

PROFIL DE AUTOR: ANAMARIA BELIGAN

WRITER'S PROFILE: ANAMARIA BELIGAN

Mihnea Voicu ȘIMĂNDAN, BA, MA, CELTA, PGCE
Keera-Pat International School
Bangkok, Thailanda
mihnea_voicu@yahoo.com

Abstract:

Anamaria Beligan is a contemporary Romanian-born writer who has been living in Australia since 1982. She has published fiction and non-fiction in both Romanian and English. Her novels and collections of short stories have been received with enthusiasm by both the Romanian literary critics and the Australian ones.

Key words: *Anamaria Beligan, writer, novel, short story, diaspora, Australia, Romania*

Cuvinte cheie: *Anamaria Beligan, scriitor, roman, povestire, diaspora, Australia, România*

I. A Short Biography

Anamaria Beligan is a contemporary Romanian-born novelist and short story writer currently living in Melbourne (Australia), considered by Adriana Babeti as “one of the most gifted story-tellers in Romanian literature.” Apart from writing both fiction and non-fiction in English and Romanian, she also writes, produces, and directs films.

Anamaria Beligan was born in Bucharest in 1958. She finished the “C.A. Rosetti” High School with a major in English and, in 1981, graduated the “I.L. Caragiale” Film Academy in Bucharest. She worked for a short period of time as a film producer at Alexandru Sahio Studios in Bucharest, but chose to flee Ceaușescu’s communist regime in 1982.

After spending seven months in an immigrant camp in Western Europe, she immigrated to Australia. Here she continued her studies and graduated with a Masters of Arts in Applied Linguistics from Monash University in Melbourne. She taught at the Australian Film and Television School in Sydney and received an award from Cambridge University Press for her academic achievements and dedication.

She is co-owner of The Athanor, an independent film and multimedia production company, founded in 1988 together with her life-long companion, Valeriu Câmpan.

Her writing career began later in life, after the birth of her two daughters, Katrina and Dana. Although at first it was just a hobby, writing became Anamaria Beligan’s calling.

II. Published Works

Anamaria Beligan has published **two novels and two collections of short stories**. Her writings have also been published in both Australian and Romanian publications, as well as in online magazines. She writes in English, but she also assists Dana Lovinescu with the translation into Romanian of her own works.

Her **novels** include *motherbena.com*, published in Romania by Curtea Veche in 2005 and in Australia by Equator Publishers in 2006. Her debut novel is entitled *Letters to Monalisa (Scrisori către Monalisa)* and was published in 1999 by the Romanian publishing house Polirom, and featured on the national best seller list for several months.

Her latest **collection of short stories** bears the title *Love is a Trabant (Dragostea este un trabant)*. It was published in 2003 by Curtea Veche and was listed for the 2003 Romanian

Publishers' Association Award (AER). Anamaria Beligan's first collection of short stories, *A Few More Minutes with Monica Vitti (Încă un minut cu Monica Vitti)* was published by Polirom in 1998 and by Equator Publishers in 2002. The collection was short listed for the 2003 Steele Rudd Best Short Story Collection Award.

Anamaria Beligan is a prolific short story writer, with many short stories published in both Australian and Romanian literary journals.

The **short stories published in Australian literary journals** include: *A Few More Minutes With Monica Vitti* (RePUBLICA 1, 1994), *The Riddle of the Saviour and the Swallow* (VOICES, 1994-1995), *Csardas Lullaby* (QUADRANT, April 1995), *Ticket to Nineveh* (VOICES, Winter 1995), *Untwinned* (QUADRANT, March 1996), *A Remarkable Skull* (QUADRANT, November 1996), *Juanito the Conqueror, part I* (QUADRANT, June 1997), *Juanito the Conqueror, part II* (QUADRANT, July / August 1997), *La Primavera* (QUADRANT, November 1998), *Cucharadita* (QUADRANT, July 2001), *Love is a Trabant* (QUADRANT, January / February 2002), *A Family Portrait* (QUADRANT, July / August 2003), *Betsy and the Emperor* (QUADRANT, July / August 2004), *Windermere: Love at Second Sight (extract)* (QUADRANT, October 2007), and *Sunset Stroll with Retriever* (QUADRANT, May 2008).

The **short stories published in Romanian literary journals** include: *The Riddle of the Saviour and the Swallow* (LITERATORUL, March 1995), *Le Plus-que-Parfait du Subjonctif* (MOFTUL ROMAN, December 1995), *Le Plus-que-Parfait du Subjonctif* (RAMURI, May / June 1995), *Ticket to Nineveh* (LUCEAFARUL, September 1995), *Untwinned* (ORIZONT, April 1996), *A Remarkable Skull* (ARC, 17/18, 1996), *A Few More Minutes With Monica Vitti* (ARC, 19/20, 1996), *Kiss-Kiss, Laura* (RAMURI, December 1996), *Csardas Lullaby* (ORIZONT, October 1997), *La Primavera* (RAMURI, March 1998), *Salt of the Earth* (ORIZONT, July 1998), *Cucharadita* (ORIZONT, October 2001), *Betsy and the Emperor* (FAMILIA, August 2002), *A Family Portrait* (ORIZONT, September 2002), *Windermere: Love at Second Sight (extract)* (FAMILIA, October 2007), and *Windermere: Love at Second Sight (extract)* (RAMURI, March 2008).

Some of her short stories have also appeared in **Australian and Romanian anthologies**: *Le Plus-que-Parfait du Subjonctif* (PICADOR New Writing 2, 1994)

Fatherland (DAUGHTERS AND FATHERS, UQP, March 1997), *Ticket to Nineveh (Romanian translation)* (Best Short Stories of 1996, ALLFA, Romania, June 1997), *Salt of the Earth (Romanian translation)* (Best Short Stories of 1998, ALLFA, Romania, June 1999), *Larger Than Life* (The Book of Grandparents (Cartea cu bunici) HUMANITAS 2007), and *Veronica's Robe de Chambre* (Women Under Communism (Tovarășe de drum) POLIROM 2008).

Anamaria Beligan has also published the following **pieces in online publications**: *A Remarkable Skull* (EXQUISITE CORPSE, Fall / Winter 2001/2002), *Love is a Trabant* (RESPIRO, Issue 9 / 2002), and *motherbena.com (extract)* (LOLOCUR, #6).

Her journalistic work includes the following **interviews**: *Interview with Carmel Bird* (ORIZONT, February 1999), *Interview with Les Murray* (ORIZONT, May 1999), *Interview with Robert Dessaix* (ORIZONT, September 1999), *Interview with Gail Jones* (ORIZONT, January 2000), and *The Music of History* (QUADRANT, October 1999).

Anamaria Beligan has also published **articles, book and film reviews** in QUADRANT (Australia), DILEMATECA (Romania), LiterNet (online Romanian writing community), SBS Radio (Australia), and Radio 3ZZZ (Australia).

III. Critical Appreciation

The collection of short stories *A Few More Minutes with Monica Vitti (Încă un minut cu Monica Vitti)* has been wildly praised by both Australian and Romanian critics:

- "The title story in Anamaria Beligan's assertive, inventive collection *A Few More Minutes with Monica Vitti* celebrates the unforgettably lush sexiness of Monica Vitti (...) seen through the eyes of a young migrant to Australia from "a communist country whose fantasy of building the

workers' paradise had left its workers completely drained of fantasy". (...) In Beligan's own east European background, in her abundant cinematic and literary references and in her wicked sense of irony, there's more than a touch here of Milan Kundera, although many of her rather sly stories are set in inner Melbourne." (Tony Maniaty, *Week End Australian*)

- "The mastery in Beligan's style is to involve the reader in eavesdropping on a conversation between a young barrister and her friend ensconced in a lounge of the Queenscliff Hotel. (...) From this vantage point the reader is drawn into the delicious details and suppositions surrounding the whereabouts of the skull. (...) The sense of the master storyteller's skill is perhaps best seen in the end of the introduction to her first story when she says: "So, my dear, anonymous and voyeuristic reader, it is for you that I am now going to file what started on a Monday evening, last August, in the delicious privacy of one of the three lounge rooms of the Queenscliff Hotel." How could any reader put down a book after this kind of literary entrapment?" (John Watts, *Leader Newspapers*)

- "Anamaria Beligan's fiction is imbued with remarkable professionalism... and maximum of virtuosity." (Dan Stanca, *România Liberă*)

- "This is an enthralling book. Anamaria Beligan has managed to write extremely naturally about matters which are quite unnatural." (Mircea Mihaies, *Face to Face* television program Channel 2, Romanian National Television)

- "This book is one of the achievements of a generation of writers to which Anamaria belongs only biologically... Hers is a certain type of magic realism which does not resemble any other writing, a type of elegance which is by no means feminine, a mastery of dramatic effects, a clarity of construction, a type of imagination so strange, yet so vivid in its strangeness..." (Adriana Babeti, *Face to Face* television program Channel 2, Romanian National Television)

- "With extraordinary subtlety and sensitivity, the author creates the atmosphere of a contemporary fairy-tale (...) Anamaria Beligan's major quality is that she is a master storyteller. (...) The return to a traditional type of story, unrestrained by the rules of realism, combined with an original style that vaguely reminds one of Mircea Eliade, bestow a special charm on this book, a charm which is rarely found in contemporary literature." (Radu Pavel Gheo, *Contemporanul*, 27 May 1999)

- "...her short stories create an atmosphere which is filled with psychological mystery, with a slightly perverse sensuality, with segments of hallucination and with a mixture of iciness and incandescence, of voyeurism and refined morbidity." (Dan C. Mihailescu, *Revista 22*, 25-31 January 2000)

- "Anamaria Beligan's characters are haunted by History's curse or - as in Milan Kundera's case - by History's jokes. (...) Anamaria Beligan's first book reveals a mature writer, who perfectly masters the skill of narrative construction. Beside the unpredictable and spectacular explosion of her imagination, the most important qualities of her fiction are the balanced composition and the excellent use of dramatic effects." (Daciana Branea, *Orizont Literary Journal*, January 2000)

Her debut novel, *Letters to Monalisa* (*Scrisori către Monalisa*), received good critiques both in Australia and Romania:

- "I wonder who wouldn't read in one breath Anamaria Beligan's lively novel, *Letters to Monalisa* (...) - about East Europeans leading a promiscuous, sordid yet vivid existence inside a refugee camp which brings to mind Emir Kusturica's Gypsy movies. (...) The atmosphere in this German camp instantly captures the reader, not only because of the mixture of well-suited jargons and poetic nostalgia, but also because of its higher level, which deals with the metaphysics of exclusion. (...) Living as an excluded person entails a permanent tension (...) which is conveyed by every page of this book. Anamaria Beligan manages the difficult task of investing the camp - ironically named 'Hotel Arkadia' - with the signs of a disturbing, almost pathological melancholy, in order to endow the entropy of the declasses with the magnitude of an insidious utopia, echoing John Lennon's *Imagine*, which is heard in the end. (...) The last pages - particularly strong and poetic -

prove, among many other things, Anamaria Beligan's undisputed talent as a story-teller.” (Gabriel Cosoveanu, *Ramuri Literary Journal*, December 1999)

- “*Letters to Monalisa*, a novel of exasperation and revolt, reveals an experienced writer, in charge of her tools, with an extraordinary skill of veiling and unveiling meanings. The stakes are high, the bet is a difficult one. Yet it all ends in brilliant victory (...)” (Magdalena Roibu, *Orizont Literary Journal*, January 2000)

- “...her language is fresh, daring, strong, original. Devoid of exaggerations or sentimentality, it manages to impress the reader through its profound evocative power. (...) Anamaria Beligan and her characters operate inside a disturbingly vivid historical farce, which arises from the past, in order to explain the tragedy of the present, the confusion of post-communism.” (Cristina Cheveresan, *Orizont Literary Journal*, January 2000)

- “Anamaria Beligan is an extremely gifted writer - her style does not betray for one moment the author's gender (...). She writes naturally, effortlessly, with remarkable neutrality, liberated from any feminine complex (...) Her cultural knowledge is remarkably well woven into the text: notice the discussion on Leni Riefenstahl, or the dog named Nazarin, after Bunuel's 1959 film. (...) This book is powerful and deep, and very rich in symbols. (...) Its fragmented and crushing reality brings to mind Kusturica's movies. (...) *Letters to Monalisa* is a profound and lively book.” (Radu Voinescu, *Luceafarul Literary Journal*, 1 December 1999)

- “(...) the theme of the captive migrant, living inside Hotel Arkadia (what a name!), in a transitory state between everywhere and nowhere, as well as the narrative pattern which brings to mind Gorky's *The Lower Depths*, provide the author with a generous chance to bring together contrasting characters and picturesque situations.

"Matei, the anxious amnesic with an artistic imagination (see page 125, where he imagines an affair between Romanian poet Ion Barbu, a lecturer in Berlin, and the famous Leni Riefenstahl!) is the central character around whom gravitate Vera's disillusioned femininity, the amoral cynicism of Victor Cotenet (see the succulent page 64, in which the former truck driver summarises the general corruption under Ceausescu's regime), the hallucinatory drunkenness of Krzysztof the Pole, the sensual timidity of the Bernd-Satri pair, the endearing loquaciousness of the Gypsy Nae Lebadaru, Beno's exhibitionism, the dreamy confusion of the Croat Radovan Balen, and so on. It all ends in a dream-like manner, with a fire and a purifying snowfall: the burning down of the Purgatory.” (Dan C. Mihailescu, *Revista 22*, 25-31 January 2000)

The collection of short stories *Love is a Trabant* (*Dragostea este un trabant*) had been praised by many Romanian literary journals:

- “...one of the most promising collections of Romanian fiction belongs to Curtea Veche publishers and has a suggestive title: *Povestasi romani* (*Romanian Story-Tellers*). I would like to believe it is not by accident that the first volume of the series bears the signature of Anamaria Beligan, one of the most gifted story-tellers in Romanian literature... Her happy and sad, jocular-bitter stories, about the lost, the strayers, the marginalised, about the small tribe of those who failed, about those suspended between worlds, have a magical effect. They could easily become our own un-lived stories, because they bring to life both the past and the future (...), they change the present and reality to make them more intelligible and more bearable, while we sit down around the author, watching her and listening to her in an enchanted state, page after page, like one does with a genuine story-teller.” (Adriana Babeti, *Orizont*)

- “If (...) I were to find an author who is closest to Anamaria Beligan, my first thought would be to re-read Mircea Eliade's stories which he wrote in exile, particularly during the eighties and nineties. (...) The similarities start, primarily, with the fact that both writers are of Romanian origin, but made their mark in a different culture... The majority of the texts in *Love is a Trabant* prove that the story – alert, captivating, strange or miraculous – becomes paramount. I don't know if it was a deliberate decision to inaugurate the *Povestasi romani* collection with Anamaria Beligan's book, but

I have no doubt that, in doing so, Curtea Veche publishers have made an excellent choice.” (Radu Pavel Gheo, *Orizont*)

- “Her Western cultural experience is immediately apparent in Anamaria Beligan’s writings, and it is difficult to identify which cultural space they really belong to. More likely, it is the Australian space. ...Anamaria Beligan pays much attention to detail, uses a contrapuntal style, and cuts her sequences well (there are no flat moments, the stories are full of verve and dynamism), the dialogues are spicy, the vocabulary is varied (bearing witness to her linguistic preoccupations) and she does have humour.” (Marius Chivu, *Observator cultural*)

- “Anamaria Beligan possesses a good insight into the lives of migrants, whose tribulations she turns into a type of fiction which could be categorised as behaviourist, if it weren’t for the short but powerful incursions in the realms of obsessions, oneirism and absurdity which belong to (...) our traumatic, post-modern world... Love is a Trabant leaves the impression of a fresh, alert style (...) coupled with the serious anxieties of one who has witnessed the human comedy transplanted, as it were, from native Europe into the “exotic” circumstances of the Antipodes.” (Gabriel Cosoveanu, *Ziua Literară*)

- “The language of Love is Trabant is neither English nor Romanian. It is the language of beautiful story-telling (...)” (Crenguta Napristoc, *Observator cultural*)

Anamaria Beligan’s novel *motherbena.com* well-received in the Romanian mass media:

- “ In but one of the baroque twists in this provocative and elegant satire on life in the weird world of today, a rat-infested old cinema in Melbourne becomes the improbable hiding place for illegal immigrants. Mother Bena, originally from a remote Romanian village, now heads a great Australian business empire, ruling it and her strange family with a rod of iron and a kind of ruthless wit. Anamaria Beligan, in her distinctive and cinematic style, has created a narrative that glides from shocking tragic-comedy to poetic revelation to a sad grandeur in this commentary on who does business in the world, how they do it, and what it costs.” (Carmel Bird)

- “A well-mastered, vividly paced narrative, rich in entrapments and false leads. But this wouldn’t mean much if Anamaria Beligan had not tried - and achieved - to address a profound issue (...) the inherently tragic character of the human condition... The two plots - the soapie and the real life -- are interchangeable, so that, like in some Chinese story, one could ask, 'if everything is nothing but a dream, who is doing the dreaming?’” Dania-Ariana Moisa - *Ramuri*)

- “The language is overwhelmingly vernacular, the writing - interactive, addressing a "dear reader" who is both witness and co-author (...) of the book, which writes itself before his/her eyes. ...The world we live in is brutally mirrored in Anamaria Beligan's novel: decadent, insane, addicted to playing Russian roulette with words, living in a 'surrealist space, somewhere between the bazaars of Istanbul, the semi-rural *iarmaroc* of southern Romania and the explosive kitsch of an Indi rock clip.” (Valeria Manta-Taicutu - *Agonia.ro*)

- “An interesting, challenging post modern novel, with powerful characters, especially Mother Bena, a sort of female 'Godfather', 'busier than an airline company' and 'more restless than a global corporation'.” (*Săptămăna Financiară*)

- “The best novel about Romanian immigrants. With a plot based in Australia but also in the dilapidated world of the Romanian village, this book is a breathless read and contains all the ingredients of a bestseller of high literary quality: love stories, suspense, humour, satire, thriller elements and a high paced drama unravelling across several levels and timelines.” (*Revista Avantaje*)

IV. Extracts of Literary Works

- “...You see, I come from a dusty city in the plains of Wallachia, where winters were unbearably cold and summers could become dangerously hot. Between such extremes, it was not always easy for the inhabitants to keep their heads cool... Especially in summer, during those nights whose aroma of warm darkness, and melted asphalt, and acacia, and ancient dust suddenly stirred

by some unsuspected breeze, was so addictive, that I know of someone who has made a very lucrative cottage industry out of bottling that scent and selling it to wealthy expatriates, by correspondence..." (*Electricity*)

- "I became mesmerised by the way she was gliding her blunt, crooked forefinger across the aristocratic grandeur of the frontal bone, lingering for a long moment around the remarkable bulges of the frontal eminences, sliding gently along the majestic superciliary ridges, then making its way across the mighty parietal eminences, softly palpating the Lambdoid Suture, tickling the occipital crests, protuberances and tubercles, resting inside the mysterious sanctum of the Foramen Magnum, then proceeding, past the temporal ridges, depressions, fissures and fossae, and across the slender zygomatic arch, straight into the adventurous surfaces of the norma frontalis, penetrating the smooth, seven-boned cavities of the orbits, descending boldly along the concealed, turbinated mysteries of the nasal fossae, into the supremely synchronised symphony of the maxillaries, then inserting itself between incisors, canines, and bicuspid, and inviting me to co-palpatate the palate... I remember how she then swiftly turned the skull upside down, to reveal the sphenoid bone which bound that magnificent construction, locking it in for eternity in its tight embrace. The enigmatic sphenoid itself, like an enormous, ossified bat, with regal, angelic wings.

'The lesson had been nothing but one all-embracing, expertly applied caress.

My adolescent blood was beginning to stir." (*A Remarkable Skull*)

- "I couldn't stop thinking, 'What if Reghina's whistle penetrates through the thick walls of the Forensic Institute down the road?... What if the old hearts, floating gently in their formol-drenched slumber, start beating again, infecting the sound waves, threatening the darkness with their pulsating iridescence, insinuating their vitality into their sister-organs, causing chopped fingers to tap-dance, fat livers to shiver, lonely eyes to gaze deeply into each other, black lips to murmur some forgotten, dangerously poetic song?'

I knew I was on the verge of some forbidden revelation, my feet were cold with enchanted terror, I wanted to move, I wanted to scream, I wanted to cry... but, like a pre-programmed puppet, all I could do - all I did do - was to open my mouth and to allow the csardas torrent that had insidiously built up inside my lungs to burst out, through the fluid orchestration of my incredibly astute trachea, through the lyrical softness of my pharynx, clashing mightily against the firmness of my palate, and finally flowing free between my melodic molars, between the dry caresses of my astounded lips, into the glow of the resonating darkness.

Not in the least surprised by my sudden musicality, Reghina grabbed me by the waist, mirroring my song, and by then the combined power of our csardas had no trouble in guiding my clumsy feet, getting them to perform every step of the dance with aerial perfection." (*Csardas Lullaby*)

- "I sometimes experience very accurate recollections from the time we were both floating in the womb of that remote person, the twenty year old Hungarian black-eyed beauty who buried herself in the hills of Moldavia to be loved by our father, the visionary. And who never inspired any Liszt, just some second rate, provincial composer who composed that dubious, ill-fated Moldavian Ballad Penny kept playing on her harmonica.

I can see myself in that remote womb, floating painlessly - the only painless time I could ever recollect. I can see my eyes, enormous and lidless, trained at staring in the dark... I can see them staring at my sister Penny, that other me, those other eyes, equally giant, equally lidless, but restless and fiery... And that liquid silence between us, and inside us... that liquid abyss! I was staring and glaring, questioning the waters, questioning her eyes. She, on the other hand, was busy growing, moving, breaking free from that watery prison. She closed her eyes, as soon as she grew eyelids, she pounded against the uterine walls as soon as she grew strength. She emerged into the world prematurely, leaving me behind, I who never wanted to leave. They had to extract me with forceps to the horror of the Hungarian beauty who was roaring and cursing, in unintelligible idioms. To Penny, our birth was the beginning. To me, it was the end." (*Untwinned*)

- "I travelled along the Esplanade, past the Empire State Building and towards the Luna Park. I crossed the Kathmandu Valley, into the narrow streets of the Barri Gotic. Then I paused for a few seconds above the Botanical Gardens, listening to a drunken kookaburra laughing in the night. Through an open window, in Mala Strana, I saw a little boy laughing at the kookaburra's laughter. I followed the placid bats in their flight above the Government House, and through a bedroom window, I saw the Governor of Victoria and his wife snoring serenely in their double bed. I then travelled further, crossing a few fields of black tulips, where Swiss cows were grazing in the discreet light of the blimp. I flew over an Atlantic or two, and I found myself in Werribee Zoo. My blimp nearly got caught between the ivory dreams of the slumbering rhinoceroses, so I crossed the Andromedan constellation, and headed back to the South bank of the Yarra River. I then followed a Burmese prince as he was chasing white elephants along the pedestrian stretch of Bourke Street. I flew over Parliament House, and saw mighty, juicy visions of restructuring and effectiveness spilling out into Treasury Place. I crossed Spring Street and the heights of Machhapuchhare, and watched the possums rummaging the bins for white collar suppers and blue collar dreams.

We flew like this, my blimp and I, closely yet remotely, fast yet slowly . So as to see, and to remember, yet to never get involved." (*La Primavera*)

- "Dear Monalisa,

You keep asking me about it. No, you don't keep asking me - but you keep expecting an answer.

I thought I could sink away, and hide, deep down, where the river stops. Deep down, in the blackest of the sea, where the sun never disturbs the salty waters. Where the sun remains powerless and therefore cannot inflict its fermentation, its exasperation, its recycled defecation, the slush and the slime called life.

I slipped, and slipped, between the silent, benevolent tongues of the jelly fish. Into the twilight zone of the octopuses, and the orchestrated whispers of the sea sponges. I slipped further down, into the black dream webs of the sea spiders. Further down, searching hungrily for the dark abyss, for my last chance to exhale on a bed of deep-sea anemones. I yearned for sleep - the sleep of calcium, and magnesium, and sodium, and carbon, and potassium, and cadmium, and zinc - sinking deeply into the wet darkness, safe at last from the kiss of light.

But it didn't work, Monalisa.

It didn't, it wouldn't, it never will.

It is the most treacherous of seas, this black sea of ours. It defies the logic of death. It forbids you to rest.

I feel your questions, which are not questions, just expectations, Monalisa. And beyond them, I feel her questions, which are not real questions, just would-be words on would-be letters dropped in a would-be mail-box, on a Sunday evening. A plankton of almost-questions, out of control, proliferating on the vast surface of the sea. And no abyss underneath, just that horror, that unspeakable horror I saw, that defiance of logic and death, that anomaly of creation, that curse.

I'm floating, Monalisa. Hopelessly, just beneath the plankton. I'm slime and I'm slush and I cannot begin to forget." (*Letters to Monalisa*)

V. Instead of Conclusions

Anamaria Beligan is currently working on **her third novel**, *Windermere: Love at Second Sight*. Her activity has been generously supported by The Literature Board of the Australia Council for the Arts. Les Murray, Australia's leading poet and one of the greatest contemporary poets writing in English, confessed that "Anamaria Beligan is a wonder, among Australian writers. Utterly distinctive, full of invention and flair and sheer difference."

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