

# H-Diplo | The Robert Jervis International Security Studies Forum

## Forum on the Importance of the Scholarship of Dorothy Borg, Part II



Dorothy Borg, undated;  
all photos courtesy of  
Professor Carole Gluck.

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Editor: Diane Labrosse | Commissioning Editor: Warren I. Cohen | Production Editor:  
Christopher Ball

### Contents

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Introduction by Warren I. Cohen, Emeritus, University of Maryland, Baltimore County and Michigan State University.....	2
Essay by Rosemary Foot, Professor Emerita, and Senior Research Fellow in International Relations, University of Oxford .....	4
Essay by Carol Gluck, Columbia University.....	6
Essay Steven I. Levine, Emeritus, University of Montana .....	9

## Introduction by Warren I. Cohen, Emeritus, University of Maryland, Baltimore County and Michigan State University

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For insight into Dorothy Borg's scholarship, readers will find Part I of the tribute to her most useful—although even then none of us could avoid mention of her magnetism.<sup>1</sup> In the essays that follow, three very different scholars, each with a different perspective, describe how they were drawn into her orbit.

Dorothy was genuinely interested in our work and in our lives. None of us knew her before she had reached her sixties, largely past the drama of her earlier life. She lived alone and delighted in sharing lunch or dinner with each of us, and we were delighted to have so charming and thoughtful an audience. The door to her office was always open, and we were always welcome to drop in on her. She would set aside her own work and interrogate us about ours—and about our families. Inevitably, whatever our principal research interests were, she persuaded us of the importance of studying American-East Asian Relations, the field she had established with the assistance of John Fairbank, Richard Leopold, Ernest May, and Arthur Schlesinger.

A young Carol Gluck, not yet the preeminent scholar of Japanese history, was assigned the office next to Dorothy's. In her essay, Carol describes Dorothy's impact on her life and work over the decades that followed. Rosemary Foot, pre-Oxford, spent only six months at Columbia with Dorothy but retained contact for the rest of Dorothy's life, even though Dorothy took a much different and less critical approach to American policy during the Korean War. Nancy Tucker and I met Rosemary thanks to Dorothy; Nancy and I became lifelong friends with Rosemary in the process.

Steve Levine had a somewhat different relationship. To be sure, Dorothy was interested in and admired his scholarship, but he, as much as Nancy and I, became part of her family. Steve's very personal association with her is apparent in his essay.

Dorothy Borg was an extraordinary woman, still elegant as she turned 90, still intellectually engaged. She enriched the lives, personal as well as professional, of all of us who gained her interest.

### Participants:

**Warren I. Cohen** is Distinguished University Professor, Emeritus, at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County and Michigan State University. He has written 13 books and edited eight others. He is currently preparing a new edition of *East Asia at the Center*. He has served as editor of *Diplomatic History*, president of the Society of Historians of American Foreign relations, and chairman of the Department of State Advisory Committee on Historical Diplomatic Documentation. He has been a consultant on Chinese affairs for various governmental organizations

Professor (Emeritus) **Rosemary Foot** is a Senior Research Fellow in the Department of Politics and International Relations at the University of Oxford, a Research Associate of the University's China Centre, and an Emeritus Fellow of St Antony's College, Oxford. In 1996, she was elected a Fellow of the British Academy. Her research interests cover security relations in the Asia-Pacific, human rights, China-US relations, and the implications of China's resurgence for global and regional order.

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<sup>1</sup> H-Diplo/ISSF Forum on the Importance of the Scholarship of Dorothy Borg, Warren I Cohen, Akira Iriye, and Lloyd Gardner; ed., Diane Labrosse, 29 April, 2022; <https://issforum.org/forums/34>.

**Carol Gluck** is George Sansom Professor of History and former Chair of the Committee on Global Thought at Columbia University.

**Steven I. Levine** is Research Faculty Associate in the Department of History and non-resident Senior Fellow at the Maureen & Mike Mansfield Center at the University of Montana. Born in New York City in 1941, he received his B.A. from Brandeis University in 1962 and Ph.D. from Harvard in 1972. During his fifty-year academic career he taught at half a dozen universities, most recently at the University of Montana where he was Mansfield Professor of Asia-Pacific Studies. He continues to teach adult education courses in MOLLI, the Montana Osher Lifelong Learning Institute. He and his wife Madeline G. Levine, live in Hillsborough, North Carolina.

## Essay by Rosemary Foot, Professor Emerita, and Senior Research Fellow in International Relations, University of Oxford

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I first met Dorothy Borg over 40 years ago, having been introduced to her by my friend and then work colleague, the late Professor Christopher Thorne. The relationship between Christopher and Dorothy was warm and playful as well as hugely respectful. Dorothy could not have been more delighted when Christopher was awarded the Bancroft prize for his book *Allies of a Kind*—the first non-American to receive that prize—an award that Dorothy herself had won with her book *The United States and the Far Eastern Crisis of 1933-1938*.<sup>1</sup> Christopher once told me that he had pretended to Dorothy that he had neither the requisite clothes for the award ceremony, nor had prepared a speech. She was most alarmed and spent some time and effort pressing him to take the occasion more seriously. He finally relented and revealed in fact he had both things in hand and much laughter (relieved on Dorothy's part no doubt) between the two ensued.

For Christopher, and then for me, Dorothy's work was a model—rigorous, accessible, perceptive, and always written with an eye to providing the broader context for key policy decisions. I benefitted enormously from the friendship between Christopher and Dorothy, which helped convince Dorothy that she should take me under her wing. That first meeting with Dorothy was followed by many others on each of my trips to New York, which averaged about twice a year except when I had longer periods of research leave. An American Council of Learned Societies/Fulbright Fellowship took me to the East Asian Institute of Columbia University for six months in 1981-82, and opened many more opportunities to spend time with Dorothy and for her to work on trying to turn me into a proper student of US-East Asian relations.

Invariably, I would call in on Dorothy in her office in the East Asian institute and she would be reading and taking notes in pencil on a yellow, lined, legal pad. We would go to her regular lunch spot (tuna sandwiches being her particular favorite) and start our discussion. The Maoist period figured prominently, her concerns often focusing on the costs endured by ordinary Chinese as Chairman Mao Zedong's often violent revolutionary, state-building, experiment unfolded. We talked about the United States too, particularly the McCarthy era which had shaped key parts of her life and political thinking. But we also discussed my first major research project—one not based on my Ph.D. but on a topic area that was relatively new to me, US-China relations during the Korean War. She shared many books from her copious library and pointed me to the places and archives that I needed to visit to make progress on my research. She encouraged me to pursue that topic area when others were doubtful that the time was yet ripe for a major study of this period.

It was fortunate that her book, edited with Waldo Heinrichs, entitled *Uncertain Years: Chinese-American Relations, 1947-1950*,<sup>2</sup> came out in 1980 just as I was tentatively embarking on my research on the Korean conflict. That book, covering a period that Dorothy rightly saw as critical in Chinese-American relations with long-standing consequences, focused not only on US decision-making but also on Chinese Nationalist and Chinese Communist policies and perspectives. The volume had been crafted with great care, all of the chapters being based on primary archival materials and offering new perspectives that led me to appreciate that the Cold War in Asia had unfolded in quite different ways from that of Europe.

The process of creating the volume involved a pre-publication conference. Some chapters in the final text also included conference discussant notes. This approach provided me with crucial pointers for ways to engage in academic scholarship. At that stage I was very new to the academic profession, with little

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<sup>1</sup> Christopher Thorne, *Allies of a Kind: the United States, Britain and the War Against Japan, 1941-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978); Dorothy Borg, *The United States and the Far Eastern Crisis of 1933-1938* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964).

<sup>2</sup> Dorothy Borg and Waldo Heinrichs, eds., *Uncertain Years: Chinese-American Relations, 1947-1950* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980).

professional experience of organizing wide-ranging academic events, and even less awareness of the best ways of receiving academic criticism and delivering it on the work of others. The volume came out one year after the normalization of China-US relations and this also influenced the way I came to think about the interconnectedness between contemporary and past developments. But perhaps it was the willingness and ability to look at the world not simply from the perspective of Washington, but also from Beijing and Taipei that most impressed. The insights to be gained from such an approach stayed with me.

It was also particularly important to my progress that Dorothy introduced me to the Society for the History of American Foreign Relations and to a range of scholars active in that organization that she believed would be helpful to deepening my appreciation of American-East Asian relations. How right she was. I owe her for putting me in touch with several scholars who have influenced my thinking and writing. I came to count a number of them as good friends. The list, by no means exhaustive, includes Warren Cohen, Nancy Tucker, Carol Gluck, Akira Iriye, Bruce Cumings, Marilyn Young, Steven Levine, Michael Hunt, and Michael Schaller.

Without Dorothy's willingness to act as mentor, much of this may not have happened or would have taken much longer to bring about. The quality of my life and personal experiences would have been reduced. Dorothy's kindness to a young, British scholar with no prior experience of working in US archives, or of working as a historian at all was life-changing. I acknowledge a huge debt to her and shall always cherish my memories of our time together.

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 Essay by Carol Gluck, Columbia University
 

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## “The Magnetism of Dorothy Borg”

Nearly everyone who came within close range of Dorothy Borg felt the attraction: her personal elegance, her penetrating attentiveness, her devotion to the work of history, and something about the way she saw the world (and you) proved all but irresistible. She helped to found and also fund the contemporary field of the History of American-East Asian Relations. Having written her own path-breaking books on interwar relations with China from US sources,<sup>1</sup> she insisted that young historians of US relations with Asia study an Asian language and use Asian as well as American archives. For years, her presence first at Harvard and then at Columbia was a magnet for scholars who were interested in the United States and Asia, and who, having met and talked with her once, returned again and again, until the circle of what were later called “Borgians” came to include distinguished scholars from different countries, generations, and methodological persuasions. In her stateliness and dedication, she became the muse of things Asian-American historical.

What was it about Dorothy Borg that drew so many to her? Forceful, I think, was the intensity of her commitment to history. For the students and scholars who visited her office at Columbia—there was nearly always someone sitting in the chair opposite her desk, back to the open door (photo below), engaged in long conversation with the person everyone called Dorothy—she seemed to regard history as a kind of sacred calling. She *believed* in history-writing, in getting things straight, in historiographical myth-busting; she also



Dorothy Borg in her office at Columbia University, undated

believed that such things mattered in the real world of politics and policy. Her own work disputed the once common notion that Americans were historically, even emotionally, disposed toward China, showing instead not only how national interest drove Asian policy but also how the myth negatively affected US understanding of China both before and after the Second World War. Her 1957 article on Roosevelt’s “quarantine” speech of 1937 argued that rather than a break with isolationism, the speech was the president’s “groping attempt” to avert war with Japan.<sup>2</sup> Her conclusions, based on careful archival analysis, included a lifelong respect for the force of public opinion, which she sometimes linked to her early experience as a journalist. But the negative side of this respect derived more from the political attacks inflicted by McCarthyism on her friends and colleagues in the Institute for Pacific Relations, an experience she took both as a warning and as a challenge for historians to do their job and do it well.

Indeed, that was the motif threaded through those long conversations with her continual stream of visitors. Most of us Borgians felt extremely close to Dorothy, whether it was Hugh Borton, who liked to point out at age 87 that she was a year older than he was, or graduate students at a time when they were not meant to “trust anyone over thirty” who confided in her the details of their personal and political concerns. In fact, though she dropped hints of her own private life in bits and pieces over the years, she did seem to know an enormous amount about the private lives of others, mostly volunteered in the cocooning atmosphere of her office. She was a good listener certainly, and was quite willing to offer impressively sage advice on personal as well as academic matters. She was also a good asker of questions, and the one question she always asked her academic visitors, not long into the conversation, was “How’s the book?” Some found the answer ready to

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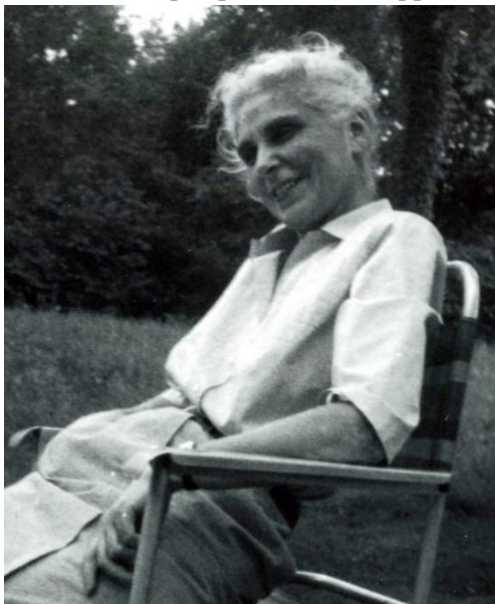
<sup>1</sup> Dorothy Borg, *American Policy and the Chinese Revolution, 1925-1928* (New York: American Institute of Pacific Relations: The Macmillan Company, 1947); Borg, *The United States and the Far Eastern Crisis of 1933-1938: From the Manchurian Incident through the Initial Stage of the Undeclared Sino-Japanese War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964).

<sup>2</sup> Borg, “Notes on Roosevelt’s ‘Quarantine’ Speech,” *Political Science Quarterly* 72, no. 3 (Sept., 1957): 405-433.

hand; others squirmed for lacking an adequate response. But the squirmers kept coming back, Dorothy kept asking the same question, and the books eventually kept getting written. Her interrogation wasn't personal; it was the scholarship that mattered. On that she never wavered.

My own story was somewhat different from the historians and political scientists drawn to Dorothy by her work and a common interest in China, diplomatic history, or international relations. When I began teaching modern Japanese history at Columbia in 1975, I was assigned the office next to Dorothy's in the East Asian Institute. I had not read or known of her books, knew very little about modern China and virtually nothing about US history, to a degree that I now find thoroughly shameful. I did know and work in an Asian language and archives, but in a frog-at-the-bottom-of-my-own-well sort of way. As my conversations with this mesmerizing presence next door drew me into Dorothy's magnetic field, the intellectual filings began to move in her direction. I listened and I learned; Dorothy became my tutor and my touchstone. It wasn't long before I was sitting in that chair nearly every day, and not much longer that I began to make tentative forays into the history of US-East Asian relations, at first in the classroom.

Dorothy's co-edited volume *Pearl Harbor as History*, based on a conference she organized in Japan in 1969 had appeared while I was in graduate school, bringing Japanese and American scholars together in what was then an unusual transpacific collaboration.<sup>3</sup> It must have influenced me because when I created the course "World War II in Japanese and American History," I decided that the only way to cover my ignorance and learn about the US perspective was to approach every topic from both sides. I invited historians of the US to speak



Borg, undated

on Versailles, Pearl Harbor, the atomic bombs, etc., and in the following session I gave the Japanese view on the same events. The stellar cast of visitors owed everything to Dorothy, since I had met all of them when they were visiting her. So it was that Martin Sherwin, Christopher Thorne, Michael Hunt, Waldo Heinrichs, Ernest May, and others over the years enlightened both the students and me on twentieth-century US history. And because they spoke first, I had to ask different questions of the Japanese material in order to provide a coherent counterpart to their presentations. I not only learned about the US; I saw Japan differently, too. This, Dorothy pronounced, was precisely the point of doing the history of US-East Asian relations from both sides.

I wrote about the US Occupation of Japan for a conference and volume in Dorothy's honor in the early 1980s, and in time I did learn something about US foreign relations and twentieth-century history, much of it from colleagues in Dorothy's world—from Warren Cohen, Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, Marilyn Young, Bruce Cumings, and many others.<sup>4</sup> I never became a proper historian of American-East Asian relations, but I did

become a Borgian through and through. At a reunion in 2019 Borgians came from near and far to remember her and regale one another with tales of the important part she played in our lives (photo below). It was an honor to co-host the gathering with Lien-Hang Nguyen, now the Dorothy Borg Professor of the History of American-East Asian Relations at Columbia. A historian of the Vietnam War, who works in Asian and US archives, Hang is a true Borgian in scholarship and in spirit. Thinking of Dorothy and her unflagging encouragement of new academic generations, for the reunion workshop we paired older Borgians with

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<sup>3</sup> Borg, *Pearl Harbor as History: Japanese-American Relations, 1931-1941* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973).

<sup>4</sup> *New Frontiers in American-East Asian Relations: Essays Presented to Dorothy Borg*, ed. Warren I. Cohen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).



younger scholars of the history of US-Asian relations, proving once again the vibrancy of the field Dorothy did so much to inspire.



2019 tribute to Borg, "New Directions in the History of US-Asian Relations," Columbia University, hosted by Carol Gluck and Lien-Hang Nguyen, now the Dorothy Borg Professor of the History of American-East Asian Relations at Columbia. FRONT ROW, left to right: Lien-Hang Nguyen, Peter Gluck, Susan Sherwin, Warren Cohen, Lloyd Gardner, Nancy Gardner, Mitsuko Iriye, Akira Iriye, Kate Epstein, Rosemary Foot, Carol Gluck; BACK ROW, left to right: Nick Cullather, Martin Sherwin, Larry Weiss, Chris Reardon, Ryan Irwin, Jennifer Miller, Paul Chamberlin, Cindy Ewing, Bruce Cumings, Michael Schaller.



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## Essay Steven I. Levine, Emeritus, University of Montana

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### “Remembering Dorothy Borg”

My mother was intensely jealous of Dorothy Borg. Long ago, whenever I visited my parents in New York from out of town, I stayed at their apartment, a short walk from Dorothy’s on Riverside Drive. Often, on day one, after as much family chitchat as I could tolerate, I would excuse myself.

“I have to go out now. I’ll be back in a few hours.”

“I suppose you’re going to see *the Borg woman* again,” my mother would spit out. It was an accusation, not a question. Apparently, she viewed me, her only son, as an incorrigible ingrate who serially violated the Fifth Commandment to *Honour thy father and thy mother*. It was a bum rap. I deserved at least a passing grade in Filial Piety 101 and loved my difficult mother well enough. But she sensed correctly that I loved Dorothy more.

Until I entered Dorothy Borg’s gravitational field, I was an errant asteroid in the academic universe. Once in orbit, even now thirty years after Dorothy’s passing, I remain centered because of her.

I first met Dorothy in 1972 at Columbia University where she was a scholar-in-residence at the East Asian Institute. I was a newly minted Harvard Ph.D. with a one-year post-doc fellowship at the Research Institute on Communist Affairs, the domain of Zbigniew Brzezinski, later Jimmy Carter’s national security adviser. Columbia’s counterpart to Henry A. Kissinger, Brzezinski was a firm and principled anti-Communist global strategic thinker. Moreover, Zbig, as we all called him, was tough-minded, simpatico, and accessible.

My friend Andrew J. Nathan, then a rapidly rising Chinese politics star at Columbia, first introduced me to Dorothy. It was a brief courtesy call to enable her to look over the new kid on the block. Dorothy at seventy was thirty-nine years my senior. It was not until the following year, however, that Dorothy and I got to know each other.

I have Zbig to thank. I was on the job market. The political science department at Ohio State dangled a tenure-track position in front of me at the same time Columbia offered a non-renewable three-year term contract. Columbia had enrolled more graduate students studying China than Mike Oksenberg and Andy Nathan could comfortably handle. A utility infielder was needed in the lineup, and I was available. My wife, a Harvard Ph.D. in Slavic literatures, already had a plum position at the CUNY Graduate Center in New York. Our daughter was five years old. I was loath to assume the long-term burden of a commuting marriage that accepting Ohio State’s offer would entail.

What to do? I knocked on Zbig’s door, seeking advice. He listened attentively, deliberated for ten seconds, and pronounced, “Stay here at Columbia. Why would you want to go to Ohio State?” Why indeed? Had I known that friendship with Dorothy Borg would be my signing bonus for three more years and out at Columbia, the attraction of a tenure-track appointment at OSU would have vanished instantly. Although I spent only four years of my fifty-year academic career at Columbia, my admiration of Dorothy, coupled with my lifelong friendship with Andy Nathan, suffused my view of Columbia, the only institution among the seven I worked at for which I developed and still retain an emotional bond. I was a troublemaker at all the others, prone to faultfinding and frequently challenging administrators until I slowly mellowed into a cantankerous old man.

When I joined the department of political science in 1973, I was inexperienced, unpublished, and insecure. I had lingered in graduate school for nearly a decade, feeding on federal and foundation fellowships when a new generation of specialists studying China and the Soviet bloc, fluent in “enemy languages” and cultures, was being trained to help Washington wage the Cold War. Now, as a thirty-two-year old rookie, I was in the starting lineup on a big league team after just one year in the minors.

I soon came to realize that one of Dorothy Borg’s personae was that of an academic talent scout. She fixed her knowing gaze on the current cohort of advanced graduate students and neophyte faculty at Columbia to assess their potential. As a founder of the field of American-East Asian relations, she was particularly interested in cultivating younger talent who could contribute to its development. That is probably how I came to her attention. Of course, I was only one, and far from the most talented, among the many whom Dorothy discovered and nurtured.

If Brzezinski brought me to Columbia, Fortuna brought Dorothy and me together. At the expiration of my fellowship year, I moved into my new ninth-floor office at the East Asian Institute to prepare for the 1973 fall semester. Last in the Chinese politics pecking order, I was assigned two political science courses that neither Mike Oksenberg nor Andy Nathan wanted to teach—Chinese foreign policy and East Asian international relations. At Harvard I had focused on domestic Chinese politics and written my dissertation on the Chinese civil war of 1945-1949. I had balked when the chair of the Government Department urged me to take a field in American politics to enhance my employability. Unwilling to heed this sage advice which, in retrospect, I was foolish to reject, I persuaded my doctoral adviser Benjamin I. Schwartz to intervene on my behalf. Fixated on China, I had no interest in studying American politics. Nor, for that matter, had I ever studied international relations. I possessed only an anti-Vietnam War political activist’s knowledge of US foreign policy and US relations with East Asia. My only classroom experience was one year at Merrimack College in Massachusetts where I taught three sections of modern European history, a subject I had never studied, along with an introductory course on modern East Asia. The course in East Asian international relations was the greatest challenge of my first year teaching at Columbia, and I possessed only a superficial knowledge of the history of US relations with East Asia, with Japan and Korea in particular.

Dorothy Borg to the rescue! She helped me organize my syllabus, gave me a long list of books to read, and, most of all, throughout the semester provided the moral support that enabled me to survive. Every two or three weeks, she invited me to lunch as her guest at the faculty club, which I had not even known existed. I always ordered a tuna salad sandwich, the cheapest item on the menu. Following her lead, our leisurely conversations focused on my work, but occasionally she would tell me what she was doing. I was slow to realize that she was now treating me as a colleague, the first person in my academic career to do so. It took me more than a few years to mature into an effective teacher, but Dorothy set me on the path. Even after I left Columbia, to work for a year at the RAND Corporation in Santa Monica, and then teach at American University in Washington, D.C., Dorothy was unfailingly supportive. She instilled in me her own interest in American-East Asian relations, and taught me to put China into perspective. It might be the Central Kingdom, she said, but it had not been at the center of American national interest in East Asia and the Pacific for most of the United States’ history. My awakened interest in American-East Asian relations came to full fruition in 2012 with the publication of *Arc Of Empire: America’s Wars in Asia from the Philippines to Vietnam*, a book I co-authored with my close friend and colleague Michael H. Hunt, a Yale trained historian whom I had first met in 1978 at a conference Dorothy organized.<sup>1</sup> Michael and I had become colleagues at UNC-Chapel Hill; the book was an outgrowth of a jointly taught graduate seminar and undergraduate history course. Dorothy’s spirit inhabits that book.

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<sup>1</sup>Michael H. Hunt & Steven I. Levine, *Arc of Empire: America’s Wars in Asia from the Philippines to Vietnam*, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

Until I encountered Dorothy I had never been properly mentored nor even really knew what a mentor was. Another brief excursion into my past may explain the role she played in my life as she did in the lives of so many others.

When I was a senior politics major at Brandeis University in 1961-1962, my adviser I. Milton Sacks predicted I might become an expert on Sino-Soviet relations, an incandescent topic as the alliance between the Soviet Union and China imploded. I already knew Russian and was determined to study Chinese in graduate school. (Later in my career, I churned out quite a few, mostly uninspired, journal articles and chapters on Sino-Soviet affairs.) At Harvard, Benjamin I. Schwartz, a leading specialist on Chinese communism and Chinese political philosophy, praised my work and published my first graduate seminar paper in the 1964 volume of *Papers on China*, a Harvard in-house publication.<sup>2</sup> After I had added Chinese to my quiver of foreign languages, he promptly read and praised each draft chapter of my dissertation on the Chinese civil war. But he rarely said anything more than “Very good,” before our conversation turned to other things. Without even opening the manuscript I brought to his office in 1970, John King Fairbank decided to publish my first translation of a Russian memoir about China in the 1920s in his Harvard East Asian Monograph series.<sup>3</sup> I was a promising grad student, no more, no less, and always felt like an outsider at Harvard.

As a fledgling assistant professor at Merrimack College (1971-72), commuting 500 miles round trip every week from New York, I inadvertently antagonized the provost, an Augustinian priest, by nominating the anti-Vietnam War peace activist Jesuits—Daniel and Philip Berrigan—for honorary degrees at graduation. (After I discovered that two star college hockey players in my class had cheated on an exam, the same provost curtly informed me that I should turn a blind eye to their transgression. They cheated with impunity in order to maintain their eligibility. I remembered the Church’s practice of selling indulgences prior to the Reformation. I was no Martin Luther so I acquiesced.)

I recount these experiences only because Dorothy was the first person in my academic career to both mentor me and treat me as a colleague. Moreover, in the course of just a short time, that collegial relationship blossomed into an intergenerational friendship such as I had never even imagined. Other senior professors at Columbia, notably historian C. Martin Wilbur, also treated me collegially, but Dorothy was exceptional.

More than anyone else, Dorothy also taught me what the study of history was all about. As a politics undergraduate major and Government Department graduate student at Harvard, I had never taken a class in historical methods. In general, I was allergic to methodology and the theoretical abstractions that were the common currency of political scientists, the lords of IR in particular. But historiography, to which Dorothy introduced me without speaking of it as such, while talking about many books and many scholars, was a different matter. She sharpened my understanding of history as a field in constant motion, a plain of contestation and controversy, of swirling currents of interpretation deriving from the lived experience of historians and the temper of the times as well as from the evidence they discovered in archives and other sources.

Moreover, in her own work Dorothy provided a model of what could be accomplished in the field of American-East Asian Relations by scholars without proficiency in East Asian languages. Among her works I single out what is her crowning achievement. Even as I disperse my library to lessen the burden on my heirs, one book I will never give away is *The United States and the Far Eastern Crisis of 1933-1938*, Dorothy’s 1965 Bancroft Prize-winning study that sits on a bookshelf next to my desk.<sup>4</sup> Later I had occasion to read

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<sup>2</sup> Levine, “Trotsky on China: The Exile Period,” *Papers on China*, 18 (December 1964): 90-128.

<sup>3</sup> Vera Vladimirovna Vishnyakova-Akimova, *Two Years in Revolutionary China 1925-1927*, Translated with an Introduction by Levine (Cambridge, MA: Harvard East Asian Monographs, 40, East Asian Research Center, 1971.)

<sup>4</sup> Dorothy Borg, *The United States and the Far Eastern Crisis of 1933-1938* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1964).

Dorothy's articles in *Far Eastern Survey* and the important books she co-edited with Shumpei Okamoto and Waldo Heinrichs.<sup>5</sup> These two conference volumes reflected the impressive development of a field that Dorothy herself had co-founded.

An immense benefit of Dorothy's solicitude for me and many other junior scholars was to be admitted into the cosmopolitan world of scholarship that she herself inhabited. She maintained a network of contacts in the United States and abroad. At "Dorothy conferences" in Mount Kisco, New York in 1978 and in Tempe, Arizona in 1982, I met and mingled with renowned senior scholars including Warren I. Cohen, John Lewis Gaddis, Waldo Heinrichs, and Akira Iriye. In attendance and presenting papers were brilliant younger scholars including Richard C. Bush, Steven M. Goldstein, Michael H. Hunt, Stephen R. MacKinnon, Qing Simei, and Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, all of whom became major figures in their fields of interest. At the Tempe conference on American journalists in China in the 1940s, John Hersey gave a keynote address, and veteran journalists including Tillman Durdin and Annalee Jacoby shared their stories from a critical era in the shaping of US views of China. Many of these connections were renewed at other conferences in other places, including Taipei in December 1982 and Beijing in October 1986. In Taipei, Chiang Kai-shek's younger son, General Chiang Weiguo, focused his wrath at America for failing to save China from Communism.

In Beijing at the high point in post-World War II US-China relations, the Peking University library gratefully accepted shipment of Dorothy's donation of her impressive library of books on American-East Asia relations and added it to their collection. At dinner my Chinese friends, all members of the Chinese Communist Party, spoke excitedly about the possibility of a free press and multi-party democracy. I had to verify with my best Chinese friend that I had correctly understood the rapid Mandarin of their conversation above the clatter of banquet plates. Soon after, unfortunately, Deng Xiaoping doused the hopes of Chinese Communist reformers and foreign sympathizers by cracking down on dissent and purging his own protégé Hu Yaobang for being soft on student protesters and flirting with Eurocommunist ideas of socialist democracy. It was an ominous premonition of the June 4 Massacre of 1989. One-party Leninist dictatorships and socialist democracy—European or otherwise—are incompatible.

After the Mount Kisco conference Dorothy contacted me to request my help in editing a conference paper by a scholar of my generation that contained important ideas but was deficient in both organization and clarity. As noted above, she and Waldo Heinrichs were co-editing the conference papers. By this time I was teaching at American University in Washington, D.C. where I spent three days a week, commuting on a motorcycle from Chapel Hill, North Carolina. But Dorothy in New York was still my lodestar. I accepted the assignment, practiced my skills as an editor, and discovered that I enjoyed learning from and critiquing the work of colleagues more than doing scholarly work of my own which, however, I continued to do. Ever since then I have done a lot of peer reviewing for publishers and journals in addition to correcting my students' work while I was still teaching.

In sum, Dorothy mentored me, befriended me, and supported me intellectually and emotionally more than anyone else in my professional life. I have only an inkling of what I offered Dorothy in return, apart from the small boxes of rugelach—an East European Jewish pastry—from a neighborhood bakery my wife and I often brought her as an unnecessary but appreciated token of admission to her apartment. The rugelach we nibbled on were often accompanied by sips of Bailey's Irish Milk (not Irish Cream, she insisted). I must mention that Dorothy also befriended my wife Madeline who, in 1974, left CUNY for a position at UNC-Chapel Hill where she remained until her retirement. Dorothy and Madeline occasionally lunched together when I was not in town. Apparently, Dorothy did not view Madeline as a dangerous distraction from the work I should

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<sup>5</sup> Borg and Shumpei Okamoto, eds., *Pearl Harbor as History: Japanese-American Relations, 1931-1941* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973); Borg and Waldo Heinrichs, eds., *Uncertain Years: Chinese-American Relations, 1947-1950* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980).

be concentrating on, as she did the wives of some of her other male mentees, something she confided to us more than once.

One more thing. During one visit to New York in 1984, I found Dorothy uncharacteristically depressed and in need of cheering up. Paul Cohen, a distinguished historian of modern China at Wellesley College, had just published his new book, *Discovering History in China: American Historical Writing on the Recent Chinese Past*.<sup>6</sup> Dorothy had been working on a similar historiographical project that she had spoken to me about on several occasions. With the publication of Paul's book, Dorothy felt that her own work had been preempted and rendered superfluous. Not having read his book, there was little I could do to console Dorothy. She was already eighty-two—two years older than I am now as I write. She had no need to burnish her credentials by adding further publications, but intellectual work was what gave meaning to her life. I understood that. I understand it even better now.

I last saw Dorothy a year or two before she died. Her health was already failing, and she was lying in bed, but she was still Dorothy. We spoke only briefly. I knew I would never see her again, and I cried when I left her apartment. But I still do see her. And I think of her often and try to be the person she was always helping me to become.

In April 1987, the book that had very slowly evolved from my 1972 doctoral dissertation was finally published by Columbia University Press.<sup>7</sup> In the acknowledgments, I thanked “My parents, Julius and Eda G. Levine, [who] taught me in their own way to savor the Confucian truth that ‘To learn and at due times to repeat what one has learnt, is that not after all a pleasure.’” Of my beloved mentor, I wrote, “Dorothy Borg has embodied for me an ideal of scholarship and fellowship that I despair of ever attaining myself. She has been my muse and my counselor. Without her inspiration this book would never have been completed. Rather than attempting to describe those virtues of wisdom, Socratic modesty, and tough-minded empathy which all who know her treasure, I dedicate this book to her.” In the copy of the book I inscribed and presented to Dorothy, I wrote, “The Greeks were wrong. The muse of history is named Dorothy, not Clio.”

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<sup>6</sup> Paul A. Cohen, *Discovering History in China: American Historical Writing on the Recent Chinese Past* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984).

<sup>7</sup> Levine, *Anvil of Victory: The Communist Revolution in Manchuria, 1945-1948* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987).

## About the Jervis Forum

The Robert Jervis International Security Studies Forum is a joint project of H-Diplo, an H-Net network, and the Arnold Saltzman Institute of War and Peace Studies at Columbia University. It is named in memory of Robert Jervis (1940-2021), the founder and founding executive editor of the forum.