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Título: Uncentering The Earth. Copernicus And The Revolutions Of The Heavenly Spheres (G

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Modern readers are less inclined than earlier ones to sit through Copernicus's juggling of Ptolemy's epicycles to discover how he arrived at his eureka moment that the Earth moves around the Sun. Fortunately, they don't have to, as Vollmann, whose Europe Central won this year's National Book Award for fiction, provides a highly personal and philosophical gloss of all six chapters of Copernicus's *De revolutionibus* (1543). Vollmann interrupts his exegeses with discussions of the contemporary mindset, the limits of observation at the time (we're told repeatedly how difficult it is to spot Mercury without a good pair of binoculars) and the scientist's quiet, provincial career. What seems most remarkable about Copernicus's book after reading Vollmann's version is how firmly his work is based on Ptolemy's. It's also striking how close he came to modern astronomical values, especially since he thought that arriving within 10 degrees of a true value would be an amazing achievement. Vollmann can't completely avoid technical explanations, but readers who want to understand the significance of Copernicus's book in both his own time and ours will find this the next best thing to reading it.