

## *Sonja Dechian wins the 2019 Jolley Prize*

**Sonja Dechian** is the winner of the [2019 ABR Elizabeth Jolley Short Story Prize](#). She receives \$5,000 for her story '[The Point-Blank Murder](#)'. Dechian was announced as the winner of the Jolley Prize by award-winning author Maxine Beneba Clarke at a special ceremony at Readings Hawthorn on 11 September that featured readings from all three shortlisted stories by the authors.

### **About Sonja Dechian:**

Sonja Dechian is the author of the short story collection *An Astronaut's Life*, which won the 2016 UTS Glenda Adams Award for New Writing and was shortlisted for the Steele Rudd Award the same year. Her writing has previously appeared in *The Best Australian Stories*, *New Australian Stories 2*, and elsewhere. She has co-edited two books of children's writing about the Australian refugee experience, *No Place Like Home* and *Dark Dreams*.



**Sonja Dechian**

The judges had this to say about Sonja Dechian's winning story:

*At once tender and sinister, 'The Point-Blank Murder' is a story of parental vigilance, with all of its new terrors. 'That's one of the things about having a baby,' our narrator explains, 'you have to think things through.' On an isolated rural property, a couple learn how to comfort and care for their newborn. The rhythms of parenthood are new and strange to them – almost otherworldly – and that strangeness echoes against the landscape. One of the pair is listening to a true crime podcast to give the days shape. Why does its distant violence feel so claustrophobically resonant? Why does the sleepless quiet of their rural idyll feel so fraught? This assured story is drum-skin taut – it trusts that its readers will find their way into its dark corners, and then emerge, bleary-eyed, back into the merciless sunlight.*

The other two shortlisted authors are **Raaza Jamsheer** (NSW), who was placed second and receives \$3,000 for her story '[Miracle Windows](#)', and **Morgan Nunan** (Vic), placed third, who receives \$2,000 for '[Rubble Boy](#)'. All three shortlisted stories appear in the September Fiction issue.

This year the [ABR Elizabeth Jolley Short Story Prize](#) (worth a total of \$12,500) attracted almost 1,350 entries from thirty-eight countries. The judges were **Maxine Beneba Clarke**, **John Kinsella**, and **Beejay Silcox**.

The judges also commended three other stories: 'Supermarket Love' by **Elleke Boehmer** (United Kingdom), 'Hero Manifest' by **Bill Collopy** (Victoria), and 'Lizard Boy' by **Brendan Sargeant** (ACT). The commended authors receive an equal share of the remaining \$2,500 in prize money and their stories will appear online in coming months. A longlist of ten stories appears on our website.

### **Further information:**

More information about *Australian Book Review*, including the complete judges report, can be found on the *ABR* website from September 12. The Jolley Prize shortlisted authors are available for interview.

Please contact Jane Finemore on +61 408 463 873 or [jane@finemorecommunications.com](mailto:jane@finemorecommunications.com)