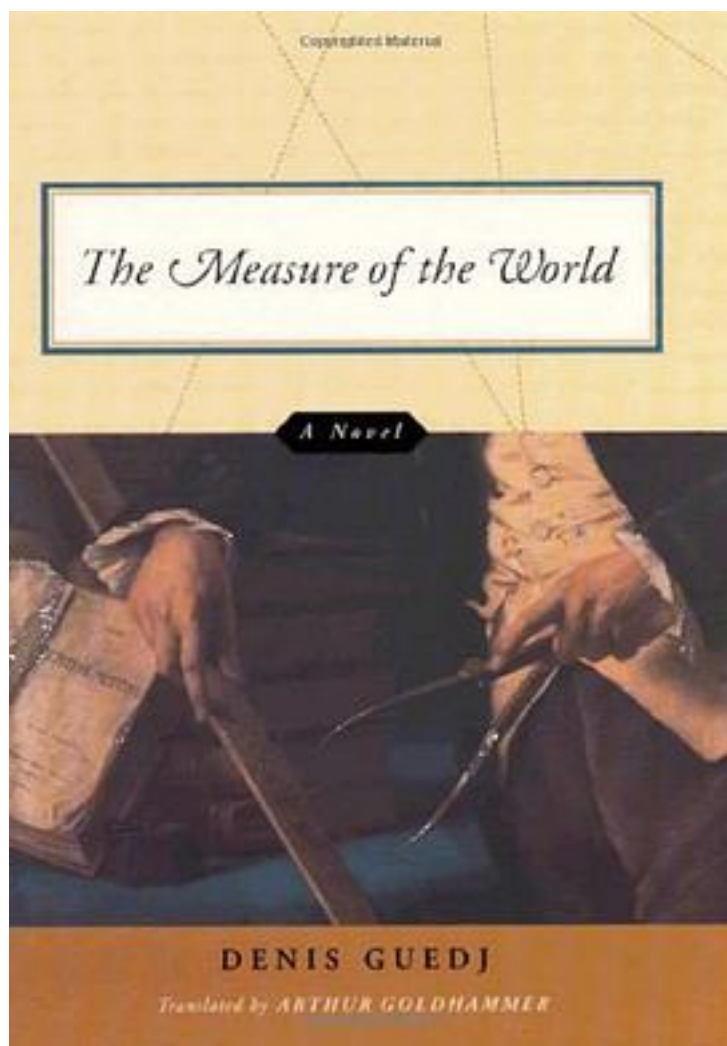


The Measure of the World



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著者:Guedj, Denis

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On June 24, 1792, two large traveling coaches left the Tuileries, one for Dunkirk and the other for Barcelona. Their passengers, Pierre M[5]echain and Jean-Baptiste Delambre, were astronomers charged by the French Revolutionary government with the task of measuring the meridian that passes through these two cities in order to devise one universal unit of measure, "for all time and for all men," the meter. The Measure of the World by Denis Guedj tells the story of this strange and wonderful effort. Not a traditional history of science, the book is a novelistic account of the measurement project that relies heavily on archival sources. A more "traditional" history could not possibly describe how a sober scientific enterprise could turn into a journey filled with adventures and experiences so bizarre as to be hardly credible. In the tumultuous days of revolutionary and postrevolutionary France, M[5]echain and Delambre were objects of suspicion as they traveled through the provinces, climbing steeples and deploying strange instruments they were detained as spies, taken for charlatans or fleeing royalists, and arrested for debt. Their perilous labors lasted until 1799, when the meter was formally established. Arthur Goldhammer's crisp translation of this wonderful novel retains the flavor of the original, and an appendix explaining Guedj's use of historical materials is included. A vivid re-creation of a fascinating and troubling period in history juxtaposed with the achievement of a complicated scientific undertaking, The Measure of the World is a marvelous book-not science fiction, but fiction about science. Denis Guedj is the author of La [5]volution des savants and L'Empire des nombres, among other books. La Mesure du monde was awarded the Prix d'Institut in 1989. Arthur Goldhammer is an award-winning translator who has translated works by Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, Jacques Le Goff, and Jean Starobinski. Praise for the French edition "An extraordinary picaresque novel that the reader will devour in one large gulp."--Point de Vue "Guedj brings the story of M[5]echain and Delambre to life with a captivating style, flawless scholarship, and an obvious taste for wonderful stories."--Lire

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