

Marjorie G. Perloff – Biography

The Austrian-American literary scholar Marjorie Perloff was born Gabriele Mintz on 28th September 1931 in Vienna. She is the daughter of lawyer Maximilian Mintz and economist Ilse Mintz. Her grandfather Richard Schüller was a high-ranking Austrian official in the foreign ministry and envoy to the League of Nations who had to flee Europe on account of the National Socialists' persecution of Jews in 1938. Her parents also managed to escape Austria for the United States in 1938 – when Gabriele was six-and-a-half years old – and the family moved to Riverdale, Bronx, a district of New York City. Marjorie Mintz's brother Walter Mintz (1929–2004) became an investment banker. As a teenager, Gabriele Mintz changed her first name to Marjorie. She studied at Oberlin College from 1949 to 1952, graduating *magna cum laude* and *Phi Beta Kappa* from Barnard College in 1953. In 1954 she married the cardiologist Joseph K. Perloff (1924–2014), with whom she has daughters Carey Perloff, a playwright and theater director, and Nancy Perloff, a curator.

Perloff went on to study at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., earning an M.A. in 1956 and a Ph.D. in 1965 with a doctoral thesis on W. B. Yeats. Perloff taught at the Catholic University between 1966 and 1971, and as Professor of English at the University of Maryland, College Park (1971–1976). From 1976 to 1986 she was Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of Southern California. The following years she taught as Sadie Dernham Patek Professor of Humanities at Stanford University (1990–2000) until her retirement in 2001. She returned to the University of Southern California as an emeritus professor, teaching English. In 1997 she became a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Perloff initially dedicated her work to the poets W.B. Yeats, Robert Lowell and Frank O'Hara, on whom she published books. Her focus then shifted towards the contemporary literary avant-garde. In 1981, she published the work *The Poetics of Indeterminacy: Rimbaud to Cage*, which led to her publication on avant-gardist movements *The Futurist Moment: Avant-Garde, Avant-Guerre, and the Language of Rupture* (1986, reprinted in 1994), as well as several other publications. In her work *Wittgenstein's Ladder: Poetic Language and the Strangeness of the Ordinary* (1986) Perloff branched off into philosophy. For *Differentials: Poetry, Poetics, Pedagogy*, published in 2004, she was awarded the Robert Penn Warren Prize in 2005, and received an "Honorable Mention" for the Robert Motherwell Prize of the Dedalus Foundation. Her recollections of Vienna and her escape were published in 2004 in the work *The Vienna Paradox*. In 2010 she published *Unoriginal Genius: Poetry by Other Means in the New Century*. Perloff has lectured at most of the major US universities as well as at universities and during galas in Europe, Asia and Latin America. She has held Guggenheim, NEH, and Huntington fellowships, served on the Advisory Board of the Stanford Humanities Center, and is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Perloff is currently Scholar-in-Residence at the University of Southern California.

Perloff has promoted poetics outside of the mainstream, for instance the works of Louis Zukofsky, Kenneth Goldsmith and Brazilian Poetry. Her work on contemporary American poetry, and in particular poetry associated with the avant-garde, including "Language Poetry" and the Objectivist poets, has opened up the "Official Verse Culture" to critique and dialogue from outside the classrooms and lecture halls, though US poetry continues to be divided into categories such as "experimental", "mainstream" and "spoken word".

In 2001 she gave the British Academy's Sarah Tryphena Phillips Lecture in American Literature and History on Gertrude Stein's "Differential Syntax". Marjorie Perloff teaches and writes on poetry and poetics from the 20th and 21st century – from a US and comparative perspective – and on intermedia and the visual arts. Her essays and literary criticisms have been published in the *Times Literary Supplement* (TLS) and *The Washington Post*, among others. In 2008/09 Perloff acted as Weidenfeld Visiting Professor of European Comparative Literature in St Anne's College, Oxford. In 2006 she was the president of the Modern Language Association. In 2012 Perloff was accepted into the American Philosophical Society.