

**THROUGH A GLASS DARKLY**  
**AMERICANS SEE THEMSELVES FROM ABROAD**  
*A Continuing Conversation*

As responsible citizens of the United States, we are very interested in the relations our country is fostering with other countries and also with their citizens, who are as representative and non-representative of their cultures and governments as we are of our own. We have a deepening concern with how we as Americans understand ourselves in resonant, inextricable relationship with the world around us—an inter-connectedness we, personally, rejoice in because it invites us powerfully back to the need to see and serve our common, mysterious, redeeming humanity. It concerns us gravely that on our travels we have become more and more aware of how rarely the people we meet believe that we as a country can see the ‘we’ in ‘them’, the ‘us’ in ‘you’.

For *Through A Glass Darkly* we invited writers who have traveled or lived abroad to share the experience of finding themselves to be, for others, the embodiment of a culture they may have always considered an ill-fitting second skin. Many of us have never felt as American—or less American—than we have when we have traveled or lived for any period of time in other countries.

We have posted these essays on our website and invite you to join in the conversation if you already have written something about your own developing self-awareness as an American when traveling abroad or if you are inspired by something you read here to share your own experiences. We encourage you to contact us and the individual authors whose experiences speak to you.

Heather Tosteson and Charles D. Brockett, *Editors*

Wising Up Press  
 Universal Table, Inc.  
[www.universaltable.org/reliableneighbors.html](http://www.universaltable.org/reliableneighbors.html)  
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**III**

**A FOOT IN TWO WORLDS**

*Families are our first culture, our first nation state, forming us and our visions of the world before we have any idea there are alternatives, or choices, involved. In these selections, writers experience the varying intersections of national identity and family culture—finding that they may have become more American than they imagined, or that an ocean and a language and another culture aren't the impermeable barriers they hoped they would be—feelings wash freely back and forth, making them wonder where is the dream, where the reality, where the lasting value. “From the tone of their questions, I realized everyone at the party believed that in America we lived in opulence, that we didn't know the meaning of want, of sadness and misery,” Guruianu writes. Sergi says to a stranger in Germany about her own family: “. . .we all have them.” And families. And countries of origin or destination or both. One foot in, one foot out, the ground shifts on either side and we shift with it. We can't find our balance any other way.*

*Andrei Guruianu*

## The First Night

Leaning over my father's lap in the aging Tarom airliner, I saw the first New York lights limp across the black waters of the Atlantic. As the plane angled and dipped its body over the island, the lights multiplied and clustered in dense patches like prayer candles quivering in the shadowed foyer of a church.

We arrived in America at night. The drive from JFK to our aunt's house was a blur of fast moving shadows and neon. Everything was lit up with flashing bulbs that pried my tired eyes open to peer into the darkness. Life here seemed to come in bursts of color, words and faces stuck on poles taller than buildings. I mouthed the names and was sure that I mispronounced them in my head. They sounded like secrets my friends would be jealous to hear. I couldn't wait to learn what they all meant, to decipher this new language that made our bootleg movies back home seem so exotic. In Romania, when someone got their hands on a taped VHS copy of *Top Gun*, *Police Academy*, *American Ninja* or *Bloodsport*, it was always a major event and cause for a party. Adults gathered at the apartment of whoever had the coveted tape, and along with other children I remember sneaking furtive peaks at screen. The adults laughed and shouted, they left happy. They'd seen America.

That night I fell asleep, a ten-year-old exhausted from a twelve-hour flight, but excited about what I would discover in the morning. I imagined waking up to the same parade of lights announcing what we could see and where we should go next. I was ready to feel my heart beat faster from the speed of this new life.

The backyard looked crisp, wrapped in the cold white calm of a late spring snow. It was bright, without color. We stayed inside to unpack, and I knew from my parents' hushed tones then we wouldn't go anywhere that day. We wouldn't go anywhere for several days. When we finally did venture outside, it was always during the daytime, a few blocks at most, so we wouldn't get lost without the words we would need to find our way back. At night we stayed inside the house and flipped on the television. The country

that I imagined and wanted so dearly to see flashed its colors in a seductive dance at the simple click of a button. I would press it and mouth in silence the word printed in white under the button— *khannel*. The colors blurred, then come back into focus. I pressed it again.

Andrei Guruianu

## The Welcome Party

The long flight east across the Atlantic was followed by a short drive through Bucharest, where for the most part streets are paved and smooth and sidewalks are lined with billboards and business signs. In less than a half hour we'd left the Romanian capital and arrived in Pantelimon. Stepping outside the car, I was the only one feeling nauseous from the final leg of a halting ride down small, dilapidated village roads filled with craters capable of swallowing the entire car.

Robert, my second cousin on my mother's side, parked his new, navy blue Logan to the side of the road in front of a massive, maroon colored iron gate with filigree accents. He secured the steering wheel with a metal rod and took the stereo out of the dashboard even though we would only be a few meters away. To be safe. The place isn't what it used to be. My aunt and grandparents climbed out of the car and stood for Robert to open the gate. He pulled on a steel shaft, and the doors swung inward at the middle to reveal a muddy construction site instead of the green yard I'd imagined. A half-built house stood in the center surrounded by an iron skeleton, ladders, wheelbarrows, stacks of bricks and sacks of cement. A few red and yellow balloons were tied to the front door swaying in the thick, white smoke rising from an open grill.

"*Bine ai venit!*" someone called out emphatically while still a few steps inside the doorway, as if the message couldn't wait for the body to catch up. I didn't recognize the voice.

Almost immediately more voices trailed behind the first one, all chiming in, "*Bine ai venit!*" "*Bine ai venit!*" "Welcome!" My attempts at a thank you were muffled by the cheek-to-cheek kisses so typical of Eastern European greetings. When I was younger I would wipe the dampness of the saliva from my cheek using my shirtsleeves. I couldn't do that now, so I let the kisses dry into my skin.

Excited chatter and extended arms ushered me inside the house. Faces materialized in front of me like minor, supporting characters in a children's

book I'd read long ago. They seemed familiar, somehow related to a time in my life I should remember, but couldn't place for certain. They were mother's cousins, old friends, their mothers and fathers, people that made up the days we spent as neighbors along the same dusty alley before all the homes came down at Ceausescu's command throughout the mid 1980s.

Several people agreed in hushed tones, then proclaimed without a doubt, "You look exactly like you did when you left," which was a lie, but I said thank you anyway, not sure if it was really a compliment. I thought to myself that they looked nothing like they did when I left. If they did, then I might remember them.

"May no one cast a spell on you," an elderly woman shouted in front of my face, sending mock spit mostly over my head to seal the incantation. When I used to get recurring headaches as a child, grandmother repeated the same words while making the sign of the cross with three burning matches over the rim of a cup filled with cold water. She would extinguish the matches in the cup, then dip her thumb in water and smudge the cross on my forehead. If the headache went away, it meant the spell was broken.

This gathering of voices and strange faces was my surprise "Welcome Home" party, although the sign taped to the far wall read simply, "Welcome," in English. It did not say, "Welcome Back" or "Welcome Home." It was store-bought. Simply "Welcome," as if they knew. I was just another visitor in passing.

Robert wanted to show me the house. He was building it on the plot of land his family received from the government after the communists fell as a way to make up for the house they had lost. My grandparents decided to sell theirs for fast cash, and now regret the move because land, especially in and around Bucharest, has gone up in price. Robert's house had two floors and two dirty mattresses were lying on the floor in the upstairs bedroom. The workers slept there at night, he explained. If he allowed them to stay, there was less of a chance that they would run off with tools and materials. From his future bedroom's window he pointed to a hole in the ground covered up by planks of wood. They were digging a well that would be powered by an electrical pump in order to supply the house with running water.

Someone from below called us downstairs. The food was ready, and I could smell the *mici*, inch-thick ground pork sausages with healthy amounts of garlic and several other seasonings that irritate my stomach, but the flavor we were never able to replicate in America is something I'm willing to suffer for. Mother blames it on the produce. She says nothing tastes the way it did back home.

As soon as we sat down, grandfather raised his small glass of *tuica* and everyone else did the same. We drank, then the cacophony of voices rose again, shouting questions across the table to where I was seated at the head, the place of honor where every word, every expression that crossed my face could be scrutinized. I was questioned, then questioned again about my answers.

When we were done eating and drinking to the point where grandfather had a permanent red-faced grin plastered on his round, boyish face, they took turns presenting gifts, whatever items they thought I might like or be impressed by. How could they know? The last time they saw me I was still playing in the dust with plastic soldiers and toy trucks. We'd never exchanged letters. Never talked on the phone.

They handed me gaudy poured-plastic statuettes, two ceramic mugs that came together to form a whole heart, a supposedly shatterproof tea cup set I still haven't tested, and a cigarette lighter shaped like an armored knight that produced a flame from the tip of his helmet. All of them had Made in China, Made in Taiwan, made in anywhere but Romania stickers. I knew they thought I would like them because they were foreign, because they weren't Romanian. I had left that behind long ago.

Then their looks changed again, no longer the awe that the poor and illiterate reserve for those who live abroad. Instead there was the hint of expectation that because I'd come from the land of plenty, that I'd gotten out and made it, by their standards, I had a responsibility to help. It's why every year we send home large packages crammed with small conveniences, to alleviate the hardship of those left behind, to lighten our own guilty conscience.

But this time I wasn't prepared. All I had with me were some bars of Palmolive soap, half-pounds of Eight O'Clock coffee, and medicine for my grandparents. Packing for the trip, I felt like the aunt who used to visit us in Romania during the 80s, her bags filled to the brim with cheap American goods that we hoarded and awed over like precious possessions. I hadn't thought of bringing something back for everyone in exchange for their hospitality and generosity. Even when mother packed the essential items for my grandparents I resisted, arguing with her that they didn't need our charity.

"You're not serious, are you? I'm not bringing grandma soap. That's insulting. She makes her own soap."

"You need to remember that when we were there even if we had enough money to buy something there wasn't enough to buy. Now, they have plenty to buy, but not enough money to buy it with. It's just a new face on an

old problem."

From the tone of their questions, I realized everyone at the party believed that in America we lived in opulence, that we didn't know the meaning of want, of sadness and misery. I felt embarrassed for returning, forcing them to spend money that they wouldn't have spent otherwise on loaves of bread bigger than our heads, on fresh, plump tomatoes, blocks of gleaming white goat cheese, and hard salamis cut in thick slices.

Anna Steegmann

## A VISIT TO GERMANY

Once I had my green card, I could travel home again. My mother's excitement had been building for months. In every letter and every phone call she asked:

"What shall I cook for you and your husband? What do you want to eat the day you arrive?"

"Cook something typically German," I told her.

She did. The first evening we sat down to a substantial meal of fatty *Schweinsaxen*, sauerkraut and mashed potatoes.

"Best to have a good foundation, so you won't get too drunk," my mother said toasting with Earnest.

*"Summ Woll."*

I had tried to teach Earnest a few German phrases, but he was hopeless. While my mother delighted in her new son-in-law, his manly voice, good manners, handsome looks and funny attempts at German, my brother's face turned sour. Heinrich did not approve of my move to fascist America. The America of Ronald Reagan, the land of Right to Life fanatics and Evangelical Fundamentalists.

"Anna, tell Earnest he's not the first black man I met," my mother said.

"Is that so?" Earnest grinned.

"Langenlonsheim was liberated by American soldiers. When the GI's rolled into our village with their tanks, I was scared of the Black soldiers. I had never seen Black people before. When an old man warned us that Blacks weren't human like us and that the soldiers might rape us, all the girls ran home. I hid at home, but I shouldn't have been afraid. They were very friendly. They gave us chocolate and chewing gum."

I translated the portion about the gum and chocolate.

"Tell your mother her pork knuckles are almost as good as my mother's."

My mother watched Earnest struggle with his knife and fork. He did

not manage to cut much meat off the bone. She came to his rescue. Holding the meat up with her fingers, she took a big bite. Earnest, relieved, followed her example. She nodded approvingly, "No need to feel shy. It tastes better this way."

I studied my brother. Heinrich ate mechanically, without pleasure. He drank too fast. After my father's death, my brother had taken on my father's mannerisms, patterns of speech and way of bossing my mother around. Sitting in my father's chair, under the crucifix, he barked at her: "We need more beer here, Mutti" and sounded just like the old man.

After dinner my brother proposed a trip to Vater Rhein, a brewery tavern. "You'll be able to taste real beer, not that dishwater they sell in the US," he promised his brother-in-law. It was a cool and cloudy August evening. Germany's endless grey winters and cold and rainy summers had always depressed me. Now after years of tropical heat and the unbearable humidity of New York summers, I enjoyed the grey skies. I wasn't gloomy, rather pleasantly melancholic.

On the way to the pub, I savored the scenery. The factories with their gigantic chimneys weren't as ugly as I remembered. "Hein, do you remember how we played in the coal dumps. Wasn't it fun to slide down the slag heaps?"

My brother shrugged his shoulders. "I guess."

"Remember how mother had to waste a pound of butter, how she scrubbed us for hours to make us look like white children again?"

Hein did not share any of my excitement. I turned to Earnest.

"You might be in for a special treat. Twice a week, the blast furnaces of Krupp Steel light up the sky. It's awesome. Different shades of flaming reds and oranges you've never seen before."

"Can't wait," Earnest said.

There was the unpleasant smell from the Chemical plant. Still, after being away for a while, it was rather romantic. Keyed up by the view of the green meadows and the majestic river, I recited my favorite Heinrich Heine poem for my husband.

*Mein Liebchen wir saßen beisammen  
Traulich im leichten Kahn  
Die Nacht war still und wir schwammen  
Auf weiter Wasserbahn*

*(Heinrich Heine, Lyrisches Intermezzo  
My darling, we sat together,*

*We two in our frail boat,  
The night was calm o'er the wide sea  
Whereon we were afloat)*

“That sounds lovely,” Earnest said. “Must be a romantic fellow, this Heine.”

“He was a romantic fellow. Born in Düsseldorf on the Rhine, not far from here,” I said.

“Your homeboy,” Earnest chuckled.

As soon as we stepped into Vater Rhein, all eyes turned to Earnest. I was glad that he had left his bone earrings and bear claw necklace at my mother’s house. He was exotic enough. People in my hometown had no problem staring at strangers. Perhaps the only Black men they knew were Muhammad Ali and Sammy Davis Jr.? We sat down at the barrel-table and waited for the burly waiter in his blue work shirt and apron to bring the first round. He came with a tray full of small glasses of *Diebels Alt*, the local specialty—a copper colored, slightly sweet dark beer. Happy to hear him speak in the local dialect, I didn’t mind his gruff manner. Smiling was not common in this part of the world. If you wanted to see smiling people, you went on vacation to the Italian Riviera or the island of Mallorca. I didn’t need to be around smiling faces when I was home, among my people.

My brother spotted a co-worker and shouted across the room. “Manfred, come over. Meet my sister and brother-in-law from New York.” All heads turned in our direction. It was rare for tourists to visit Vater Rhein. I eavesdropped on people’s conversations. The local dialect melted my heart. The view of the Rhine was sensational. Although it was 9:00 p.m., it was still bright outside. How I had missed the long European summer evenings. I watched the barges headed for Rotterdam, Basel, and Cologne. On one barge, a woman was hanging up laundry, on another a terrier looked expectantly at me. The boats’ lovely pattering sound put me into a dreamy state. I remembered the train rides along the Rhine on visits to my grandmother. The castles, fables and the tale of the Loreley Mountain. I had pictured myself as a stowaway heading for Holland, the North Sea, and finally the Atlantic Ocean on my way to America, the country of my dreams. The land of the Little Rascals, Laurel and Hardy, and Buster Keaton. A country where having fun was mandatory.

When the waiter set down the slender glasses I snapped out of my reveries. Heinrich and Manfred took two beers each. “The first round is on me,” my brother announced. The waiter took out his pen and noted six beers on Heinrich’s coaster. “*Na denn, Prost,*” Heinrich said and clinked glasses.

Manfred emptied his in one gulp, Hein took two for his. They wasted no time and moved on to the next round. Earnest and I looked at each other. I shrugged my shoulders. “Guess, they have to prove their manhood,” Earnest whispered.

Hein inspected Earnest as if he wasn’t good enough for me. Hein and Manfred stepped up their drinking tempo. The waiter served us in shorter intervals. “Let’s see if the American can hold his beer,” my brother said. I was worried for Earnest. Like most Americans, he wasn’t accustomed to real beer. The waiter noted that they had twelve beers. My brother and his friend were not the only ones getting drunk. Many of the guests at Vater Rhein were working themselves up into a drunken stupor. In the rear, a group of fans celebrated the victory of their soccer team. They made sure the rest of the guests knew about it. “M—S—V, M—S—V, let’s drink to the MSV,” they hooted every time the waiter brought another round. Back by the brewing-kettle, two parties battled each other for dominance. They sang songs praising the beauty of the Rhine. “Why was it so beautiful on the Rhine? Because of the jolly maidens and the thirsty fellows.”

The singing and excessive smoking got on my nerves. I’d just kicked the habit a few weeks earlier and worried about a relapse. “Ask Earnest what his position on Reagan’s foreign policy is,” Heinrich demanded. During high school my brother had fallen into the clutches of the Communist Party. He decided against college and chose the revolutionary path: working among the masses in the factories. He never approved of my choices. We had been arguing about politics all our lives. Now he was ready to start with my husband. I translated the request. Earnest was perplexed.

“I have no idea what Reagan’s politics are.”

“But he’s your president. Aren’t you concerned?” my brother screamed.

My stomach felt queasy.

“Not really. I don’t care about politics,” Earnest said.

How could he be so relaxed under an interrogation like this? He had never experienced the barbs of my brother’s fury.

“What do you care about then?” Hein yelled.

“Interior decorating. Whether I should change my slipcovers from hunter green to midnight blue. Whether that would match my carpet.”

“What did he say?” Heinrich asked.

I didn’t dare to translate, but my brother, despite his proletarian demeanor, was quite well-versed in the English language. He was outraged. “The whole world is going to hell because of your government and you worry

about your sofa!”

He had a point. I had been mad at Earnest for not exercising his right to vote. When was the last time he participated in politics? During the Vietnam War?

“You need to pay attention to your president’s position on rearmament. He wants to install more missiles in Europe,” Manfred said as his face turned purple.

”I don’t know anything about that,” Earnest said, without sounding the least bit apologetic.

“Don’t you read the papers?” Heinrich countered.

“Not really. I’m not interested in politics.”

Manfred was beside himself. US ignorance had infiltrated his favorite pub. My brother lit a new cigarette with the butt of the old one. Greedy, he inhaled as he worked himself up for further confrontation. The waiter brought another round of beers. One, two gulps and the small glasses stood empty again. Manfred called the waiter back to the table. The coaster had no more room for notations. The waiter turned it over and used the back to write on.

“I expected more from a Black man,” Hein said, “You are a bad example for your race.”

“How dare you say something like that,” I screamed.

Earnest covered his ears. My voice must have been several octaves too high.

“A black man should be aware of his country’s history. Aware of his people’s struggle,” Hein lectured.

Manfred nodded his approval.

“Well, maybe he is,” I said, hardly believing it myself.

“Does he think with his dick? Does he have a big one?” Manfred asked.

I was stunned. I had experienced bigotry a few times in Earnest’s company. While walking arm in arm in SoHo, a car with a New Jersey license plate had stopped next to us. One of four young men stuck his head out and yelled “Why don’t you let us fuck her, brother” before they sped away. This sort of conduct could be expected in New Jersey or Queens, but not here in my hometown, in the company of my brother and his friend, two revolutionary thinkers.

Earnest had not understood a word. I had been looking forward to this visit. The Rhine, my friends, my mother’s cooking, the *Tatort* detective series on TV. When Earnest got up to go to the bathroom, the revolutionaries

took turns attacking me.

“The US is a fascist country.”

”Reagan is a madman. How can you live in such a country?”

“Voluntarily!”

“Look,” I defended myself, “not all Americans are alike. Some even read the New York Times.”

“But look at the politics of the country.”

“Not everyone supports it. At least none of the people I know.”

My arguments fell on deaf ears. Only one thing mattered. The principle. Reagan’s foreign policy had brought us dangerously close to a war. WAR. Didn’t I know what that meant?” Earnest came back to find me shouting on top of my lungs:

”No, I don’t know what war is. Neither do you. We have never lived through a war.” My brother was a pompous ass. So was Manfred. I was tired of their pontificating. They let me have it.

“You’re a fascist pig, yourself.”

“A degenerated Philistine.”

In our teenage years Heinrich and I argued all the time. At times, we chased each other around the kitchen table shouting obscenities at each other. My helpless mother tried to be the peace- broker: “Stop, you’re going to kill each other one of these days. For Christ’s sake, remember, you’re brother and sister.” He was my brother. But he was a fool who had not learned anything in all these years.

People at neighboring tables stared at us. Heinrich and Manfred chain-smoked. I was tempted to light up myself. Earnest looked helpless as if racking his brains for a way to protect me from their attacks. I was ready to leave it all: Vater Rhein, this town, this state, Germany. I wanted to get on a plane and return to New York. Stay in New York forever and never set foot in this country full of dogmatic idiots ever again.

The waiter stopped by our table. Earnest took two glasses for himself. Manfred and Heinrich moved in on me like two birds fighting over a crumb of bread. Each one tried to outdo the other in attacking me. Manfred tried to justify an attack on the US Air Base in Frankfurt.

“You fools. Two people ended up dead and one wounded. What was the point? Do you really believe you can change people’s minds by using such strategies?” I screamed. They never got a chance to answer. Earnest, a beer glass in each hand emptied them out over my opponents’ heads, in one swift move. The beer ran down my brother’s face and soaked his shirt. Neither Heinrich nor Manfred said a word. A temporary cease.

*Paula Sergi*

### In front of the Hildebrand papers

my guide asks about Iraq. *And Hurricane Katrina, what about that?* He studies sociology, group therapy, precisely. He reminds me of Stephen from undergrad in Oshkosh- same ruddy face.

We banter on the nature of man  
in front of the oldest document known  
in old German text, two weathered leather pages  
kept behind glass, behind a thick, vault door

in the basement of Bibliotek der Stadt.  
I ask this quasi Stephen, hired only to unlock the vault,  
to translate the text. He clears his throat.  
It reads something like this:

*son and father armored, singing their war songs,  
taking their swords.* He apologizes

for his English  
(though we've talked for twenty minutes).  
He's sorry for the poor condition  
of the text.

*Hildebrand said he was the better man, the man  
with more honor.*

I ask about the German psyche,  
their preoccupation with angst, as with Schiller.  
He hedges. In front of the Hildebrand papers  
he wonders why American writers turn to alcohol.  
Hemingway, for example.

Touché. I reveal I'm a writer,  
that my writer brother died from drink,  
and I have the poems to prove it.  
He closes the vault, heavy thud like history falling.  
Or a wall.  
Reports his brother died last year,  
cancer, and the withering.

I hand him a book of my poems,  
the dog-eared one from my bag,  
the one with my brother's sketches.  
When I turn to leave,

my guide says, behind my back,  
he himself had a bout with drink,  
almost died seven years ago. This explains  
the complexion. *Issues*, I mutter,  
*we all have them.*

In front of the Hildebrand papers  
he whispers, his grandfather favored the Nazis.  
He just can't sleep at night.



## CONTRIBUTORS

**Andrei Guriianu's** work has appeared previously in a full-length book of poems and short stories, *Days When I Saw the Horizon Bleed* (FootHills Publishing, 2006). Individual works have been published or are forthcoming in *Paterson Literary Review*, Ted Kooser's *American Life in Poetry* project, *River Oak Review*, *Vestal Review*, *Saranac Review*, *Dogmatika*, and *Marginalia*. He is a doctoral student in creative writing at Binghamton University, and the founding editor of *The Broome Review*, an annual literary print journal. In June 2007, he was honored with a month-long residency as a fiction writer at Yaddo in Saratoga Springs, NY. [www.thebroomereview.com](http://www.thebroomereview.com)

**Anna Steegmann** was born in Germany and has lived in New York since 1980. Her stories, poems and essays have appeared in *The New York Times*, [sic], *Promethean*, *Epiphany*, *138 journal*, and *Boomer Women Speak*. She has published in several German newspapers and literary magazines. Her translation of *Trompe L'oeil. Italy: Ancient and Modern* from German to English has been published this month by W.W. Norton; other translations will be published this spring by *Dimension 2* and *Absinthe*. She currently teaches Writing at City College of New York, where I received a MA in Creative Writing. Her essay *Mein Harlem* has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize and Best American Essays. <http://zweisprachen.blogspot.com>

**Paula Sergi** is the author of *Family Business*, a collection of poems from Finishing Line Press, and co-editor of *Boomer Girls: Poems by Women from the Baby Boom Generation*, University of Iowa Press. The Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters, along with the Hessen Literary Society, selected her as the 2005 Wisconsin writer and cultural ambassador to Germany, which included a three month residency in Wiesbaden. Ms. Sergi received a Wisconsin Arts Board Artist Fellowship, and her poetry and essays are published regularly in such journals as *The Bellevue Literary Review*, *Primavera*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *Spoon River Poetry Review* and *The American Journal of Nursing*. She holds an MFA in creative writing from Vermont College and a BSN from the University of Wisconsin, Madison. [www.paulasergi.com](http://www.paulasergi.com)

