

An Experiment in Publication: Digitizing the Archive

1. This collection of essays started out as quite a different book. My original proposal to the author (as early as 2012) was for us to come up with a “Marjorie Perloff Reader.” I had in mind a volume that would bring together key selections from Perloff’s work (mainly her books). And such a collection, I thought, would make her ideas accessible to readers, especially those who would like an introduction to her important writings and to see her critical project as a whole. But the plan didn’t work out for one main reason: “interested” publishers surmised that it would be quite costly to publish a book like this, which is essentially a collection of chapters from previously published books (copyrighted by major university presses).
2. In 2015, when I was made general editor of the *Critical Voices* series of Sussex Academic Press, I wanted to revive the project aborted earlier due to complications caused by too much assertion of rights and ownerships over words and other possessions. I wanted it to be a Reader with a twist, so to speak. My intention was still pretty much the same: to introduce the readers to the configurations of Perloff’s critical ideas by presenting her essays on key poets and thinkers, specifically those who have made defining marks in the development of her poetics over five decades.

The “twist” lies in the fact that this New Reader would consist entirely of essays that haven’t been previously collected and included in any of Perloff’s books. Part of the plan was for us to include works that haven’t been published earlier. I still hope to publish such a book one day soon.

3. Unfortunately, in the course of the preparation of the New Reader, I was made to realize that my understanding of the Word (and the world that OWNS it!) was terribly naïve. The new format of the Reader didn’t spare Marjorie and me from the tough demands of the Law concerning the reproduction of copyrighted materials, be they in the form of artistic image, or poetry, or even statements—critical or otherwise—made by so-and-so on such-and-such that appeared in this-and-that publication. (Since Marjorie has already cited a few of these problematic instances in her Preface, I’ll leave the case at that and move on.)
4. The current collection—quite a different book—has been assembled in view of current copyright issues so as to put Marjorie’s early critical work back out into the world. Marjorie thought that it might be a good idea to come up with an unprecedented format for doing a book, namely, to “publish” and make her early essays accessible (without monetary demands on her readers), that is, on her own website. And for this endeavor (which I would like to consider to be a first in a series of them), Marjorie wanted us to focus on the uncollected essays and reviews she published during the pre-digital period from 1964 to 1994.
5. The book has twenty-six chapters and is divided into two sections: Essays and Reviews. Except for chapter 16—“What to Make of a Diminished Thing (On Philip Larkin)” —which was repackaged based on a freely formatted version of the paper provided by EBSCO, all the essays are presented as they appeared in their first instance

of publication. We thought that this format would be most helpful to readers, especially those who'll be citing from this corpus of Perloff's essays in their own works. In the case of the Reviews, unfortunately, we have to re-encode the texts and reformat them since scanned images of them (whose pages had yellowed and deteriorated) came out a bit scratchy. Nevertheless, scaled-down images of the review essays (as they were printed originally) have been appended at the bottom of the chapters for the readers' reference. Also, each page has been given a book pagination, so that guided by the Table of Contents, the readers can navigate their way through the book with ease. And the bibliographical details of each essay are provided in the Contents.

6. For my own small part in the book's preparation, I would like to thank, Riddick Matthew "Doc" Recoter, Joanne Castañares, Joanna Marie "JM" Cabantog, and Louise Jezareth "Reith" Antipala for saving me, a true heir of the Flintstones, from the endless "returns" of technology. Doc, like myself, is a Perloff fan, and thus was a great sounding board in various courses and at different stages in the preparation of this "different" book. And it's my great pleasure to thank Amaranth Borsuk for her lovely cover design and for her sound advice on how to improve the quality of the layout presentation.
7. "I was thinking of using as a motto for my book a quotation from *King Lear*: 'I'll teach you differences.' ... The remark 'You'd be surprised' wouldn't be a bad motto either...." Thus says Ludwig Wittgenstein, whose life and ideas have, over the years, been a key inspiration to Perloff in the "framing" of her differential poetics. Working with Marjorie (luckily again) on this project has surely taught me the critical lesson of differences. And indeed, what a great pleasure it is for me to find in this different space of texts from a different time, an occasion to re-frame one's motto, to unhinge (from) one's self, again and again.

8. For *Modernists, Avant-Gardists, Contemporaries: Essays of the First Three Decades, 1964-94*, and to all its readers as well, I would think “the remark ‘You’d be surprised’ wouldn’t be a bad motto either....”

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