eisenstein challenges us never to separate the book from its contents, printing from cultural life, the publisher from the forces of change in the early modern era....Once again Eisenstein’s mission is to shake our assumptions.” (*Eighteenth Century Studies* 27 (1): 121)

This quote summarizes the focus of Eisenstein’s career: the scholarly, interdisciplinary exploration of the sociocultural impact of print and publishing from its inception to the present day. Specifically its impact, as perceived by Eisenstein, on the advancement of science and on the evolution of “the thought of Renaissance humanists and Reformation theologians.”¹⁴ Complementary topics investigated by Eisenstein include the study and the impact of print on sociocultural revolutions and Revolutionaries and the milieu of French print and publishing culture.

¹² Finkelstein and McCleery, 2.

¹³ Grafton, 5.

¹⁴ Robert M. Kingdon. “The Printing Press as an Agent of Change.” in *Library Quarterly* 1980 50: 139-142.

Analysis of scholarly works

Monographs

Eisenstein's scholarly works clearly demonstrate the value she places on originality of thought, clearness and applicability of the argument presented, and the respect one gives to other scholar's work and investigations. As noted before, she continuously seeks out the controversial and provocative in order to contribute to and expand the body of scholarly knowledge.

As previously mentioned, Eisenstein explored the responses of the scholarly historical community to her work regarding the impact of printing in several early papers prior to the completion of *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*. In one of these, "The Advent of Printing in Current Historical Literature: Notes and Comments on an Elusive Transformation" (1970), Eisenstein reviews the current scholarly work available on the subject of the effects of printing on the broad fields of history and social history, which she argues was "particularly important for historical scholarship".¹⁵ However, in her summation, she concludes that Sigrid Steinberg "understates the case" when he notes "The exact nature of the impact which the invention and spread of printing had on Western civilization remains subject to interpretation even today," arguing that there are 'almost no interpretations, however inexact, upon which scholars may draw when pursuing other inquiries.'¹⁶ She also reviews the work of Marshall McLuhan in this

¹⁵ Elizabeth L. Eisenstein "The Advent of Printing in Current Historical Literature: Notes and Comments on an Elusive Transformation," in *The American Historical Review* Vol. 75, (3): 727.

¹⁶ Sigrid Henry Steinberg, *Five Hundred Years of Printing*. Harmondsworth, England. ; Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1974. 11. Quoted in "The Advent of Printing in Current Historical Literature:

article, agreeing with him that the “more the medium has been used the less conspicuous it has become,” and explores the general premises of her argument.¹⁷

In a subsequent paper presented at the Library of Congress as an Englehard lecture on Sept. 23, 1977 just prior to the publishing of her book, Eisenstein now states her thesis clearly and succinctly:

The impact of printing, experienced first by literate groups in early modern Europe, changed the character of the Italian Renaissance and ought to be considered among the causes of both the Protestant Reformation and the rise of modern science.”¹⁸

The Printing Press as an Agent of Change is viewed by most scholars as Eisenstein’s seminal work. In the preface to her original work, she appears to anticipate that the book will be controversial and provocative, acknowledging that “despite some analytical and critical portions, this [*The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*] is primarily a work of synthesis.”¹⁹ While recognizing “the current vogue for ‘history from below’,” which she identifies as “helpful for many purposes,” she notes that this approach is “not well suited for understanding the purposes of this book.”²⁰ She states the main focus of her book is “how printing altered written communications within the Commonwealth of Learning. It is primarily concerned with the fate of the *unpopular* (and currently unfashionable) ‘high’ culture of Latin-reading professional élites.”²¹

Eisenstein notes she “also found it necessary to be unfashionably parochial and stay

Notes and Comments on an Elusive Transformation,” by Elizabeth L. Eisenstein. *The American Historical Review* Vol. 75, (3): 729.

¹⁷ Ibid, 732.

¹⁸ Elizabeth L. Eisenstein. “Emergence of Print Culture in the West” in *Journal of Communication* 30 (1): 99.

¹⁹ Elizabeth L. Eisenstein. *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. xvi.

²⁰ Ibid. xiii.

²¹ Ibid. xiv. Italics the author’s.

within a few regions located in Western Europe.”²² She goes on to defend her approach commenting, “my aim is to enrich, not impoverish historical understanding... [and] I regard monovariabale interpretations as antipathetic to that aim.”²³ These statements define much of Eisenstein’s approach to her material and to the principles which guide her research and scholarly writing.

Eisenstein argues that the difficulty lies in striking the right balance between those “who assume that printing changed *everything* and the scholarly skeptics who hold it changed *nothing*.”²⁴ She claims the problem arises particularly when the historian attempts to define the “new powers of print” by placing it within the context of the history of the book and not within the context of the larger cultural and intellectual changes which were occurring during this period.²⁵

Another important concept raised by Eisenstein is the notion of “fixity” or the “preservative powers of print.” This idea is crucial to her argument that the “printing revolution” was instrumental in facilitating the rise of modern science.²⁶ She argues the ability of scholars to guarantee that each copy of a scientific treatise or text was true to the original text before the age of print was highly variable and dependent upon the skills of the scribe. In addition, the number of copies of texts was limited and therefore the spread of new information and experiments also was circumscribed. However, according to Eisenstein, as a direct result of printing, an author could more easily guarantee the re-creation of an accurate and reliable copy and an increased and wider distribution area

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid., xvi.

²⁴ Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, “Emergence of Print Culture in the West” in *Journal of Communication* 30 (1): 100.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Elizabeth L. Eisenstein. *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. xii.

after the establishment of printing and print culture. As will be discussed later, it is this kind of “technological determinism” which has elicited a negative response from other scholars.

In 1983, Eisenstein created an abridged edition of *The Printing Press* for the general public entitled *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe*. In this work, she attempts to “block out the main features of the communications revolution... and deal with the relationship between the communications shift and other developments associated with...the transition from medieval to early modern times.”²⁷ While illustrations have been added, in this edition the footnotes have been dropped and the bibliographic index has been reduced to a greatly reduced list of “selected readings.” Eisenstein notes in her preface that the interested reader should consult the unabridged edition for “full identification of all citations and references.”²⁸ As will be seen later, the reduction of reference sources in translations and abridgements is a lack which she frequently comments upon in the works of other authors.

Twenty years after the publication of *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*, Eisenstein published a retrospective article entitled “An Unacknowledged Revolution Revisited.”²⁹ In it she comments that in the early years of print culture studies, “although everyone seemed to agree that the consequences of printing were of great importance, they all stopped short of telling us just what those consequences were.” She remarks that “even though the task could not be completed, I thought it should at least be begun. A

²⁷ Elizabeth L. Eisenstein. *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. xi.

²⁸ Ibid. The “full-scale work” is 794 pp. and contains a 59 pp. bibliographic index with a 13 pp. preface. The abridged version is 300 pp. and contains a 14 pp. selected readings list with a 6 pp preface.

²⁹ Elizabeth L. Eisenstein. “An Unacknowledged Revolution Revisited” in *The American Historical Review* 107 (1): 87-105.

beginning is what I attempted to provide.”³⁰ She goes on to note that while the “printing revolution should no longer be described as unacknowledged,” she takes issue with the ways in which some scholars, specifically Adrian Johns, are “treating the shift from script to print as inconsequential.”³¹

In her meticulously crafted rebuttal to John’s attack on her work, she finds that they are “in agreement rather more than some reviews have indicated” and recognizes John’s work as “impressive in many respects.”³² However, she claims that he appears to be “unfamiliar with [the] protocols of the historians craft...and thinks nothing of jumping over hundreds of years.”³³ She argues that to conflate “the establishment of printing shops across fifteenth-century Europe...with the industrialization of printing processes” four hundred years later, “alters the familiar printing revolution beyond all recognition.”³⁴ In addition, she claims the “consequences entailed by a major transformation have to be reckoned with whether we pay attention to them or not” in order that “historians who come of age in the twenty-first century should not have to result with an unacknowledged revolution once gain.”³⁵

In his response, Johns notes that he and Eisenstein agree about the most critical point: that the beginning of “print culture” is one of the “most important of all episodes in Western history.”³⁶ In addition, he argues that his work, *The Nature of the Book* is not intended to replace *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*, “but rather...to

³⁰ Ibid., 87.

³¹ Ibid., 96.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Adrian Johns. “How to Acknowledge a Revolution” in *The American Historical Review* 107 (1): 106-126.

supplement it and... to acknowledge the importance of print *in a different way*.³⁷ While acknowledging the depth and breadth of new scholarship that has been completed since Eisenstein first completed her work, among them those involving studies of readers and reading practices, Johns contends that it is often difficult for Eisenstein's work to accommodate newer viewpoints.³⁸ As a result, he argues there are "shortcomings in her approach that are not easily remedied from within" and that he by contrast, has "presented something of a draft manifesto for a different way of understanding the importance of print."³⁹ The importance and value of this exchange lies in the fact that it allows readers to "watch major historians of different generations and formations at work" which as a result will "open up a whole series of vital issues" for new scholarly discussion.⁴⁰

Critical Response

In his review, Peter F. McNally comments "Like other major pioneering works of historical scholarship, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*...is likely to be long remembered—for mapping in great detail and in splendid variety new scholarly territories and for resurveying old ones."⁴¹ However, the most common contemporary complaint regarding Eisenstein's work is that she had "exaggerated revolutionary aspects and downplayed evolutionary ones."⁴²

³⁷ Ibid., 108. Italics the authors.

³⁸ Ibid., 109-110.

³⁹ Ibid., 117.

⁴⁰ Anthony Grafton. "How Revolutionary was the Print Revolution?" in *The American Historical Review* 107 (1): 87-106.

⁴¹ Peter F. McNally. "The Advent of Printing: Historians of Science Respond to Elizabeth Eisenstein's "The Printing Press as an Agent of Change." in *ANQ* 3(1): 38-39.

⁴² Elizabeth L. Eisenstein. "An Unacknowledged Revolution Revisited." *American Historical Review* vol. 107 Issue 1.

Modern authors continue to criticize Eisenstein's work as "over-determinist and simplistic."⁴³ Adrian Johns argues, "what we often regard as essential elements and necessary concomitants of print are in fact rather more contingent than generally recognized."⁴⁴ Johns frames his argument within the notion of 'print culture' and problems that arise when we fail to clearly identify and define its 'inherent' elements versus those that are 'in actuality transitory'. Important for my study, Johns poses his argument and research opposite those of Elizabeth Eisenstein's book.

Johns proposes to "excavate the complex issues involved in the historical shaping of print."⁴⁵ While he notes that *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change* is "still probably the most influential anglophonic interpretation of the cultural effects of printing,"⁴⁶ he argues that the continued unquestioning acceptance of the ideas proposed by Eisenstein in 1979 obscures a "new historical understanding of print."⁴⁷

According to Johns, Eisenstein's notion of 'print culture' is "characterized primarily in terms of certain traits that print is taken to endow on texts."⁴⁸ For example, Johns claims that one of the most important attributes of print for Eisenstein is fixity. However, Johns argues that "it is not printing *per se* that possesses preservative power, but printing put to use in particular ways."⁴⁹ In order to illustrate his thesis, he uses the example found in Eisenstein's book of Tycho Brahe, the *Astronomiae Instauratae Mechanica* and the notion of fixity.

⁴³ Finkelstein and McCleery, 2.

⁴⁴ Adrian Johns. "The Book of Nature and the Nature of the Book," in *The Book History Reader*. London and New York: Routledge. 60.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid. 62.

⁴⁷ Ibid. 66.

⁴⁸ Ibid. 62.

⁴⁹ Johns. 62.

In addition, Johns asserts that in Eisenstein's definition of 'print culture', "printing itself stands outside history...its culture is correspondingly placeless and timeless."⁵⁰ He claims that Eisenstein does not analyze what the origins of these properties are nor does she assume any "position on the question of how print culture might emerge from print."⁵¹ In his analysis of the trials and tribulations of Tycho Brahe to control the "immutability and mobility of his text," Johns argues that Eisenstein's argument is "oddly disconnected from the professed experiences of real historical examples."⁵² He asserts we must account not only for the moments when a concept such as fixity "works" but also those many other instances in which it failed and why. He goes on to pose important questions regarding the evolution of the cultural history of print including examining "more closely places where printing exists, but where its cultural consequences seem very different" from ours and how the nature of print has changed over time within our own society.⁵³ His work is significant because it endeavors to "treat all sides of the world of print with equal historiographical respect"⁵⁴ comparing and contrasting recently scholarly work in cultural history with an iconographic work such as Eisenstein's *Printing Press*. At the same time, other scholars cite *Printing Press* as "much a program for the future research as a report on finished research."⁵⁵

⁵⁰ Ibid. 65.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid. , 61.

⁵⁴ Ibid. , 66.

⁵⁵ Robert M. Kingdon. "Printing Press as an Agent of Change" in *Library Quarterly* 1980 50: 139-

Other monographs

Other interests that Eisenstein has pursued throughout her career include those on the culture of French printing and the French revolution. Two additional monographs I will briefly discuss address those topics.

The first is “*The first professional revolutionist: Filippo Michele Buonarroti (1761-1837), a biographical essay*.” While noting that Buonarroti has been the study of a group of Italian scholars, “exploring various facets of the subject [professional revolutionaries],” Eisenstein recognizes her own “curiosity about the emergence of the professional revolutionist upon the unfolding stage of history.” She regards Buonarroti as worthy of additional, scholarly study because his “life spanned a long and turbulent era, intersected with many important figures and epoch-making events, but more particularly, as a pioneer in a new profession,” that of the professional revolutionary.⁵⁶ This slim, thoroughly researched volume is one of her earliest, if not the earliest of her works. The book covers Buonarroti’s formative years through his life as a revolutionary, concluding with his death. Illustrated with three portraits of Buonarroti, “from youthful disciple, to conspiratorial expert, to venerated patriarch,” it also contains an extensive bibliographic essay regarding the original and archival work supporting this book.

The second work is her final monograph, *Grub Street Abroad: Aspects of the Eighteenth Century French Cosmopolitan Press*.⁵⁷ This volume is a compilation of Eisenstein’s Lyell Lectures of 1989-1990. The book explores “not publishing

⁵⁶ Elizabeth L. Eisenstein. “*The first professional revolutionist: Filippo Michele Buonarroti (1761-1837), a biographical essay*.” Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1959.

⁵⁷ Elizabeth L. Eisenstein. *Grub Street Abroad: Aspects of the Eighteenth Century French Cosmopolitan Press from the Age of Louis XIV to the French Revolution. Lyell Lectures, 1989-1990*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.

history per se but its relevance to a selected set of issues associated with intellectual and cultural change” specifically the “indeterminate, decentralized zone occupied by the dispersed citizens of the francophone Republic of Letters.” The author revisits the Parisian world of Balzac’s “portrayal of conniving publishers and desperate Grub Street authors” found in his *Les Illusions Perdues*.

The critical response to this work is varied. Hayden Mason in his review praises the work: “Professor Eisenstein has added considerably to our understanding of the French Enlightenment by showing, paradoxically, how large a part in that Enlightenment was played by French-language publishers outside France.”⁵⁸ In the same vein, Edoardo Tortarolo argues Eisenstein’s introductory description of the contents of the book “does not do justice to the wealth of themes in [her] text, nor to her many powerful polemics against the most recent historiography on the subject.”⁵⁹ He commends the book as “a courageous effort to recall historians’ attention to the importance of French culture outside France ...and an appeal for the need to go beyond disciplinary specializations in historical analysis.”⁶⁰ However, he also notes that her “interpretive suggestions remain at a very high level of generality and ...occasional inaccuracies” while remarking upon the “often uselessly [gratuitously] polemical tone.”⁶¹

Other reviewers share his opinions. Colin Jones claims that while Eisenstein argues “ideas are underrepresented in the present historiography of the late Enlightenment” she in turn, has written a book which contains “no real discussion of any

⁵⁸ Hayden Mason. “Grub Street Abroad: Aspects of the Eighteenth Century French Cosmopolitan Press from the Age of Louis XIV to the French Revolution. Lyell Lectures, 1989-1990” in *French Studies* 47 (4): 464-466.

⁵⁹ Edoardo Tortarolo. “Grub Street Abroad: Aspects of the Eighteenth Century French Cosmopolitan Press from the Age of Louis XIV to the French Revolution. Lyell Lectures, 1989-1990” in *Journal of Modern History* 67 (1): 159-161.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 161.

⁶¹ Ibid.

one's ideas...and almost all references are to secondary sources."⁶² In addition, Jones claims "Eisenstein adopts an unpleasant, unscholarly tone whenever she refers to Darnton, hounding him even utterly irrelevantly into her footnotes."⁶³ Raymond Birn also faults Eisenstein claiming "This book is not the product of archival research, and it draws heavily on the work of others," which he notes, "Eisenstein acknowledges graciously."⁶⁴ Nonetheless, according to Birn, in Eisenstein's view the "time appears ripe for a renewed history of ideas and the most appropriate locus is the history of early modern print."⁶⁵

Finally, in her review of *Grubb Street*, Margaret C. Jacob claims "Once again Eisenstein's mission is to shake our assumptions, particularly the 'cultural imperialism' betrayed in the writings of French historians."⁶⁶ According to Jacob, this book is a meditation "on the aspects of the European, particularly Francophone, world of the book during the eighteenth century," specifically "French speaking intellectuals and publishers exiled or domiciled in the Dutch Republic from the early 1700's to...the 1750's."⁶⁷ While recognizing that "Eisenstein adds... [a] welcome voice" to the debate regarding the impact of French-language publications during this era, Jacob argues "Eisenstein engages with this scholarship, but not always in satisfactory ways."⁶⁸ In her detailed discussion of the book, Jacob argues that because Eisenstein wanted "her Enlightenment to be ever moderate, always high-minded, [and] ultimately disconnected from the

⁶² Grub Street Abroad: Aspects of the French cosmopolitan Press from the Age of Louis XIV to the French Revolution." in *The Modern Language Review* 89 (2): 483-484.

⁶³ Ibid. 484.

⁶⁴ Raymond Birn. "Grub Street Abroad: Aspects of the French cosmopolitan Press from the Age of Louis XIV to the French Revolution" In *American Historical Review* 99 (2): 576-577.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 577.

⁶⁶ Margaret C. Jacobs. "Grub Street Abroad: Aspects of the French cosmopolitan Press from the Age of Louis XIV to the French Revolution" in *Eighteenth Century Studies* 27 (1): 121-126.

⁶⁷ Ibid. 121.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 121.

revolutionary ardor unleashed late in the century,... *Grubb Street Abroad* offers a “flawed and only partial account” of this period in print culture.⁶⁹

As can be seen from these analyses of her monographs, Elizabeth Eisenstein has written with great keenness about her chosen topics and in turn, has generated an equally intense response of admiration and disagreement from within the scholarly community. Exactly as she would have it, I suspect. In the following reviews by Eisenstein of other scholar’s works, she analyzes their work, commenting on their writing and research capabilities in addition to identifying what she values most highly in their work.

Book reviews

There are several themes that surface regularly in Eisenstein’s reviews of other scholar’s work. She consistently recognizes or calls attention to works that build upon or expand the writings of other scholars or those which provide a basis, framework or invitation for subsequent investigators to build upon. In addition, she recognizes and commends those authors who use significant primary source materials and who demonstrate creativity in making new connections between well-known earlier notions and ideas.

For example, in her review of Adrian John’s book, *The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in the Making*, Eisenstein notes “The large, dense book is ...based on wide-ranging acquaintance with secondary literature and deep probing [original] archival work.” She notes “Despite its shortcomings, this is an impressive and challenging work.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 124-125.

It pulses with intellectual energy...no one who is concerned with scientific publication in the age of the hand press can afford to overlook it.” (*ISIS* 91 (2): 316-317.) While in *Printing the Written Word: The Social History of Books 1450-1520*, Sandra L. Hindman argues that the shift from manuscript to print culture was more “evolutionary than revolutionary” in direct opposition to Eisenstein’s claims, Eisenstein’s review notes that nearly “every essay...contains some new and useful information,”...enlisting the “talents of experts to demonstrate, in fine grained detail, the complexity and variety of changes entailed in the shift from script to print.” (*Renaissance Quarterly* 47 (1): 155-157.)

The notion of interdisciplinary approaches to the topic of book and printing history is always important to Eisenstein. In *The Book in Renaissance Europe- Proceedings of the 28th Tours Colloquium on Humanist Studies* edited by Pierre Aquilon, Henri-Jean Martin and F. Dupuigrenet Desrousilles, Eisenstein argues that “taken as a whole...the collection illustrates the diverse methods and approaches which characterize current ‘book and society’ studies.” While she notes that in most of the essays, “information is emphasized and interpretation downplayed,” the final essay by Michael Screech clearly demonstrates “why intellectual historians ought to master book history...Underlining the ...recent development of fruitful collaboration between bibliographers and Renaissance Historians.” (*Renaissance Quarterly* 42 (3): 540-543.)

Eisenstein frequently finds the English translation of materials to be lacking in the clarity and “spirit” of their translation however, one that does succeed is the English edition of Roger Chartier’s work, *The Cultural Uses of Print in Early Modern France*. In this book, a collection of eight essays originally published as separate articles, the expressed goal of the author is to “explore how printed materials were used by most

members of the French urban populace...those who were neither fully literate nor completely illiterate.” As a result, Eisenstein claims that the work addresses primarily the concerns of social historians rather than intellectual historians. However, she notes the “discussion of methodology in the introduction provides recommended reading for historians at large” and that on the whole, Chartier has “succeeded in the very difficult task he has set for himself.” (*Sixteenth Century Journal* 20 (1): 130).

Book reviews on works with an emphasis on revolutionaries and Revolutions

As noted previously, Eisenstein’s work as a reviewer reflects her own scholarly expertise and interests. In this section, I will examine several reviews pertaining to works about Revolution and revolutionaries and the impact of print on both. As can be seen in the reviews explored below, Eisenstein appreciates a writing style that both excites the reader and encourages them to continue to explore both the book at hand and the topic under discussion. In addition, she demonstrates her intolerance of writers who do not satisfactorily complete and defend their argument. In addition, she is quick to remark upon and identify where a reader may find unexpected value in a work, such as in her lengthy and well-argued review of Janet L. Polasky’s *Revolution in Brussels* below.

While Eisenstein argues “revolutionary historiography is not the author’s [Polasky] strongpoint” and identifies flaws both in her arguments and the “graceless style and awkward locutions,” she also recognizes that “the study has the undeniable merit of pointing to a relatively neglected and potentially rewarding area for investigation by

anyone interested in the comparative study of revolutions,”...placing “future historians in her [Polasky’s] debt.” (*The Journal of Modern History* 61 (4): 829-833).

Similarly, in her review of François Furet’s “*Revolutionary France, 1770-1880*,” Eisenstein comments that the original volume in French was richly illustrated and included “color illustrations, informative maps and charts and biographical vignettes.” Unfortunately (according to Eisenstein), this material has been eliminated from the English version giving this volume the “forbidding appearance of a college textbook, an appearance that is reinforced by the addition of a forty page annotated bibliography.” Notwithstanding, Eisenstein claims this volume is worth reading because it “shows how a gifted historian has managed to construct a liberal tradition out of the unpromising materials provided by the often antiliberal men and measures of nineteenth century France.” (*American Historical Review* 99 (4): 1323-1324).

However in *The Damiens Affair and the Unraveling of the Ancien-Regime, 1750- 1770*” by Dale K. VanKley, Eisenstein states VanKley uses the story of the trial and execution of the would-be assassin of Louis XV in 1757 as the basis for his “thesis concerning the unraveling of the *ancient regime*.” While Eisenstein finds that “his reconstruction of the *mentalité* and social milieu of the would-be assassin is good enough to stand on its own,” she argues that the topics “fail to mesh despite strenuous efforts at linkage.” In addition, Eisenstein claims that VanKley fails to address other failed plots and conspiracies and their impact on the “unraveling”, noting that the author has failed to “provide an adequate basis for [his] conclusion.” (*Journal of Modern History* 57(4): 748-750).

Finally, in *“France and North America-Revolutionary Experience”* by Mathé Allain and Glenn R Conrad, a compilation of a group of papers originally delivered at a symposium “centered on the revolutionary experience,” Eisenstein argues that “An already broad theme...[is] stretched out of shape to act as a catchall for papers that are not related to each other.” She cautions the term ‘revolutionary experience’ is “loosely interpreted so that there is less substance” than expected and argues the book “traverses familiar territory” and remarks the scholarly reader will “find no surprises here.” (*Eighteenth Century Studies* 10 (1): 127-129).

Unfavorable Reviews

Other unfavorable reviews, similar to the ones above, follow a comparable pattern in their inadequacies or deficiencies as perceived by Eisenstein. In the following reviews one can see the primary flaws identified by Eisenstein: the author(s) do not credibly demonstrate their argument, the work does not add to the scholarly discussion and body of knowledge, and translations that are not true to the spirit of the original works.

In her review of Frederick G. Kilgore’s, *The Evolution of the Book*, Eisenstein notes several flaws. She argues that he does not “persuasively demonstrate his theory but rather the “borrowed terminology [he uses] serves simply as a modish way of packaging a familiar narrative.” She goes on to claim that the author “draws indiscriminately on outdated secondary accounts that includes several general surveys”

instead of demonstrating new scholarly ways of approaching the material. (*Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 30 (4): 635-636.)

Similarly in her discussion of *Books and the Sciences in History* by Marina Frasca-Spada and Nick Jardine, Eisenstein argues there is an “absence of any clear rationale” for the selection of the article or author for inclusion and claims the book “undermines and problematizes a natural, time-honored way of linking books with the sciences.” (*American Historical Review* 106 (5): 1745-1746.)

In the English translation of “[Henri-Jean] Martin’s magisterial survey of the seventeenth-century French book trade,” “*Print, Power, and People in 17th Century France*,”⁷⁰ Eisenstein claims that while the “main outlines of the study remain undisturbed...the loss of substance comes less from abridgement than from faulty translation.” She argues that the translator makes a “misguided attempt to make the work conform to current historical fashions,” rendering the work not only “unfaithful to the letter but also to the spirit of Martin’s first major work.” (*Renaissance Quarterly* 48(3): 626-628).

A second failed translation involves the work of Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin. According to Eisenstein, *L’Apparition du livre*, is “still unsurpassed as a work of synthesis;” a superb survey of the printed book trade in early modern Europe. She notes in her review that “as long ago as 1930, Berr lined up Lucien Febvre to serve as the author of this particular volume.”⁷¹ However, while this apparently was the plan for the original work, in the end it appears that Martin did the majority of the writing, while Febvre supplied the earlier outline of the material. In the current English translation

⁷⁰ This work is an abridgement of Martin’s doctoral dissertation completed in 1969.

⁷¹ Eisenstein identifies Henri Berr as the editor of the *Evolution de l’humanité* series of which this was one in the series.

entitled “*Coming of the Book-Impact of Printing*, Eisenstein claims the work “ has the advantage of covering an interval that makes sense—both in terms of print technology and periodization schemes” given that the “early modern period coincides with the age of the hand press.” However, while praising the original work for its “richly annotated and magnificently classified bibliography...which provides helpful guidance to a backlog of special studies,” she laments that this has been omitted from the English version. In addition, Eisenstein argues that unfortunately the book has been “ill served by those responsible for the English translation on all counts.” She claims the “careless handling of proper names...[and the] inconsistent use of French and English forms...impair the book’s value for the uninformed reader.” She claims “Instead of stimulating interest in an intrinsically fascinating topic, *The Coming of the Book* in the English version is likely to have a deadening effect.” (*Journal of Modern History* 50 (3): 490-493).

Another book which (according to Eisenstein) threatens to “deaden the reader” is Alexandra Halasz’s work, *Marketplace of Print: Pamphlets and the Public Sphere in Early Modern England*. Eisenstein notes this book “appears in a series devoted to literary theories associated with...historicism, poststructuralism, feminism, and Marxism.” Eisenstein argues that while the author claims to demonstrate that “Early modern pamphlets serve as an important vehicle for examining print culture,” and claims to “trace the...commodification of discourse,” she (Halasz) “undermines her running argument by refusing to meet [her protagonists] on [their] own ground,” her formulations are “unhelpful for historians,...and regrettably this book does more to deaden than to quicken the historical imagination.” (*Sixteenth Century Journal* 30 (1): 169-171.)

Finally, I will examine a work that is closely allied to Eisenstein’s interests,

Printing, Propaganda, and Martin Luther, ” by Mark U. Edwards, Jr. Edwards's study of Protestant and Catholic pamphlets published in the early years of the Reformation (1518-1530), proposes to explore “to what extent was the Reformation a ‘print event’ and what was Luther's role in the movement?” In addition, Edwards seeks to examine how readers gained access to print editions of Luther’s texts and ultimately how the lay reader interpreted Luther's message. According to Eisenstein, in his work Edwards “turns his attention to Luther’s first battles and offers a detailed account of pamphlet warfare in Strasbourg between 1518 and 1422.” She goes on to note this study contributes to “two historiographical debates, one over the role of printing in the Reformation and the other over the content and reception of Luther’s messages.” This is significant to Eisenstein’s work as they reflect her own claims and notions of the importance of printing in the spread of literacy and its impact on the reformation, her emphasis on interdisciplinary approaches, and the value she places on works that spark controversial debates within the scholarly history community. The review focuses on clear examples of where she feels he succeeds with his goals and where the work falls short, i.e. loosely organized, repetitive. She notes that while Edwards is “always looking for the larger issues at stake in historiographical debates,” she argues that his “self-imposed limits” of time and place, does not allow for a thorough investigation of his topic. (*Renaissance Quarterly*, Summer 1996 49 (2): 396-398).

Impact of Eisenstein’s Work

In her review of *Grub Street Abroad: Aspects of the French Cosmopolitan Press*, scholar Margaret C. Jacobs claims:

No scholar has done more than Elizabeth Eisenstein to put the history of printing into the mainstream of Western historical development. Her *Printing Press as an Agent of Change* is unrivalled as the single most important English language book about printing from the Reformation to the French Revolution. (*Eighteenth Century Studies* 27 (1): 121.)

As I have demonstrated, Eisenstein's research is important because it has helped to "inspire a generation of younger scholars to integrate the history of books and readers into the study of intellectual and cultural history—a generational change that is currently reshaping the historiography of all three movements that Eisenstein studied."⁷² In addition, her work has helped to advance the scholarly study of the book as a material object of cultural production and the impact and importance of printing in cultural history. Eisenstein's body of work has been instrumental in defining the notion of 'print culture'.

⁷² Anthony Grafton. "How Revolutionary Was the Print Revolution." *The American Historical Review* Vol. 107, No. 1.

Annotated Chronological Bio-Bibliography of Elizabeth Eisenstein

Biography

Elizabeth L. Eisenstein is currently Professor Emerita in the history department at the University of Michigan. She received the A.B. from Vassar College and an M.A. and Ph. D. from Radcliff College in 1953, having studied under Crane Brinton. She taught at the American University in Washington, D.C. from 1959-1974 and was the Alice Freeman Palmer Professor of History at the University of Michigan from 1975-1988. In addition to numerous other awards and honors, Prof. Eisenstein was a resident consultant for the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress in 1978, delivered the Harold Jantz Memorial Lecture (November, 1995) and has received fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities. Finally, in 1993 the National Council for Independent Scholars established the *Eisenstein Prize* which is awarded annually and recognizes “the best published article submitted by an NCIS member. The committee especially welcomes articles with an independent focus.”

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- _____. 2003. "Defining the Initial Shift: Some Features of Print Culture." in *The Book History Reader*. Finkelstein, David and Alistair McCleery, eds. London and New York: Routledge, 151-173. A compilation of essays which comprises the "first comprehensive volume to bring together a variety of work...examining key aspects of book history [which is] interdisciplinary in scope...and nature." Eisenstein picks as her point of departure the "establishment of presses in urban centers beyond the Rhineland during an interval that begins in the 1460s and coincides, very roughly, with the era of incunabula."
- _____. 2002. "An unacknowledged revolution revisited." *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 107, (1): 87-105. A brief assessment of the responses from the scholarly community for the past twenty years to her original work *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*.
- _____. 2002. "How to Acknowledge a Revolution--Reply." *The American Historical Review* 107 (1): 126-128. An editorial reply to Adrian Johns's article, "How to Acknowledge a Revolution." Johns is one of many new scholars who seeks to add to our knowledge of how the printing press and print technology influenced contemporary cultures. His criticism of Eisenstein's work is part of the basis for his book, *The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in the Making*.
- _____. 2000. *The printing revolution in early modern Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. An abridged version of her seminal work, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*. Significantly smaller (300pp.) than the original work (794 pp.), the volume contains a fourteen page list of "selected readings" compared to the fifty-nine page bibliographical index of the original. In addition, it is illustrated with a variety of tipped in illustrations.
- _____. 1997. "From the printed word to the moving image. Technology and the Rest of Culture". *Social Research*, Fall 1997 V.64 (3) : 1049-1067. The text of a talk given to the New School for Social Research, Fall 1997. Eisenstein argues that "the creation of new forms of media, such as the Web, will not supplant print as a means of transferring information."
- _____. 1995. "The End of the Book +Reply to Richard Winslow Article Critique." *American Scholar* 65 (2): 319-320. Response letter. Winslow argues Eisenstein "dances all around McLuhan's central point [the medium is the message] without coping with it." He goes on to note "the one does not need to believe that the book will disappear in order to believe that electronic media shape our attitudes." While

Eisenstein agrees that “I did not address any of McLuhan’s sweeping claims,” she had a much more “limited aim in mind; namely, to demonstrate that the end of the book had been proclaimed many times before electronic media.”

- _____. 1995. “The End of the Book, Some perspectives on Media Change.” *American Scholarship* Vol. 64 (4): 541-555. Eisenstein addresses the ongoing debate on the predicted “end of the book” secondary to new and evolving technologies. She proposes to “place current attitudes in some sort of historical perspective...to consider reactions to previous changes affecting media.”
- _____. 1993. “Erasmus.” *The Times Literary Supplement* (4694): 15. Response letter.
- _____. 1993. “Grub Street Abroad-Reply.” *The Times Literary Supplement* (4692): 15. Response letter.
- _____. 1992. *Grub Street Abroad: Aspects of the Eighteenth Century French Cosmopolitan Press*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. This volume is a compilation of Eisenstein’s Lyell Lectures of 1989-1990. The book explores “not publishing history per se but its relevance to a selected set of issues associated with intellectual and cultural change.
- _____. 1990. “Who Read John Locke + Reply to Oscar Handlin.” *American Scholar* 59(3): 478. Letter “aimed only at reasserting...that cosmopolitan review journals...found their way into numerous eighteenth-century American college libraries and private collections.” Therefore, “They need to be taken into consideration”...by those, “concerned with the reception of John Locke in the colonies.”
- _____. 1986. *Print Culture and Enlightenment Thought*. The Sixth Hanes lecture. Chapel Hill] : Hanes Foundation, Rare Book Collection/University Library, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1986. Discusses the book industry and trade in the 18th Century Enlightenment.
- _____. 1984. “French Intellectual Traditions.” *The Times Literary Supplement* (4248): 969. Response letter
- _____. 1983. *Books and Society in History*. Kenneth Carpenter E., ed. Papers of the Association of College and Research Libraries Rare Books and Manuscripts Preconference, June 24-28, 1980. Boston. New York: R.R. Bowker. The collected proceedings of a conference held to “adduce the coming-of-age of a new international discipline: the history of the book, unified as never before by practitioners who are integrating French scholarly traditions of *histoire du livre* and Anglo-American analytical bibliography.”⁷³ Eisenstein’s essay examines the 15th century shift from manuscript to print culture and the economy within which it took place. In addition, she explores the impact of such modern technologies such as copy centers and word

⁷³ Will Goodwin. “Books and Society in History.” in *American Libraries* April 1983 14: 194- 96.

processors.

- _____. 1980. "Emergence of Print Culture in the West." *Journal of Communication* 30 (1): 99-106. A paper presented as the Englehard lecture at the Library of Congress, Sept. 23, 1977 just prior to the publishing of her book, *Printing Press As An Agent of Change*. A study of the general implications of the shift from script to print, the work also examines the role print played in the development of the Italian Renaissance, Reformation and early modern science.
- _____. 1970. "The Advent of Printing in Current Historical Literature: Notes and Comments on an Elusive Transformation" in *The American Historical Review* Vol. 75, (3): 727-743. An early paper, part of the exploration phase noted in the introduction prior to publishing *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*. Eisenstein reviews the current literature in print regarding the effect of printing on the fields of history and social history.
- _____. 1979. *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Eisenstein's seminal work.
- _____. 1959. *The first professional revolutionist: Filippo Michele Buonarroti (1761-1837), a biographical essay*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University. One volume in the *Harvard Historical Monographs* series. A study of the "pioneer in a new profession," that of the professional revolutionary.

Published Book Reviews

- _____. 2001. "The Cambridge history of the book in Britain." Lotte Hellinga and J.B. Trapp, eds. *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 52 (4): 737-738. The third volume of a seven volume collaborative series. In her review, Eisenstein argues that the "rational for devoting a volume to this particular interval is unclear." While she claims "the essays are of uneven quality," she notes that Nicholas Orme on 'Schools and school books' and Pamela Neville-Singleton on 'Press, politics and religion,' have written "two outstanding pieces." She also comments that the work "does provide a useful overview of recent research on early printed books and on late manuscript book production."⁷⁴
- _____. 2001. "Books and the Sciences in History." Frasca-Spada, M. and Jardine, Nick. *American Historical Review* 106 (5): 1745-1746. This collection of works originated in a seminar held by the Cambridge University Historiography Group.
- _____. 2000. "The Evolution of the Book." Frederick G. Kilgour. *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 30 (4): 635-636. Published by MIT Press, "The author, a

⁷⁴ Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Oct 2001 v52 i4 p737(2).

library-systems analyst, believes that the theory of ‘punctuated equilibrium,’ developed by evolutionary theorists to explain certain discontinuities, is applicable to the history of the book.”

- _____. 2000. “The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in the Making.” Johns, Adrian. *ISIS* 91 (2): 316-317. In this book, John’s rejects several of the arguments Eisenstein poses in *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*, as he explores the role and evolution of print culture and the history of the book as it was primarily practiced in early modern London.
- _____. 1999. “Marketplace of Print: Pamphlets and the Public Sphere in Early Modern England.” Halasz, Alexandra. *Sixteenth Century Journal* 30 (1): 169-171. According to Eisenstein this book “appears in a series devoted to literary theories associated with...historicism, poststructuralism, feminism, and Marxism.”
- _____. 1997. “The Future of the Book.” Nunberg, Geoffrey. *Papers of the Bibliographic Society of America* 91 (2): 256-261. A compilation of papers presented in July 1994 at the University of San Marino in which the participants offer their views on the social and cultural effects of digitization and the “death of the book.”
- _____. 1998. “Sir Philip Sydney and the circulation of manuscripts 1558-1640.” H.R. Woudhuysen. *American Historical Review* 10 (1): 173-174. A “compilation of works on manuscript culture in Tudor-Stuart England.” Eisenstein argues “It is too bad that Woudhuysen’s study...adopts such a restricted, insular view of a topic that seems so well suited to comparative perspectives.” She also remarks on his “unhelpful decision not to provide a selective or annotated bibliography” providing instead a “long indiscriminate list of all the titles that are cited in the text.”
- _____. 1996. “Printing, Propaganda, and Martin Luther.” Edwards, Mark U., Jr. *Renaissance Quarterly*, Summer 1996 49 (2): 396-398. Mark Edwards’s study of Protestant and Catholic pamphlets published in the early years of the Reformation (1518-1530), proposes to examine “to what extent was the Reformation a ‘print event’ and what was Luther’s role in the movement?” In addition, Edwards seeks to examine how readers gained access to print editions of Luther’s texts and ultimately how the lay reader interpreted Luther’s message.
- _____. 1995. “Print, Power, and People in 17th Century France.” Martin, Henri-Jean. *Renaissance Quarterly* 48(3): 626-628. The English translation of “Martin’s magisterial survey of the seventeenth-century French book trade.” This is an abridged version of Martin’s doctoral dissertation, completed in 1969.
- _____. 1994. “Printing the written word: The Social History of Books 1450-1520.” Hindman, Sandra L. *Renaissance Quarterly* 47 (1): 155-157. A collection of papers initially presented at a conference held in 1987 entitled “From scribal culture to print culture.” The contributors argue that the shift from manuscript to print culture was more “evolutionary than revolutionary” in direct opposition to Eisenstein’s claims.

- _____. 1994. "Revolutionary France, 1770-1880." Furet, François. *American Historical Review* 99 (4): 1323-1324. The English translation of the fourth volume in a five volume set published by Hachette.
- _____. 1993. "In the public eye-a history of reading in modern France, 1800-1940." Allen, James Smith. *Technology and Culture* 43 (1): 140-142. Focuses on the study of reading after 1800. While Eisenstein notes the work "contains the results of his own archival research and reflects his special interest in reader reception theory," she finds that Allen "traverses much of the same ground and draw[s] on the same artists" as Martyn Lyon's earlier work *Le triomphe du livre: Une histoire sociologique la lecture dan la France du XIX siècle* and argues that his "treatment is diffuse and disorganized."
- _____. 1991. "The Reformation and the Book-Europe of the Printed Word (1517-c.1570)." Gilmont, Jean-François, ed. *Sixteenth Century Journal* 22 (3): 583-584. This essay collection proposes to explore "what influence did the printed book have on the Reformation and, conversely, what influence did the Reformation have on the development of printing." Eisenstein notes that while some readers will "find little that is new, the contributors do supply useful summaries of previous studies,"...however, neither "his [Gilmont's] preface nor his brief (and lame) conclusion (nor the essays in between) are likely to help us come to terms with the major problem he has posed."
- _____. 1990. "History and power of writing." Martin, Henri-Jean. *American Historical Review* (5): 1487-1488. "A wide-ranging synthesis covering the fate of writing from the first cave drawings to the proliferation of electronic media." Unfortunately, according to Eisenstein, "this ambitious undertaking stretches the author's reach beyond his grasp." She argues that "large sections seem more relevant to a history of publishing...than to the topic at hand." In addition, the "French experience is taken as paradigmatic" while the criteria for the selection of work from the modern era becomes increasingly unclear.
- _____. 1989. "The Book in Renaissance Europe-Proceedings of the 28th Tours Colloquium on Humanist Studies." Aquilon, Pierre., Martin, Henri-Jean and Desrousilles, F.Dupuigrenet, eds. *Renaissance Quarterly* 42 (3): 540-543. This is a collection of approximately thirty papers, dedicated to the memory of Philippe Renouard. Eisenstein argues that "taken as a whole...the collection illustrates the diverse methods and approaches which characterize current 'book and society' studies." While she notes that in most of the essays, "information is emphasized and interpretation downplayed," the final essay by Michael Screech clearly demonstrates "why intellectual historians ought to master book history....Underlining the ...recent development of fruitful collaboration between bibliographers and Renaissance Historians."
- _____. 1989. "The Cultural Uses of Print in Early Modern France." Chartier, Roger.

Sixteenth Century Journal 20 (1): 130-130. The English translation of a collection of eight essays, originally published as separate articles. The expressed goal of the author is to “explore how printed materials were used by most members of the French urban populace...those who were neither fully literate nor completely illiterate.” As a result, Eisenstein claims that the work addresses primarily the concerns of social historians rather than intellectual historians. However, she notes the “discussion of methodology in the introduction provides recommended reading for historians at large” and that on the whole, Chartier has “succeeded in the very difficult task he has set for himself.”

- _____. 1989. “Press and Politics in Pre-Revolutionary France.” Censer, Jack R., Popkin, Jeremy D. *American Historical Review* 94 (2): 456-457. A collection of essays that seek to explore the history of the journal. In addition, according to Eisenstein, there is a more modest claim “upheld by most of the essays: that periodical coverage of political contestation was less muted and more extensive than hitherto assumed.” While Eisenstein notes “lively coverage of French politics invariably came from journals published abroad,” and comments on the lack of discussion on this topic from the contributing scholars, she claims “their collection [should be] required reading for anyone concerned with the eighteenth –century political press.”
- _____. 1989. “Reading reconsidered.” (Criticism of Robert Darnton’s *Toward a History of Reading*). *The Wilson Quarterly* 14 (1): 140-141. Eisenstein remarks that Darnton “has a remarkable gift for seeing possibilities in unpromising material and for injecting new life into overworked fields.” However, she also claims that his “case histories...do not lead toward uncharted territory but takes us back over familiar ground.” In addition, she questions his definition and identification of ordinary readers by “looking at book margins for clues” and wonders how many “ordinary readers” were “likely to own copies of *The Decline and Fall*?” Finally, she argues “to be asked to think about the way Luther, Marx and Mao ‘changed the course of history’ is bad enough, to be asked to ponder how their reading of certain books turned the trick is too much!”
- _____. 1989. “Revolution in Brussels.” Polasky, Janet L. *The Journal of Modern History* 61 (4): 829-833. This monograph is “aimed at revising previous treatments of the Belgian uprisings of 1787-93 in the light of recent research indicating that late eighteenth century Belgium economy was in a dynamic ‘proto-industrial’ phase.”
- _____. 1985. “The Damiens Affair and the Unraveling of the Ancien-Regime, 1750-1770.” VanKley, Dale K. *Journal of Modern History* 57(4): 748-750. Van Kley uses the story of the trial and execution of the would-be assassin of Louis XV in 1757 as the basis for his “thesis concerning the unraveling of the *ancient regime*.”
- _____. 1984. “Essays on the Heritage of the Renaissance from Homer to Gutenberg—The Growth of Knowledge and its Transmission through the 1st Printed Books.” Stillwell, Margaret Bingham. *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 78 (4): 504-507. While working as a cataloger of incunabula, Miss Stilwell became interested in

the stories behind the transmissions of the texts she was working on. According to Eisenstein, her earlier works “surveyed the first two decades of incunabula and the first century of scientific printing,” whereas this volume proposes to “provide a purposefully brief and substantially chronological guide to the print history of some of the texts that became incunables.” However, Eisenstein argues “the book under review does not fit this description.” In addition, she claims that “as the reading progressed it became ever more difficult to decide what main theme and/or organizing principle” the author was following and questions that the author’s “speculation...on problems of transmission” does not provide sound guidance in exploring these issues.

- _____. 1983. “Victims, Authority, and Terror-The Parallel Deaths of Dorleans, Custine Bailly and Malesherbes.” Kelly, George Armstrong. *Journal of Modern History* 55 (4): 736-738. According to Eisenstein this book is “designed to cast new light on the Jacobin Terror of 1793-94 by examining four figures who helped to initiate the Revolution in 1789 only to be executed as enemies of the state before Thermidor.” However, she argues that Kelly “never makes clear which Terror and what Jacobins he has in mind.” In addition she claims that the four cases are not only “quantitatively insignificant [but also] qualitatively skewed—selected to prove a thesis which has been developed without considering the actual phasing of the Jacobin Terror.”
- _____. 1978. “Coming of the Book-Impact of Printing.” Febvre, Lucien and Henri-Jean Martin. *Journal of Modern History* 50 (3): 490-493. The English translation of Febvre and Martin’s superb survey of the printed book trade in early modern Europe, *L’Apparition du livre*, which according to Eisenstein is “still unsurpassed as a work of synthesis.”
- _____. 1976. “Essays on Manuscripts and Rare Books.” Lutz, Cora E. *Sixteenth Century Journal* 7 (2): 125-126. A compilation of sixteen, mostly previously published essays focusing on “a painstaking concern about detail, reflected in descriptions of single texts,...coupled with an uncritical and, sometimes thoughtless handling of broader issues,” such as the notion espoused by Dr. Curt Bühler, that “the invention of the press came at a time exactly suitable for its advent.” Eisenstein argues that this “volume is aimed less at professional historians than at book loving connoisseurs,...perpetuating a tradition cherished by the readership she [the author] serves.”
- _____. 1976. “France and North America-Revolutionary Experience.” Allain, Mathé, Conrad, Glenn R. *Eighteenth Century Studies* 10 (1): 127-129. A group of papers originally published as part of an academic conference representing according to Eisenstein, “An already broad theme...stretched out of shape to act as a catchall for papers that are not related to each other.” She cautions the term ‘revolutionary experience’ is “loosely interpreted so that there is less substance” than expected. Finally she argues the book “traverses familiar territory” and remarks the scholarly reader will “find no surprises here.”

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