

The Devil's Intersectionality: Contemporary Cloaked Academic Antisemitism

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Abstract

Over a period of years, a pattern has emerged in anti-Zionist faculty publications that seriously compromises not only the scholars' credibility and professionalism but also that of academic publishing as a whole. Academia has proceeded for a decade by blindly assuming that basic evaluation procedures like peer review, fact-checking, and copy editing have continued to function reliably. My 2019 book *Israel Denial: Anti-Zionism, Anti-Semitism, & The Faculty Campaign Against the Jewish State* uses highly detailed case studies to demonstrate why this is not the case. I summarize those findings here and explore several of the key issues and consequences further. The ferocity of anti-Zionist conviction in these books and essays unfortunately means that they often cross the line into antisemitism. Using examples from work by Jasbir Puar, Sari Makdisi, and others, I demonstrate how distinguished university presses have become purveyors of antisemitism.

Keywords: Anti-Zionism, Antisemitism, Peer review, Higher education, Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Scholarly publishing, University presses, BDS, Jasbir Puar, Saree Makdisi, Duke University Press, University of Chicago Press, Apartheid

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

The intersectionality I want to address here, increasingly operative but never acknowledged, brings together academic professionalism, professional prestige, pedagogical practices, a misrepresentation of academic freedom, and all the vetting and reward procedures of the contemporary research university—and saturates them with anti-Zionism and antisemitism. For all that the concept of intersectionality in the new millennium has been promoted in some quarters of the American left, we remain largely blind to its quite different material manifestation in the academy. Indeed, the phenomenon is disguised—cloaked—in a variety of ways, most notably by long-term assumptions about professional standards that evolving academic anti-Zionism has substantially eroded, and arguably eviscerated.

The intersectionality at stake here is the subject of my 2019 book *Israel Denial: Anti-Zionism,*

*Anti-Semitism, and the Faculty Campaign Against the Jewish State.*¹ With several months having passed since the book went to press, I find that it is now possible not just to summarize its main conclusions but also to reflect further on their implications and raise other issues not addressed in the book itself. I will also be able to address the book's genesis and its aims with greater clarity.

Israel Denial overall has two fundamentally different categories of chapters. The first of these is represented by a series of close readings of purported scholarship by anti-Zionist faculty members closely aligned with the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement. I wanted those critiques of work by individual faculty to be the most thorough and convincing ever published. The chapters on Judith Butler, Steven Sailaita, Saree Makdisi, and Jasbir Puar, with additional analyses of Nancy Scheper-Hughes and W. J. T.

Mitchell, are each 20,000–30,000 words long. Often promoting what we now call “alternative facts,” their pseudo-scholarship regularly crosses a line into antisemitism. I would add to these a number of essays on Judith Butler and the very fine chapter on Noam Chomsky in Susie Linfield’s 2019 *The Lions’ Den: Zionism and the Left from Hannah Arendt to Noam Chomsky*.² I supplement my analysis of anti-Zionist publications with accounts of aggressively anti-Zionist teaching; those accounts are based on individual course syllabi collected from around the country.

The second, very different set of chapters is devoted to specific peace proposals and to ways of promoting them. The book embodies my conviction that neither category of work is sufficient on its own. While I yield to no one on the degree of my opposition to the BDS movement, I believe it is not enough to detail its destructive effects. We have to show that there are productive routes to peace and sound changes to recommend in Israeli policies. Conversely, peace proposals that do not engage the hostile political climate the BDS movement has created and the counterproductive demands it has circulated will not have much real world purchase. The dual structure will certainly be a problem for those readers who will be comfortable with one set of chapters but not the other. But as I say in the preface, I was not seeking to make things easier for anyone. Supporters of Israel need both political projects, whether they want them or not.

People who follow debates about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict may be aware how uncommon it is to see the two halves of this project joined. Indeed, because I had tested and refined my arguments at dozens of presentations before campus and community audiences, I was very much aware that some people would find one set of chapters appealing and the other set offensive. Some of the responses I received to the book manuscript confirmed that experience. The audience most receptive to hearing both kinds of arguments were students. Some faculty and

community members, on the other hand, more set in their views, were among those least receptive, either disagreeing vociferously, sitting in silence, or walking out of a presentation in anger. That is not entirely bleak news, since it suggests that, although some adults are unreachable, student education is not hopeless. But it does make a basic social observation necessary: there is no already existing political space that this dual project can occupy. Nor is there an obvious scholarly or popular book category to which the book’s two-fold structure belongs. It has to be invented. *Israel Denial* is an effort to do so.

The other point to make in this regard is that *Israel Denial* has no secure place to occupy on a right to left political spectrum. My personal publishing history includes such book titles as *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* and *Revolutionary Memory: Recovering the Poetry of the American Left*. I have published several books about the Spanish Civil War, the premier left-wing cause of the late 1930s. *Israel Denial* includes detailed agendas for improving Palestinians’ lives in Gaza and the West Bank, along with a substantial proposal for coordinated Israeli withdrawal from a portion of the West Bank, an apparently radical proposal that would today come only from the far left. And yet the book is explicitly Zionist and fiercely critical of BDS pseudo-scholarship and teaching. It lays out the grounds for classifying such academic research as professionally irresponsible and decisively antisemitic; for that reason some BDS advocates insist that I speak from the political right. The leaders and staff of AEN could understand why this dual mix of political impulses was necessary, but I was not hopeful that most university press readers could. Indiana University Press had series editors, however, who had faith in the project.

This effort to move beyond the polarized debates over the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is overdue and, if anything, increasingly critical, as the Manichean character of current political understanding is becoming increasingly more stark. Antisemitic versions of anti-Zionism in the

academy are ever more widespread and hostile. The BDS movement's anti-normalization agenda is making rational dialogue nearly impossible. It actually aims to elevate the refusal to talk with pro-Zionist university or community members to a moral principle.

There are several additional ways in which the book tries to unsettle the established camps of response to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Having documented the abuses of anti-Zionist teaching, I proceed to write sympathetically about teaching Jewish Israeli and Palestinian poetry together. Israeli poets were among the first to see how damaging the occupation of the West Bank would prove to be. Palestinian poets have offered compelling portraits of the special anguish of statelessness and of the costs of political violence. But there is a subtlety and complication to both bodies of poetry wholly lacking in BDS pseudo-scholarship; moreover, despite poetic license, these poets do not indulge in alternative facts. The chapter shows how teaching can promote empathy and mutual understanding of the sort we need if the peace process is to move forward.

What I do not do is provide the conventional litany of complaints about either the Israelis or the Palestinians, as I believe reciprocal demonization does not advance understanding or promote a resolution to the conflict. Demonization is not a way to progress. I do, however, counter false accusations in considerable detail; that includes a chapter that aims to correct the claim that Israel is the main violator of academic freedom on the West Bank. My extended analyses of work by Saree Makdisi and Jasbir Puar's work are good examples of the book's corrective component.

Saree Makdisi and Jasbir Puar

Many of the issues that roil debate on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict can be engaged productively but not settled to everyone's satisfaction. Thus one may, for example, dispute the claim that Israel is a racist society, but the

accusation will persist no matter what counterevidence is marshalled. There will always be some Israelis with vocal racist sentiments to demonstrate the presence of such views in the country. Detailed evidence to the contrary in Israeli law helps minimize but not eliminate the reach of the accusation, since enforcement is not always what one would wish. Depending on how it is interpreted and enforced, the 2018 nationality law could upset that balance; it has already raised concerns about the status of Israeli Arab citizens. But some of the most fiercely committed faculty anti-Zionist publications increasingly include claims that are readily and incontestably proven false. That does not, however, prevent them from meeting with editorial approval from university presses.

Despite working on this topic for years, I remain puzzled about faculty members' willingness to lie in print. I understand it from politicians, since the half-life of public memory is now immeasurably short. But an academic book is part of your professional identity throughout your life. Of course, the intersecting enabling and reinforcing professional systems help protect people from consequences, but that does not quite illuminate the moment of decision when you choose to type out false testimony. I also understand how anti-Zionism motivated by hatred decays to become antisemitism, but even that perhaps requires an extra step before you professionalize dishonesty.

This is not to say that more responsible forms of anti-Zionism are impossible. There are anti-Zionist books that are well researched. Even though I disagree with their historical interpretations and conclusions, I find I can have a rational reader's conversation with the text. Two possible entries on that list, both from anti-Zionist publishers, would be Gershon Shafir's 2017 *A Half Century of Occupation: Israel, Palestine, and the World's Most Intractable Conflict* and Andrew Ross's 2019 *Stone Men: The Palestinians Who Built Israel*.³ Both books are resolutely hostile to the Jewish state. Ross is a prominent BDS activist, active both at NYU

and nationally, who seeks a one-state solution and is naïve about what it would do to its Jewish citizens. *Stone Men* is about labor conditions for Arabs (later Palestinians) both prior to 1948 and since. Although he is exceptionally well qualified by his previous publications to compare working conditions in Israel and with those in other countries under capitalism, he chooses not to do so, thereby isolating Israel and intensifying the reader's sense of injustice. Shafir and Ross see all encounters and all evidence through the lens of their politics, but I am willing to engage with most (though not all) of their challenges. So I am not writing to condemn all anti-Zionist faculty publications or to claim that they are all antisemitic. I am writing to condemn the substantial number of such books and essays that are baldly unprofessional and dishonest because they are grounded in fantasy accusations.

Of course it is always possible that people lie in ignorance, accepting as true the opinions of ideological allies within and outside the academy. But the research that disproves some faculty statements is not obscure. Gathering all the evidence requires commitment and persistence. I spent many months researching various medical and legal issues with which I had little knowledge. But the first step is typically a simple internet search, and it will often provide a great deal of evidence disproving anti-Zionist alternative truths. Reading and mastering the relevant academic research, the next obvious step, takes considerable time, but academic libraries have search engines that make that process a lot easier than it used to be. Key term and author searches will survey a field quickly and efficiently. Rather than going to the library to read journal articles, I just print them out at home. I am left for the most part with a question I cannot answer: did the people whose work I discuss never do basic literature searches or did they simply ignore them because they were convinced they were in possession of a greater truth?

So, to take my first example, in October 2017 Duke University Press published a new

book *The Right to Maim: Debility, Capacity, Disability* by Jasbir Puar, the Rutgers University women's studies professor.⁴ She was already, it is safe to say, notorious among many in the humanities who are interested in Israel because of her January 2016 lecture at Vassar College that was castigated for reviving ancient blood libel accusations in a contemporary form. In the intervening year or so she had become a celebrated figure on the US radical left for much the same reason. The book, however, did not return to the Israeli organ transplant accusations that occupied a good deal of the pro-Israel response to her lecture. Instead it focused on her other key Vassar themes, among them her claim that Israelis for years had stunted the growth of Palestinian children in Gaza and the West Bank by denying them access to adequate food. The children were supposedly deliberately being kept on something close to a starvation diet, allowed enough nutrition to survive but not enough to remain healthy and enable normal growth. Other faculty, including Juan Cole, had made the same claim in op-eds, but Puar was the first to do so at length and subject them to peer review and publication by a university press. I'm daring to assume that we expect more of the fact-checking at Duke, than, say, at *The Electronic Intifada*, but Duke did not fulfill such expectations.

It is a mistake to invest more confidence in the anti-Zionist peer reviewing at Duke, Minnesota, or California than we do in an anti-Zionist website. The university presses, however, are part of a distinctive and far more professionally destructive phenomenon—what we might describe as academic stealth in plain sight. The peer review process is almost entirely invisible to us, but it intersects with anti-Zionist disciplinary consensus, peer pressure, and anti-Zionist press staff convictions to create a politically biased publication system. Its results in the form of published books and essays are entirely in plain sight, even heralded by publishers and award announcements. A fragment of the review process is also often

on display in at least some of the blurbs attached to publication.

It is a circular, self-reinforcing publication process that produces what I am persuaded is an academic, antisemitic echo chamber. However it developed over time, it is now fully established, functional, and in place. It is an interpersonal and material system dedicated to adding prestige to the project of demonizing Israel. The echo chamber reproduces a fixed ideology that claims originality and significance by observance of one principle: tell us something bad about Israel that we didn't already know.

The people required to make the system function include not only dedicated, anti-Zionist editors and staff members as well as reliably anti-Zionist readers and evaluators of manuscripts, but also complicit or compliant press boards. College and university hiring and promotion committees reinforce the system and support its pedagogy at the local level. Obviously, it took time to develop this diverse cadre of enablers, but they are now in place. Meanwhile, university courses, public lectures, and the publication of new books and essays refresh the supply by recruiting new converts to the cause. Hence, its self-generating circularity. Set aside in the process are fundamental questions for scholarship: What should be the standards of evidence for political propositions for disciplines in which those standards are poorly understood, rarely consensual, and even nonexistent? What standards should guide the differences between citing factual evidence and citing opinion? Should there be an obligation to examine counterevidence and opposing views? Humanities faculty, certainly, are not well educated in interpreting, evaluating, or countering political interventions. Humanities faculty, moreover, are not well educated in how to counter their own confirmation bias. These conditions are unfortunately likely to deteriorate still further, with profound implications for the future of the humanities in higher education.

I have concluded that the books and essays at stake are antisemitic for the following reasons

that address common, but not universal, BDS views built into them: 1) they share with many BDS advocates a conviction that Zionism is racist at its core, despite the movement's historical transformation and complexity; 2) they believe the very idea of a Jewish state is illegitimate and that Israel thus has no right to exist; 3) they object to the founding of the Jewish state in 1948, not just to the military occupation of the West Bank that began with the 1967 war; 4) they assert that normal relationships with any Israeli institutions or organizations that fail to condemn Israeli government policy are unacceptable; 5) they dismiss the right 6.5 million Israeli Jews have to political self-determination. In addition, they embody a number of other views held by more devoted academic anti-Zionists that are not held by many others in the BDS movement: 1) that Israel is a fundamentally demonic, destructive, and anti-democratic country about which little or nothing positive can be said; 2) that Israel is perhaps the world's most extreme violator of human rights; 3) that there are no meaningful distinctions to be drawn between a given Israeli government and the Israeli people as a whole; 4) that distinctions between what is true or false can be set aside for purposes of political expediency. As a consequence, the publications tend to move beyond even strong political disagreement to cross a line into what often seems better understood as extreme hostility or hatred. And there is a relentless and unforgiving quality to their pursuit of an anti-Israeli agenda. But that does not mean that I am claiming the people themselves are antisemites. You can adopt an antisemitic persona in what you write while maintaining Jewish friendships and seeing yourself as someone without prejudice. Of course, that may involve considerable self-deception, but faculty are no less subject to that tendency than others.

So there are about ten key features that I have found characterize anti-Zionist and antisemitic pseudo-scholarship. Not all these elements are equally weighted in all examples. With Judith Butler, her ideological fixations primarily take

the form of delusional philosophical and political formulations. They are developed at length in her 2012 book *Parting Ways: Jewishness and the Critique of Zionism*. There she revives the ancient antisemitic slander that Jews are condemned to wander the earth stateless as punishment for denying the divinity of Jesus and embraces a secular version of it. All Jews, she claims, have the souls of wanderers; if they look into their hearts, they will realize they truly neither need nor want a Jewish state.⁵ With Jasbir Puar, her system of invented political ideas is underwritten by a litany of alternative facts, as I will discuss shortly. While many no doubt assume “facts” like hers are not really facts at all, most likely do not realize just how astonishingly counterfactual some anti-Zionist academic publications actually are. In *Israel Denial* I set out to find out and to present the definitive case that proves she and other key faculty enemies of the Jewish state live in an alternative universe, though one to which California, Duke, Minnesota, and Chicago, the latter being the publisher of *Critical Inquiry*, conspire to lend credibility and influence.

With these issues in mind, I can briefly summarize the case against Saree Makdisi’s arguments and one of Jasbir Puar’s. Makdisi, an English professor at UCLA, has published several long anti-Zionist essays in *Critical Inquiry*.⁶ They are likely to be included in his book on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Makdisi’s three full-length essays in *Critical Inquiry* are part of the journal’s recent dedication to making anti-Zionism part of its mission and identity, an agenda promoted by its anti-Zionist editor W. J. T. Mitchell. I will focus on Makdisi’s December 2017 *Critical Inquiry* essay “Apartheid / Apartheid / [],” which is his most up-to-date and comprehensive statement on Israel and Zionism. The bracketed blank space in Makdisi’s title is designed to suggest that Israel has disguised its apartheid system by not marking it with signage, thus making it invisible and unnamable.

Makdisi’s fundamentally polemical essay argues that Israel’s “apartheid regime” is actually worse than South Africa’s. Like many humanities

faculty members, Makdisi indulges more than once in flamboyant or hyperbolic maneuvers that undermine his case, inhibit a serious debate about the character and quality of life west of the Jordan River, and distract us from considering practical strategies designed to advance political solutions offering justice for both Israelis and Palestinians. Along with his rhetorical flourishes, he offers seemingly empirical evidence of his claim: a catalogue of major features of South African apartheid and their alleged Israeli counterparts. He then attempts to go further to claim that Israel exceeds South African apartheid in its discriminatory and violent treatment of Palestinians. For example, he asserts that black South Africans were simply treated as inferior, whereas Palestinians are comprehensively dehumanized. Then he escalates the distinction as “the difference between exploitation and annihilation.”⁷ “Indeed,” he writes, “there is nothing even remotely resembling a precedent for Israel’s 2008-2009 or 2014 assaults on Gaza in the entire history of apartheid in South Africa.”⁸ But then black South Africans were not firing thousands of rockets into neighborhoods in Cape Town or Johannesburg or digging under them to construct hidden tunnels to be used for commando raids and terrorist attacks directed at civilians. (Makdisi appears to be uninformed about the violence carried out by the South African Defense Forces during the Namibian War of Independence, a vital front during the battle against apartheid.) Does Makdisi imagine that the Israelis “dehumanize” members of the Palestinian security services when they work together. Does Makdisi imagine that Arab Israeli citizens who work as doctors or faculty members, some of whom identify themselves as Palestinian, are “comprehensively dehumanized”? Contrary to Makdisi, nowhere within Israel proper is there any form of discrimination comparable to that exercised by the repressive South African regime.

Makdisi declares that “every major South African apartheid law has a direct equivalent in Israel and the occupied territories today.”⁹

Space does not permit a comprehensive list of SA apartheid laws with no Israeli equivalent, but consider a few:

- A. The 1950 Population Registration Act required that every South African be classified into one of a number of racial "population groups."
- B. The 1953 Reservation of Separate Amenities Act allowed public premises, vehicles, and services to be segregated by race, even if equal facilities were not made available to all races.
- C. The 1951 Native Building Workers Act legalized the training of blacks in skilled labor in the construction industry, but limited the places in which they were permitted to work. Sections 15 and 19 made it an offense for blacks to work in the employ of whites performing skilled labor in their homes.
- D. The 1953 Native Labour (Settlement of Disputes) Act effectively prohibited strike action by Africans.
- E. The 1956 Industrial Conciliation Act prohibited the registration of any new "mixed" race unions and imposed racially separate branches and all-white executive committees on existing "mixed" unions. It prohibited strikes in "essential industries" for both black and white workers and banned political affiliations for unions. Clause 77 legalized the reservation of skilled jobs to white workers, as the Bantu Building Workers Act of 1951 had done in the construction trade, "to ensure that they will not be exploited by the lower standard of living of any other race."
- F. The 1953 Bantu Education Act enforced racial segregation in education. But Bantu education was not only about segregation; it was about the low quality of education provided to black South Africans. Deprived of much math and science, they were being trained at best for blue-collar jobs.

Makdisi underwrites his critique of Israel proper with the claim that Israel's Declaration of Independence, which commits the state

to equality of all citizens without regard to religion, is merely "aspirational" rather than legally binding.¹⁰ I cite a series of Israeli laws and court decisions to the contrary. Makdisi's earlier *Palestine Inside Out* actually declares that the number of Israel's Basic Laws that guarantee equality of citizenship and the number of Israeli High Court rulings upholding equality as a right are both zero.¹¹ It takes me a number of pages to cite the guarantees in Israel's Basic Laws, which are the equivalent of a constitution, and the numerous High Court rulings. Makdisi's statements are bald falsehoods.

As evidence of the discriminatory treatment of Israel's Arab citizens, Makdisi cites four Bedouin villages in northern Israel that, according to him, have never received municipal services. Makdisi contrasts them with the nearby Jewish village of Eshchar, established in 1986. But of the Bedouin towns he names, Kamane was recognized in 1995, Hussiniyya was recognized in 1996, and Arab al-Nai'm was recognized in 2000, at which point they were eligible for and received the municipal services Makdisi seems to believe they still lack.

The attitude Jewish area residents have displayed toward nearby Bedouin villages for a generation completely discredits the claim of ingrained and persistent racism that Makdisi promotes. Here is the relevant portion of the Wikipedia entry on Arab al-Nai'm:

The village was only recognized by the state in 2000, following lobbying by surrounding Jewish villages and Misgav Regional Council, and it was connected to municipal services after that time. Following the institution of a master plan for the village, the first permanent masonry-built houses were constructed in the village beginning in 2014. Formerly wood and metal temporary shacks, the village is currently undergoing a transformation with new houses and villas springing up, as well as new sewers and roads. In 2015 a new metaled road to the village was constructed from a new roundabout at the entrance to the adjacent community of Eshchar.¹²

I cite the Wikipedia entry to show that information proving Makdisi wrong is not obscure. I was in touch with the Jewish and Bedouin village leaders and then visited both Eshchar and Arab al-Na'im in May 2018 in company with my partner Paula Treichler. Makdisi claims all the Bedouins live in tin shacks. But masonry homes were approved in 2013, four years before Makdisi's essay was published. A hundred are either occupied or under construction. We took photographs, and I included them in *Israel Denial*. The Bedouin leader in particular was outraged that Makdisi never contacted him and published lies about his village. Obviously Makdisi did not do any proper research or fact-checking. More importantly, neither did *Critical Inquiry* or the University of Chicago Press.

The same problem with fact checking applies to Puar and her publisher. My Puar chapter has sections on her other claims as well, including organ harvesting, but the case against her stunting claim indicates the nature of the problem with universities lending their prestige to what are irrefutably false and antisemitic theses. The first step was obviously to capture the medical and public health definition of childhood stunting, which is fairly straightforward, though Puar never cites it—namely, two to three standard deviations from the norm in height for a given population for moderate to severe stunting. One may add that stunting can begin with inadequate nutrition during pregnancy. The age range for which stunting is measured worldwide is one to five years. International and local health authorities agree that the threshold standard for identifying stunting as a serious public health problem is when stunting is evident in 20% of the toddler population. It can have a range of consequences that include related health problems and learning disabilities.

When I began looking into this issue, I knew almost nothing about the subject, so I started with internet searches on stunting, then moved on to academic databases to obtain the medical and public health research publications from around the world. I also began consulting

public health faculty members in the US, Israel, and Palestine. Puar cites no medical or public health literature on the subject; I cite a substantial number of publications. It is obvious that neither Duke's readers nor the press staff, many of them acknowledged BDS supporters, insisted that scholarly research and public health data be cited. This is a scandal, and it is not unique. It needs to be taken as a serious warning call to all who care about humanities research.

UNICEF and the World Health Organization are among the agencies that endorse the 20% threshold; they also maintain international data bases on many health problems and issue annual reports that update the information. Consulting those resources makes it immediately clear how serious a problem stunting is in some parts of the world, including sub-Saharan Africa and southeast Asia. UNICEF data from 2016 include these national stunting rates: El Salvador (20.6%), Vietnam (25%), Ecuador (25.2%), Philippines (33%), Indonesia (36.4%), Nepal (37.4%), India (38.4%), Ethiopia (38.4%), Zambia (40%), Pakistan (45%), Guatemala (47%), Madagascar (49.2%), Papua New Guinea (49.5%), Eritrea (50.2%), and Burundi (57.5%). The University of Washington maintains a database that includes current rates and makes predictions for stunting rates in the future. Current Middle East rates range from Kuwait (3.0%), Bahrain (3.0%), Saudi Arabia (6.6%), Qatar (7.3%), Jordan (8.2%), Tunisia (8.7%), UAE (10.9%), Algeria (11.1%), Oman (11.5%), Lebanon (12.2%), Libya (14.9%), Morocco (16.9%), Egypt (19.8%), Syria (23.4%), Iraq (24.4%), Yemen (44.3%). If the West Bank and Gaza are averaged together the rate is 9%, but that includes a WB rate of 7% and a Gaza rate of about 10%.

This much and more an obscure search engine called Google will provide. In my book I comment that we have no way of knowing whether Puar learned any of this. But now I am not so sure. Did she do no basic internet searches on stunting? Or did she choose to set aside the results in the service of her passionate

antisemitism? Similar basic research questions hover over the work other university presses have endorsed.

When I was in Israel and East Jerusalem in May 2018 I conducted several interviews to see whether UNICEF had been misled by its ferocious Zionism. I spoke with Dr. Asad Ramlawi, head of Palestinian West Bank health services and with Dr. Yehia Abed, who had administered relevant health services in Gaza. By then I had several official Palestinian reports that confirmed the international data. Abed was able to provide me with additional confirming data. They both confirmed as well that there was no shortage of food in either Gaza or the West Bank. In the US, notably, 20% of children are considered food insecure—because poverty limits their parents' ability to buy the food they need. And that problem obtains in Gaza as well.

There is one obvious conclusion: if Israel is starving and stunting Palestinian children it is doing an exceptionally poor job. But Duke is doing a very good job of misinforming us about the facts.

One other matter absent from Puar's book: the other cause of stunting. Throughout the medical and public health literature are studies of the serious impact of consanguineous marriage, marrying your cousins, on stunting and other childhood health problems. The rate of consanguineous marriage in Gaza is about 40%.

The main editor at Duke University Press is retiring, and a search is under way for his replacement, but the anti-Zionist staff members will likely remain in place, and Duke is not the only university press with an anti-Zionist staff and a corrupt and unprofessional peer review process in operation. *The Right to Maim* in my view should be withdrawn from publication, though I am not holding my breath. I certainly plan to send free copies of *Israel Denial* to people at Duke and Rutgers. Of course Puar's book has already received an award from the National Women's Studies Association. Still, my Puar chapter is over 30,000 words. It will be a test to see if a malicious and irresponsible scholar

can be discredited. Some will certainly attack the messenger. They cannot very well dispute UNICEF, WHO, and the health authorities in Gaza and the West Bank, let alone the numerous other confirming sources.

Israel Denial, I should emphasize again, is not just about critiquing anti-Zionist pseudo-scholarship. There is a detailed essay about anti-Zionist teaching that makes practical suggestions about how to address classroom bias without violating academic freedom. And, more importantly, there are a series of chapters designed to show that there are many positive and productive alternatives to the BDS project of demonization. Chapter two lists some fifty positive actions that should be taken by Israel and the international community to improve Palestinians' lives in Gaza and the West Bank, while strengthening Israel's security, so as to create an environment in which both peoples can see a two-state solution as a practical one, not just a slogan. The effort to discredit faculty contributions to the BDS movement has to be accompanied by an affirmative vision offering alternatives.

This dual structure has been part of my work for many years. What was not clear to me when I drafted the first chapter (on Judith Butler) in 2014 was the daunting level of work that would be required for me to address so many different research areas or how many different area specialists I would need to consult. Had I known what lay ahead, I would never have dared undertake the anti-BDS part of the project that entailed gaining functional reporter-level expertise in nutrition studies, Israeli law, and other areas. There is a practical lesson here for many of us: there needs to be continuing in-depth work to critique anti-Zionist projects that get away with false claims because of the level of work required to rebut them thoroughly.

The challenge of reforming university peer review for books and journals is still more daunting, though it will have to be grounded in the evidence-based analysis I've been describing. Duke University press considers differences with

Puar to be mere matters of opinion covered by academic freedom, but not all facts are matter of opinion. Interpretations of their meaning are open to debate, but the fact that Palestinian children are not being stunted is contradicted only by one US professor who knows better than both international and Palestinian health authorities. It is not an interpretation: it is an antisemitic delusion. The large, multistory masonry homes in Arab al-Na'im are not fictions of someone's imagination; *Critical Inquiry's* editor believed otherwise because he is arguably more deeply anti-Zionist than Makdisi. It should be possible for publishers to find BDS-sympathetic readers with higher evidentiary standards. I certainly

have no trouble finding Zionist readers who want me to prove what I say. But publishers will have to take the need seriously if it is to be met. And a second line of defense against publishing mere propaganda needs to be established by hiring copy editors who make similar demands. That would be a notable upgrade in the role of the copy editor for many publishers, but there may be no choice. For these projects we haven't really even begun. The problems my analyses reveal have been exacerbated by anti-Zionist pseudo-scholarship, but that demonstrates that neither the humanities nor the interpretive social sciences have a sound understanding of how to do factual research and test hypotheses.

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- 6 See Saree Makdisi, "Said, Palestine, and the Humanism of Liberation," *Critical Inquiry* 31, no. 2 (Winter 2005): 443-461; *Palestine Inside Out: An Everyday Occupation* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2010); "The Architecture of Erasure," *Critical Inquiry* 36, no. 3 (Spring 2010): 519-559; and "Apartheid / Apartheid / []," *Critical Inquiry* 44, no. 2 (December 2017): 304-330.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 320.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 319.
- 9 *Ibid.*, 310.
- 10 *Ibid.*, 323.
- 11 Makdisi, *Palestine Inside Out*, 263.
- 12 "Arab / Arab al-Na'im," *Wikipedia*, last modified, April 18, 2019, Arab al-Na'im, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arab/Arab_al-Na%27im.