

# Celestial Matters

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 24 Apr 2003

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James Jordan — 24 Apr 2003, 18:59

I wrote:

and there was that excellent novel a few years back, \*Celestial Matters\*  
by Richard Garfinkle -- a Lupine treat -- that was set in a  
Ptolemaic/Platonic universe.)

I just want to second this. No, it's not complex in the Wolfean way, but I think most Lupinists (esp. Latroists) will enjoy it. It's unique, as far as I know, and it's fully worked out. Here is part of a short review I wrote for a Christian audience:

Here is a novel of "hard science fiction" set in an alternate universe wherein the Greek view of the universe is real. The earth is at the center, and everything revolves around it in Ptolemaic cycles and epicycles. A piece of moon has been captured and fitted out as a space-travelling platform. Naturally (!), this piece of the moon wants to return to its proper place in the sky, for it "loves" the rest of the moon. The mission's purpose: to capture a piece of sun for the Greeks to use in their ongoing war with the Middle Kingdom (China). A well-known scientist, Aias, captains the mission, accompanied by a lovely Sparta-trained Xeroki (Cherokee) bodyguard.

What makes this novel unique is its portrayal of ancient science and philosophy. Garfinkle knows his stuff, and by the time we are finished, we know a lot of it also. We also learn about ancient Chinese science and Xi (Chi) forces. There's even a bit of Plato.

There's nothing "Christian" about this novel, except that it IS a novel and as such reflects the way narrative has developed in Christendom. But it is a lot of fun, and educational as well. I particularly enjoyed it when Aias emerges from a lunar cave as his moonrock space platform travels near the sun, and ... but I must not say more.

Of course, there are lots of adventures along the way, as Chinese spies try to prevent the moon-ship from taking a piece of the sun, and as Aias comes to learn more about the nature of "reality" in this world. And we see a clean and refined romantic relationship develop between Aias and Yellow Hare, his Xeroki bodyguard. I found the narrative well-paced, and completely clean of anything objectionable in the areas of language and sexuality, hence suitable for younger readers.

Nutria