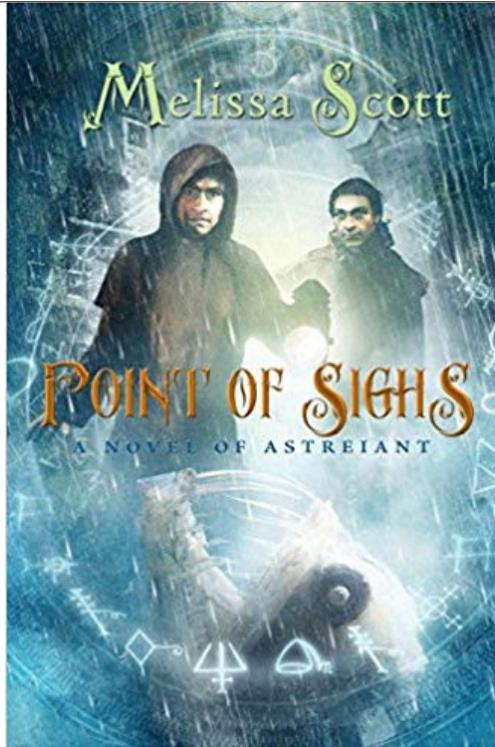


2019 Gaylactic Spectrum Awards
Best Novel



Winner

Point of Sighs
by Melissa Scott

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ISBN13: 978-1590216453

Point of Sighs is the fifth novel in Melissa Scott's "Astreiant" Fantasy series, and it's a worthy addition. Of the three previous titles in the "Astreiant" series published since the Gaylactic Spectrum Awards began (a fourth predated us) one has won Best Novel and the other two have been on our Recommended List in their given years. Beautifully written, with exquisitely detailed world-building, the story's heart is the long-term relationship between Philip Eslingen (a "knife" and former soldier) and Nicholas Rathe (a "pointsman" at the Point of Dreams station).

It's a very wet autumn in the city of Astreiant. Storms at sea have delayed merchant ships with important cargoes. Philip Eslingen's stars are bad for water, and he's finding that organizing the new City Guard is a very complicated and damp task indeed. Things are also complicated for Philip's lover, Adjunct Point Nicholas Rathe: a sea captain has been murdered; the son of a leading Dreams family has been accused of the crime (based on evidence Nicholas doubts); and the murder and its investigations have exacerbated the rivalry between Point of Dreams and Point of Sighs stations.

The investigation of the murder uncovers extortion and corruption among the pointsmen (city police) - and the mystery gets more and more complicated as each new clue is revealed. Astreiant is also a city of magic and dark legends - and it looks like one of these legends has returned, along with its savage cult of followers.

Strong character and world building, fascinating magical elements, and multi-layered mysteries await in the world of Astreiant.

2019 Gaylactic Spectrum Awards - Recommended List



American Hippo by Sarah Gailey
Tor.com ISBN13: 978-1250176431

A couple of “wilder West” novellas combined into one book: a fascinating, delightfully-written alternate history story based on an actual (rejected) plan to populate the Mississippi with hippopotami as cattle substitutes. (As depicted by the events in this story, it would have been a very bad idea!). Part caper (it’s not a caper!) story with an oddball team of rogues, part exploration of a quirky bit of history, the stories are a rollicking good read. Lots of different “queer flavors” are positively depicted through virtually every major character.

Balefire by Jordan L. Hawk
CreateSpace ISBN13: 978-1720604747

This is #10 in the “Whyborne & Griffin” series of Victorian Lovecraftian adventures, featuring two same-gender couples (Whyborne and Griffin, and Whyborne’s sister Persephone and his secretary Miss Parkhurst). Whyborne and Griffin agree to help their estranged (and often opposing) Endicott relatives free the Endicott’s home in England (Balefire Manor) from evil supernatural forces – in return for providing Whyborne with the key to translating the Wisborg Codex (which can hopefully be used to foil the return of the evil Masters to Earth). As possibly the penultimate novel in the series, it slowly draws together all the “strands” in the continuing storyline.

Five Planes: The Rule of Five Season 1 by Melissa Scott & Don Sakers
Speed-of-C Productions ISBN13: 978-1934754191

Far future space opera, set in a “pocket universe” in which trans-planar travel between five dimensional planes is enabled by a spatial rift. The lives of various characters gradually come together, connected by interplanetary politics and the gradual revelation of a mysterious conspiracy active in all five Planes. A classic example of what Susanna Sturgis refers to as “meta-gay content”: LGBTQ issues are not central to the storyline; but all kinds of positively-depicted LGBTQ characters (as well as various examples of “poly” family arrangements) appear time after time throughout the story.

Stone Mad by Elizabeth Bear
Tor.com ISBN13: 978-1250163837

This is the sequel to *Karen Memory*, and it follows the developing relationship between Karen and Priya as well as their deadly encounter with a tommyknocker in a steampunk alternate history. It’s a Weird West story that contains very positive lesbian content. Karen and Priya’s relationship is interestingly juxtaposed with a couple of female spiritualist grifters and an elderly female illusionist/stage magician. As the danger mounts, so too do the stresses on Karen and Priya as they try to define their relationship in a world that does not provide them many role models.

Armistice by Lara Elena Donnelly
Tor Books ISBN13: 978-1250173560

In this sequel to last year’s *Amberlough*, the fascistic Ospies are cementing their hold on Gedda, but international tensions and internal terrorism/resistance are causing them problems. Some of the surviving cast from *Amberlough* have fled Ged and surfaced in Porachis, specifically at the Hadhariti Studios (think “Bollywood”). Lots of political intrigue flourishes throughout the novel, as well as personal intrigues within the rocky relationship between Aristide Makricosta (the flamboyant aging protagonist from *Amberlough*) and his much younger studio assistant, Daoud.

Finders by Melissa Scott
Candlemark & Gleam ISBN13: 978-1936460885

Space Opera. Cassilde Sam and her male partner Dai Winter are salvagers looking for the color-coded Elements (remnants of ancient technology that are used to power humanity’s current civilization). Their lover Summerlad Ashe shows up again and involves the salvagers in a dangerous search for Gifts, powerful technological gadgets granting healing powers and immortality; and they run afoul of dangerous space pirates. Primarily bisexual orientations.

Harkworth Hall / Leviathan by L. S. Johnson
Traversing Z ISBN13: 978-0998893617/978-0998893624

A duology consisting of two linked novellas of historical dark fantasy, set in Regency England. It’s very “Lovecraftian”, with ambitious cultists utilizing a monstrous sea creature to advance their nefarious plans. Two young women (a young country gentlewoman and a secret agent of the British Crown) meet and work together to counter the cultists’ plots, meanwhile falling in love.

A Study in Honor by Claire O’Dell
Harper Voyager ISBN13: 978-0062699305

A reimagining of the Holmes-Watson relationship, set in a near-future USA (maybe the 2040s or 2050s), after a New Civil War has broken out in the central US, backed by reactionary forces that want to “make America great again” and stave off the gradual reversal of the society that evolved in “the dark days following 2016”. Janet Watson is black, a lesbian, and a severely injured and stressed veteran of the New Civil War; the VA is not helping her find a job as a doctor (or as anything else for that matter). She is introduced to Sara Holmes – some sort of secret government agent, as it turns out – and their lives are in danger as they unofficially investigate a hidden conspiracy with connections to the US war effort. An interesting, complex, and exciting exploration of many of the dark social forces currently being unleashed by the Trump presidency.