

LYDIA WILSON - CURRICULUM VITAE

Summary

I am currently a research fellow at the Centre for the Resolution of Intractable Conflict at Harris Manchester College, University of Oxford; a visiting fellow at the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, University of Cambridge; a visiting scholar at the Ralph Bunche Institute for International Studies at City University New York Graduate Center, and a freelance writer for publications from the *Times Literary Supplement* and *Nautilus* to *The Nation* and *Time Magazine*. I am co-founder and co-editor of the [Cambridge Literary Review](#), a journal devoted to contemporary poetry, prose, non-fiction, and essays.

I have an unusual perspective in understanding the contemporary Islamic world due to my doctoral research in medieval philosophy: modern political Islam is rooted in the medieval period, and al-Farabi, the subject of my doctoral thesis, has a central place in the history of political philosophy. Both journalism and anthropology have given me other necessary skills and experiences for carrying out fieldwork in the Middle East, which is what my research is predominantly now based on, exploring questions to do with the motivations and circumstances that can and do lead to violence.

A recent article on interviewing ISIS fighters in Iraq was the most-read in the Nation's history, garnering over 1.5 million unique reads. Two books on ISIS are in preparation, one for a general audience (with Penguin) and one for an academic audience (Cambridge University Press). Recent interviews with ISIS fighters have been held in Kosovo, Iraq and Jordan, with projects in Tunisia and UK prisons imminent.

Personal Details

Address: 48 Marlborough Avenue, Hull, HU5 3JS
Mobile: +44 (0) 7971 794946
E-mail: lydia.wilson@hmc.ox.ac.uk
Nationality: British
Current occupation: Research fellow & academic consultant, University of Oxford

Education

- 2006-10 PhD entitled: "Ancient to Medieval Structures of Knowledge: Situating Al-Farabi's *Enumeration of the Sciences*", University of Cambridge.
- 2004-5 MPhil (Distinction), History, Sociology and Philosophy of Science, Technology and Medicine, University of Cambridge.
- 1997-2000 BA Hons (2:1), Natural Sciences Tripos; University of Cambridge.
1997-8: Natural Sciences Tripos Part IA: Maths, Physics, Geology, Biology of Cells.
1998-9: NST Part IB : Geology; History and Philosophy of Science.
1999-2000: NST Part II: History and Philosophy of Science.
- 1994-6 A-levels: Maths, Further Maths, Physics, Chemistry, General Studies.
- 1992-4 GCSEs: Maths, English, English Literature, Dual Science, French, German, History, Geography, Latin.

Languages

Advanced Arabic, intermediate German, basic French, Latin and Ancient Greek.

Employment History

- Sept 2014-present Research Fellow, Centre for the Resolution of Intractable Conflict (Harris Manchester College, University of Oxford); affiliated scholar, Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, University of Cambridge; Field Director, Artis International; visiting scholar, Ralph Bunche Institute for International Studies (City University New York, Graduate Center); Head of Research, Big Bad Boo Production Company (New York).
- Sept. 2012-2014 Mellon post-doctoral fellow, Committee for the Study of Religion, CUNY Graduate Center.
- Oct 2010-2012 Post-doctoral researcher on the Science Heritage project, History and Philosophy of Science, University of Cambridge.

- Oct 09-March 2010 Work on the *Artes Liberales* project, Freie Universität, Berlin on medieval Arabic classification of knowledge.
- March 2010 Month-long internship at the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, working on medieval Arabic astrolabes.
- Oct 2006-Oct 2010 Doctoral research. Freelance writing for *Time* magazine, *CAM* magazine, Al-Jazeera online and others.
- Sept 05-Sept 06 Teaching English and writing for *Syria Today*, *Bidoun* magazine and *Open Democracy* in Damascus (whilst studying Arabic).
- Jan-Sept 2004 Freelance work, Dubai, writing corporate copy, television scripts (including a 12-part environmental series), articles, and human rights proposals, reports and letters.
- Nov 2001-Jan 2004 Freelance work including defence and economic research, teaching science, maths and English to 10-13 year olds, and setting up a short story publishing company.
- May-Nov 2001 Researcher for various Equinox documentaries, DOX Production Company, London.
- Nov 2000 – May 01 Marketing Assistant, BBC Technology, organising the international launch of BBC Technology in Las Vegas.
- 1996-2001 Various roles in science television, mostly as researcher on various BBC science programmes including *Tomorrow's World*, *Meet the Ancestors*, *Blood of the Vikings* and *The Royal Institution Christmas Lectures* (including vacation positions), with a secondment in BBC Marketing, organising the launch of BBC Technology in Las Vegas. There was also a period at the independent DOX Production Company on various *Equinox* documentaries.

Academic Activities

- 2014-present Mentoring interns and graduate students; teaching; formative research for communications strategies in countering violent extremism; briefings for policy makers.
- 2012-14 Organised weekly seminar series and extra events, including one day conferences, for the Mellon Committee for the Study of Religion, Graduate Center, CUNY.
- Spring 2013 Taught on the Advanced Certificate in Terrorism Studies, John Jay College, CUNY.
- 2006-11 Taught Arabic language in both classes and one-to-one supervisions.
Supervised on history of Arabic science and philosophy (2006-11), ancient classical science (2009-11).
- October 2008 Selected to take part on the University's 'Rising Stars' programme (training young academics in outreach skills).
- 2006-9 Classes in Arabic, German, Latin and Ancient Greek; including two months at the Goethe Institute, Berlin, and courses at the French Institute, Damascus.
- 2004-8 MPhil representative. PhD representative; MCR (college) representative
- 2008-10 Organizer, Departmental Greek and Arabic classes.

Selected publications

Edited volumes

(Ed. with R. Šnajdr), *Cambridge Literary Review* issue 10, 2017.

(Ed. with R. Šnajdr and J. Noel-Tod) *Cambridge Literary Review* vol. IV-V, 7-9, 2013-2015

(Ed. with B. Jardine) *Cambridge Literary Review* vols I-III, 1-6. 2009-2012.

(Ed. With N. Jardine) Special issue of *Studies in the History and Philosophy of Science*, 'Recent material heritage of the sciences'. December, 2013.

Academic articles

'Understanding the Appeal of ISIS,' *New England Journal of Public Policy*: Vol. 29: Iss. 1 (2017), Article 5. Available at:
<http://scholarworks.umb.edu/nejpp/vol29/iss1/5>

(with Hoshang Waziri) 'Haunted by their past: Kurds and the Islamic State,' in *Sentinel*, Vol. 8 Issue 6, June 29th, 2015.

(With Nagata, et al), SOCCENT SMA White Paper (USA), "Multi-Method Assessment of ISIL", December 2014.

(With Sheikh et al) 'The Devoted Actor as Parochial Altruist: Sectarian Morality, Identity Fusion, and Support for Costly Sacrifices,' *Clodynamics*, 5(1), 2014.

'A Typology of Dispersed Collections: Collaborating with scientists and technicians', in Laetitia Maison, Sofia Talas and Roland Wittje (eds): *Shaping European university heritage - Past and possible futures*. (Trondheim: Det Kongelige Norske Videnskabers Selskabs Skrifter 3), 2013.

(With Marta Lourenço) 'Scientific heritage: Reflections on nature and new approaches to preservation, study and access,' in *Studies in the History and Philosophy of Science*, December 2013.

'Scientific Heritage in Cambridge: an introduction,' in *Arranging and rearranging: planning university heritage for the future*, edited by Sofia Talas; Marta C. Lourenço (Padova: Padova University Press, 2012.)

'Intangible histories and the invisible technician,' in *University Museums and Collections Journal*, Vol. 5 (2012), eds. Nathalie Nyst, Peter Stanbury, and Cornelia Weber.

Reviews

Graeme Wood, *The Way of the Strangers: Encounters with the Islamic State*, in the *Times Literary Supplement*, April 14, 2017. <http://www.the-tls.co.uk/articles/private/theology-of-isis/>

Documentary on First Responders in Syria, the White Helmets in the *Nation*, October 6th 2016. <https://www.thenation.com/article/this-film-shows-syrias-civil-war-from-the-victims-point-of-view/>

Today We Drop Bombs: Tomorrow We Build Bridges by Peter Gill, *Times Literary Supplement*, September 21st 2016. <http://www.the-tls.co.uk/articles/public/death-of-neutrality/>

Learned Patriots: Debating Science, State, and Society in the Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Empire by M. Alper Yalcinkaya, *Times Literary Supplement*, January 29, 2016. <http://www.the-tls.co.uk/articles/private/two-cultures/>

'ISIS and the Assad Dynasty,' essay review of 5 books about contemporary Syria, *Times Literary Supplement*, September 23, 2015. <http://www.the-tls.co.uk/articles/private/assads-and-isis/>

'For the Errors that Remain,' review of James Montgomery, *Al-Jahiz: In Praise of Books*, *Times Literary Supplement*, March 18, 2015.

Essay review of The New York Review Children's Collection, *Rain Taxi*, Winter 2014/15

Diana Wynne Jones and Ursula Jones, *The Islands of Chaldea*, *Rain Taxi*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Fall, 2014), pp. 34-35.

Avner Ben Zaken, *Reading Hayy Ibn Yaqzān: A Cross-cultural History of Autodidacticism*, *The British Journal for the History of Science*, 47 (March 2014), pp 371-372.

Nina Berman, *German Literature on the Middle East: Discourses and Practices, 1000-1989*, *Times Literary Supplement* February 28, 2014.

Essay Review on the *Library of Arabic Literature*, *Times Literary Supplement* October 15, 2013.

Henry Maguire, *Nectar and Illusion: Nature in Byzantine Art and Literature*. *Times Literary Supplement* April 12, 2013.

A. Ben-Zaken, *Reading Hayy Ibn-Yaqzan: A Cross-Cultural History of Autodidacticism*, in *Times Literary Supplement* 2 December 2011.

Miss Tully, *Letters written during a ten years' residence at the Court of Tripoli, 1783-1795*, in *Times Literary Supplement* 9 September 2011

Bernard Rougier, *Everyday Jihad: The rise of militant Islam among Palestinians in Lebanon*. *Times Literary Supplement*, 7 July 2009.

Julija Sukys, *Silence is Death*, on the Algerian poet and journalist Tahar Djaout. *Times Literary Supplement*, 24 September 2007.

Journalism articles

'Think Iraq looks bad? You aint seen nothing yet', op-ed for the *Daily Beast*, October 28th, 2016. <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2016/10/28/think-iraq-looks-bad-now-you-ain-t-seen-nothing-yet.html>

'Is Kosovo the New European Hotbed of Jihadi Extremism?', *The Nation*, July 14, 2016. <https://www.thenation.com/article/is-kosovo-the-new-european-hotbed-of-jihadi-extremism/>

'The EU is Now Criminalising Refugees,' *The Nation*, April 20, 2016. <http://www.thenation.com/article/the-eu-is-now-criminalizing-refugees/>

'İŞİD İçin Savaşanlar Kimler?' *Perspektiv* magazine (Turkish-language article in Germany), <http://www.perspektif.eu/isid-icin-savasanlar-kimler/>, March 2016

'What I Discovered from Interviewing ISIS,' *The Nation*, October 21, 2015. <http://www.thenation.com/article/what-i-discovered-from-interviewing-isis-prisoners/>

'How ISIS Broke My Questionnaire,' *Nautilus*, February 5, 2015, Issue 21 <http://nautil.us/issue/21/information/the-isis-in-the-room>

'The Future of Land': six first person articles with engineers at the University of Cambridge working on land engineering, *Cambridge Alumni Magazine*, Winter 2008.

'The Science of Sound', five first person articles with scientists at the University of Cambridge working on aspects of sound in animals, *Cambridge Alumni Magazine (CAM)*, Summer 2008.

'China's Other Tibet', a feature on Muslims in Xinjiang, China, and their dual heritage. *Al-Jazeera Online*, 25 March 2008.

'Lifting the Veil', a review of Malu Halasa and Mazier Bahari (eds.), *Transit Tehran*, on the youth of Tehran, *Time Magazine*, 20 November 2007.

'Damascene Confusion', a review of the National Museum of Syria. *Time Magazine*, 20 September 2007.

'The Kurdish Question', experiences of staying with Kurds in Armenia, *Time Magazine*, 6 August 2007.

'Undercover in Damascus', the underwear industry in Syria, *Time Magazine*, 16 January 2007.

'Lebanon: the view from Syria'; feature on Syrian attitudes during the 2006 Lebanon-Israel war, *Open Democracy*, 11 August 2006.

'Reconstructing the Aleppo Citadel', a review of the Aga Khan Development Agency's project to restore the Aleppo Citadel, *Syria Today*, March 2006

'The Aesthete', a profile of Iraqi theatre director and actor, Basim Kahar, *Syria Today*, February 2006.

In press

'Shifting questions in researching violent extremism,' *Proceedings of the World Federation of Scientists*.

In preparation

Books on motivations to join ISIS for Penguin and Cambridge University Press

Review of the 6-hour documentary *Homeland: Iraq Year Zero* by Abbas Fahdal

'Living with the PKK,' essay in edited volume, Anna Hedlund and Brian McQuinn (eds.), working title *Living and Working with Armed Groups*.

(With Robert Jenkins, director of UNICEF Jordan): Evaluation of an educational programme in Syrian refugee camps and centres in Jordan

Review of Yassin al-Haj Salah, *Impossible Revolution* for the *Times Literary Supplement*

Selected lectures, talks, presentations and events, 2011-2017:

2017

- June "Gaslighting the Middle East", panel at the Byline Festival
Workshops at Cumberland Lodge, Countering Extremism in Society
- May "The Appeal of ISIS", Computer Lab security seminar, Cambridge
"Positive Peace in Iraq", OxPeace Annual Conference, Oxford
"ISIS Online", at Security and Human Behaviour annual conference, the Computer Lab, Cambridge
- March Briefing to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, London, on extremism in Jordan
Talk at UNESCO, Paris
- February Talk at Changing Character of War group, University of Oxford
- January Briefing at the Department of State, Washington D.C.

2016

- November "Academics as intermediaries", roundtable on policy and academia, University of Oxford
"The Appeal of ISIS, global and local," roundtable in Amman organised by Analasyeize.
- October "How uniform are drivers of Radicalisation?", Prishtina Kosovo; CVE conference run by Kosovo Ministry of Interior and OSCE
Presentation on countering extremist Islam, EU Counter Terrorism Coordinator, Brussels
Presentation in Rabat, Morocco, CVE research methods: Search for Common Ground, the Canadian Embassy, the UK Embassy, the EU coordinator
Workshop with friends and families of extremists, Tangier, Morocco
- September In Conversation with Loretta Napoleoni, on kidnappings as a global source of income for jihadists
Closed event with Madeleine Albright; security through strengthening democracy
Women and ISIS, CRIC
- August Motivations to fight, World Federation of Scientists, Erice, Sicily
Briefing for the Coalition Working group, on foreign fighters in ISIS

- July Chaired a panel on Countering Violent Extremism, Syria Strategic Communications Advisory Team, Brussels
- May Interviewing ISIS: research methods, Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, University of Cambridge
Expertise and Foreign Policy, Critical Theory and Practice seminar series, University of Cambridge
Measuring extremist online activity, Home Office, UK
- April ISIS and Social Media, Nuffield College, Oxford
The Allure of ISIS, HMG Home Affairs Select Committee, International Counter-Terrorism Conference
- March ISIS and Social Media, Leadership Academy, Centre for Peace Building and Democracy and the University of Liverpool
Countering Violent Extremism, The USA Embassy, London
- January The poetics of engagement, literary responses to conflict. Royal Holloway, University of London
How to Defeat ISIS, CRIC, Oxford

2015

- December Support for the Conference: Shia and Protestant Theology, CRIC, Oxford.
- September 'Westerners in the Islamic State,' Centre for the Resolution of Intractable Conflict conference, *Going to Extremes*, Oxford.
- August 'Western Women in the Islamic State,' World Federation of Scientists Annual Meeting, Erice, Sicily.
- May 'Unconditional commitment to comrades and cause drives willingness to fight and die,' American Psychology Association, with Hammad Sheikh
- April Organised and introduced launch of *Cambridge Literary Review* issue 8/9 at Book Culture, New York.
- April 'Interviewing ISIS prisoners in Iraq,' to Marble Hill Senior Center, the Bronx, New York
- January: 'Distinguishing between violent groups: a case study comparing pro- and anti-ISIS fighters,' at Vox-Pol workshop, Brussels.

2014

- September: 'Anthropology and Psychology of conflict fieldwork, Lebanon,' at Columbia University.
- August: One of 12 invited participants to a meeting at Dartmouth College, exploring cross-disciplinary approaches to 'Patterns'.

- May: Presented fieldwork results from Lebanon in ARTIS Virtual Lab meeting
- March: 'Anthropology of conflict fieldwork, Lebanon,' Graduate Centre, CUNY
- February: Co-organised and introduced the American launch of the *Cambridge Literary Review* at Silent Barn, Brooklyn, theatre company Title: Point.

2013

- December: 'Islamic structures of science and society', Hampshire College.
- November: 'Islam and Politics' (with John Torpey and Bryan Turner), Graduate Center, CUNY
- April: 'Science and Islam', Graduate Center, CUNY.

2012

- December : Co-organised and hosted round table on 'Blue Peace in the Middle East', House of Lords, Westminster.
- September: 'The Uses of History', Graduate Center, CUNY.
- June: 'Dispersed Collections: Collaborating with scientists', XIII Universeum Network Meeting, Trondheim, Norway.
- June: Co-hosted and organised workshop for a new working group at XIII Universeum Network Meeting, Trondheim, Norway.
- May: Organised, introduced and chaired workshop on collecting scientific heritage at the Twentieth Century Think Tank, University of Cambridge.

2011

- October: Talk to the University of Cambridge's Heritage Research Group, introducing the Cambridge Scientific Heritage project
- October: Organised and hosted poetry reading with John James, Redell Olsen and Ian Patterson, Cambridge, to launch *Cambridge Literary Review* #5.
- October: 'Introducing Ibn Tufayl's 12th century *Hayy ibn Yaqzan*', Science and Literature reading group, University of Cambridge.
- September: 'Intangible histories and the invisible technician', XI International Committee of Museums for University Museums and Collections (UMAC) Annual Meeting, Lisbon, Portugal.
- May: 'Scientific heritage in Cambridge: an account of problems and solutions for the preservation of recent and contemporary science', XII Universeum Network Meeting, Padua, Italy.

- May: (With J Durant and A Harrington) Co-organised *Collecting the Genome* workshop at the Department of History and Philosophy of Science, Cambridge.
- April: 'Founding and editing the *Cambridge Literary Review*', Cambridge in America Day 2011, New York, USA.
- January: Organised and hosted launch of *Cambridge Literary Review* #4 at Trinity Hall, Cambridge.

Selected Media Appearances

June 27th 2015: Al-Jazeera, Inside Story,
<http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/insidestory/2015/06/kurds-quest-homeland-150627004050053.html>

17th November, 2015, Democracy Now! with Amy Goodman http://www.democracynow.org/2015/11/17/lydia_wilson_what_i_discovered_from

17th November, Inside Story, Al Jazeera:
<http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/insidestory/2015/11/syria-assad-151117175500734.html>

17th November 2015, podcast with Sean Kent
<https://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/trending-topics-sean-kent/id725400407?mt=2#episodeGuid=c192cb1f7d0f780c18c68368442f00b5>

18th November 2015, CBC with Stephen Quinn

19th November, 2015, interview with South Korean radio show tbs eFM This Morning, available as podcast from: <https://itunes.apple.com/kr/podcast/tbs-efm-this-morning/id1038822609?l=en&mt=2>

19th November 2015, extended interview with Der Standard (Austrian daily), Rainer Schüller, <http://derstandard.at/2000027496268/Der-Islam-in-der-extremen-Form-des-IS-spielte-fuer>

20th November 2015, Australian ABC's "The World", <http://www.abc.net.au/news/programs/the-world/>

23rd November 2015, interview with BBC World Service

7th December 2015, CBC, The Current,
www.cbc.ca/1.3353631

19th February 2016, Al-Jazeera, *Upfront*, 'How to defeat ISIS'.
<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/02/upfront-air-special-discussion-isil-160219152546662.html>

17th March 2016, Al-Jazeera, *Inside Story*, on the announcement of a Kurdish Federal State in SyriaL <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ve-n1VwNWB0>

4th April 2016, Radio Ireland, interview about motivations to join ISIS

30th June 2016, Talking Merica, Podcast with Sean Kent and CJ Werleman, <https://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/sean-and-cj-talkin-merica/id725400407?mt=2>