



Gulliver in the Land of Giants: A Critical Biography and the Memoirs of the Celebrated Dwarf Joseph Boruwlaski. Anna Grzeskowiak-Krwawicz

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JA^3zef Boruwlaski was the most famous dwarf of the Enlightenment age. Polish-born, he travelled extensively throughout Europe, appearing and performing at royal courts and salons, before settling in Durham in his later life until his death at the age of 97. He was described in Diderot's EncyclopA(c)die and the press of his day - both on the continent and in the UK - sustained an interest in him and kept tabs on his life and experiences. His memoirs, published in a bilingual (French and English) version in 1788, show him to have been an intelligent and sharp observer of the world he inhabited. The life story of this miniature gentleman is not only highly interesting in its own right, but also offers a new perspective on the culture of the Enlightenment. Through a meticulous survey of source materials in Poland, France, and the United Kingdom, the author has managed to unearth and reconstruct many heretofore unknown details about Boruwlaski's life and adventures, about his travels first on the continent and then in the United Kingdom. It is not typical biography, but rather an attempt at identifying certain social roles that were imposed upon Boruwlaski: a plaything of the salons, a source of entertainment for the masses, an adventurer against his own wishes. At the same time, his story is that of a man who spent his whole life trying to escape from such roles imposed upon him. Boruwlaski's memoirs are included in full, containing many of the letters he sent to his wife, with critical annotation. The author also investigates for the first time the sizeable differences between the many different versions of the memoirs published during his own lifetime. This monograph offers not only an opportunity to rediscover the fascinating life story of an intriguing man, but also gives a unique point of view on Europe's uppermost elite in the Enlightenment age - as people who remained deeply fascinated with deformities and oddities despite their own self-professed 'refined' tastes.

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