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### Academic background

2013 made a Fellow of Queen Mary, University of London (School of Languages, Linguistics and Film)

2010 PhD awarded for thesis entitled 'Invisible friends: questioning the representation of the court dwarf in Hapsburg Spain' (no amendments)

2000 MA Renaissance Studies (Distinction) 'Invisible friends. Questioning the representation of the court dwarf in Golden Age Spain'

1988 BA English Literature (2.2)

All my degrees were achieved at Birkbeck College, the University of London's specialist provider of higher education for working men and women.

### Current projects

I am an external member of the interdisciplinary research group, Homo-Debilis ([www.homo-debilis.de](http://www.homo-debilis.de)), run by Professor Cordule Nolte at Bremen University, Germany. Members of Homo-Debilis are working to discover how people experienced disability in the pre-modern era, and to explore the impact of disability on society as a whole.

My research interests are focused upon relationships between representations of physical and social difference in the 16th- and 17<sup>th</sup>-century Spanish Hapsburg court and the lived experience of the people portrayed, be they monarchs or the 'fools' and dwarfs who entertained them. I interrogate images within their original contexts for what they can tell us about contemporary attitudes towards the anomalous body.

### Publications

'Dwarfs and Kings at the Spanish Hapsburg Court: Images and Living Bodies' in *Dis/ability History der Vormoderne: Ein Handbuch/Premodern Dis/ability History: A Companion*, eds. Cordula Nolte, Bianca Frohne, Uta Halle and Sonja Kerth (Didymos-Verlag, Affalterbach, 2017).

'Dwarfs – and a 'Loca' – as Ladies' Maids at the Spanish Habsburg Courts' in *The Politics of Female Households: Ladies-in-waiting across early modern Europe*, ed by Nadine Akkerman and Birgit Houben (part of the series Rulers & Elites: Comparative Studies in Governance, ed by Jeroen Duindam) (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

'Past Imperfect' in *History Today*, vol 62, issue 12 (December 2012), 4. Short article highlighting the role of people with disabilities in the courts of the Spanish Habsburgs. I drew comparisons with modern attitudes towards physical imperfection.

'Philip II: A Pen Portrait' in *History Today*, vol 60, issue 10 (October 2010), 25–28. Longer piece examining the correspondence between Philip II and his children, with particular focus on the role of the so-called loca Magdalena Ruiz. I also review for *History Today*.

'Invisible friends: questioning the representation of the court dwarf in Hapsburg Spain' in *Histories of the Normal and the Abnormal: Social and cultural histories of norms and normativity*, ed by Waltraud Ernst (part of the series Routledge Studies in the Social History of Medicine) (Oxford: Routledge, 2006; first paperback edition 2012).

## Papers given

'Picturing difference: exploring representations of the Habsburgs and their dwarfs in the 16th to 18th centuries'

◆ Disease, Disability, and Medicine in Medieval Europe (AD 400–1600), University of Bremen, 4–7 December 2015. Joint workshop with Eva Seemann.

'From head to foot: looking at dwarfism and the poor'

◆ VariAbili(ties) II: The History and Representation of the Body in its Diversity with Queering Paradigms 6, University of Winchester 20–22 July 2015 Convenors: Chris Mounsey (Winchester) and Bee Scherer (Canterbury Christ Church University)

'Unworthy subjects? Dwarfs and entertainers in the Spanish Habsburg Courts' Panel: Portraiture and the Unworthy Subject in the Early Modern World

◆ 41st annual conference of the Association of Art Historians (AAH2015), 9–11 April 2015, UEA Norwich Convenor: Carmen Fracchia (Birkbeck, University of London)

'Size isn't everything: the curious case of the Habsburgs and their dwarfs'

◆ Queer Bodies research symposium, University of Winchester (held at Birkbeck, University of London 29 July 2014) Theme: An exploration of the 'variable' body by scholars working in the areas of disability and sexuality. Some keynote speakers: Chris Mounsey (Winchester); Bee Scherer (Canterbury Christ Church University)

"'Who are you looking at?' Picturing difference in early modern Spain'

◆ Early Modern Society lecture at Birkbeck, University of London, 21 March 2014 (Invited speaker.)

'The same only different: monarchs and their entertainers in early modern Spain'

◆ Disease, Disability, and Medicine in Medieval Europe (AD 400–1600) Workshop, 5–8 December 2013 at Georgia Regents University, Augusta, GA (USA) Theme: Defining health and non-health, ability and disability Some keynote speakers: Christina Lee (Nottingham); Edward Wheatley (Chicago); Wendy J. Turner (Georgia Regents); Madeline Sutherland-Meier (Texas)

"'Who are you looking at?' Picturing difference in early modern Spain'

◆ VariAbilit(ies) Conference: The History and Representation of the Body in its Diversity, Emory University, Atlanta, GA (USA) 4–6 July 2013 Some keynote speakers: Chris Mounsey (Winchester); Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (Emory); Michael Davidson (California San Diego); Helen Deutsch (UCLA)

'Velázquez and Murillo: picturing difference in 17th-century Spain'

◆ Northern Renaissance Seminar: Disability and the Renaissance, Leeds Trinity University College, 8 September 2012

'The virgin and the widow: picturing divinity and difference at the court of Philip II'

◆ Golden Age and Renaissance Seminar: Religious Culture in Early Modern Spain, University College, London, 16 February 2008

'Imagining monsters: a reinterpretation of Bartolomé González's portrait of Queen Margarita of Austria with her Dwarf', (c.1603 Vienna, Kunsthistorisches, displayed at Schloss Ambras)

◆ Centres and Margins Conference, Early Modern Society, Birkbeck College, University of London, 7 July 2007

'Mad, monstrous and marginalised? Questioning the status of Magdalena Ruiz'

◆ Post-graduate Conference, Birkbeck College Spanish Department, 10 February 2005

'Looking for "Estanislao": examining the representation of dwarfs in Hapsburg Spain'

◆ Picturing Poverty Conference: Imagery of the Outcast and the Marginal in Early Modern Europe, University of Aberdeen, Scotland, 3–4 May 2003

'Making Magdalena: portrayals of a Spanish dwarf in letters and on canvas'

◆ unfamiliar Letters Conference: Re-reading Early Modern Correspondence at Birkbeck, University of London, AHRB Research Centre for Editing Lives and Letters, 19–20 July 2002

'Invisible friends. Questioning the representation of the court dwarf in Golden Age Spain'

◆ Research Symposium on The Normal and the Abnormal: Historical and cultural perspectives on norms and deviations at the Centre for the History of Science, Technology and Medicine and Wellcome Unit for the History of Medicine, University of Manchester (in association with Society for the Social History of Medicine) 10–11 July 2002

Other talks, teaching, etc

As a freelance scholar, I teach short courses on the Spanish and Northern Renaissance for the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) and give illustrated lectures on early modern subjects such as 'Monsters and Marvels' and 'Children and Childhood'. I also write contemporary fiction as Jan Ellis ([www.janelliswriter.com](http://www.janelliswriter.com)).