

## Review Essay

Out of (Academic) Focus: on Ilan Pappé, *Out of the Frame: The Struggle for Academic Freedom in Israel* (Pluto Press, London—New York, 2010), pp. 246

THE READER INTERESTED IN ACADEMIC FREEDOM IN ISRAEL WILL BE better off looking for sources in the media and in internet forums because this book does not address the struggle for academic freedom in Israel despite the promise in its subtitle.<sup>2</sup>

The book unfolds the tortuous journey of a “narcissus” away from the dank marshland in which it grew, and its striving to drain the swamp (a routine Zionist duty, incidentally . . .). It is the story of the private and academic life of Ilan Pappé<sup>3</sup> and his flight from the disillusionment and injustice of Zionism to the just promised land of the Palestinian *nakba* (catastrophe of 1948). An ornate and presumptuous narrative, it tells of a man who turned his back on his home and his homeland and, with an excess of explanations, seeks to disguise his exit under high-minded and ideological pretexts.

The book, then, is given over to propaganda and the exposition of a personal political ideology. It accommodates the struggle for academic freedom only in as much as it touches on Prof. Pappé’s own struggle with Israeli academia, as part of it and outside it. It neither examines nor illuminates the state of academic freedom in Israel in 2010 the year *Out of the Frame* was published.

Chapter 5, “The Best Runner in the Class,” is a fable made up by Pappé about the Tantura Affair which occupies some forty percent of the total book. It is an imaginary tale told by Pappé as a hardly veiled but singularly misleading account of the Tantura Affair. The actual Tantura was a village on the shores of the Mediterranean near ancient Dor that was captured by IDF forces 22–23 May 1948 after a long night’s combat. The Tantura Affair,

which became a cause célèbre and a life-trauma for Pappé, evolved from his involvement with an MA thesis written by Theodor Katz, a student in the Department of Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Haifa. Written under the supervision of Prof. Kais Firro, Katz's thesis, titled "The Exodus of the Arabs from the Villages on the Slopes of Southern Carmel in 1948," was based primarily on numerous interviews conducted some 50 years after the events with refugees from the villages Tantura and Umm az-Ziynat. It is crucial to appreciate that Pappé himself was surreptitiously and deeply involved in the writing of this thesis and that the rejection of Katz's thesis and unsubstantiated claims was tantamount to a rejection of Pappé's own position.

Basing himself on hearsay and on village folklore and ignoring demographic and historical evidence to the contrary, Katz claimed that IDF soldiers of the Alexandroni brigade committed war crimes that caused the deaths of 200–250 villagers **after** Tantura was occupied. Katz's thesis was judged internally in the department as excellent and given a grade of 97. After an Israeli journalist published the story of the alleged massacre based on the thesis which was available in the University library, the veterans of the Alexandroni Brigade sued Katz for libel. Katz was cross-examined in court for two days whereupon he signed a statement acknowledging that no massacre had taken place in Tantura. The University of Haifa suspended Katz's degree and established a special committee of experts in Arabic and History to check his tapes, which he initially refused to expose. The committee found numerous mistakes, inconsistencies in the use of evidence, fallacies and misleading use of the original tapes by the student.

Nevertheless, Katz was invited to revise his thesis. The second version was sent out to five external examiners, the majority of whom gave it a failing grade due to its low academic standard. The thesis contained flaws in each aspect of both oral and written history. In 2004 proposals were made to dig in the parking lot of Dor beach, the alleged mass grave of the 'victims', but such an action never took place. Pappé made Katz and Tantura a central event in Israel's historiography and academic freedom scene, and the book reflects Pappé's trauma in each of his chapters, including this imaginary one.

The Tantura Affair as it is unfolded in Chapter 5 is a fictionalized account. In it, Pappé details the efforts of a Palestinian Arab researcher and his Jewish student to persuade the woman Fatima, who, as a child, was the 'best runner in the class' and a survivor of the "massacre" at Tantura in 1948, to disclose the whereabouts of the mass grave of the supposedly numerous Arab victims of that event. Pappé represents himself in the forward as the student, but then casts himself in the chapter as Dr. Musalem Awad, the

only “Palestinian” professor in Israeli academe who has tenure, and who therefore does not hesitate to supervise his student “Yaakov.”

Those familiar with the real figures of the affair, will recognize immediately that Prof. Firro (not Firo as Pappé misspelled his name) is not an expert in 1948 but in Druze studies and Lebanon’s affairs, and never attempted to investigate and prove the massacre allegation, as did Pappé. Moreover, the fictional ‘Yaakov’ and his research—are like a mirror image of Katz’s methodology and behavior. In the course of his research Yaakov has uncovered no fewer than five villages on Israel’s Carmel coastal plain where he maintains, a single army unit had been responsible for a slaughter. Dr. Awad and his student accompany Fatima to bring her case before the High Court of Justice, which epitomizes the injustice inherent in the very existence of the state of the Jews. As a first step the judge orders the digging up of the parking lot of what is now a leisure beach, asserted to be the grave of the slaughtered villagers. Dr. Awad, Yaakov, and even Fatima’s son Ali, see this as a chance finally to “close” the Tantura controversy, and to show the whole world that a wrong has been done to the student researcher and to justice alike.

However, on the appointed day, when a military squad arrives to carry out the digging, the village where Fatima lived is surrounded and a curfew declared. Just as back in the 1950s, Pappé, informs the reader, the noise of loudspeakers reverberates in her ears and all those years of endless harassment by the “evil Shabak [Israel’s General Secret Service] people and the police” are conjured up again. While “Yaakov”/Katz and Pappé /“Awad” wait to see the bones lifted out of the grave, Ali realizes that his mother has been concealing the truth about the location of the grave. Alas, it was not this parking lot: Pappé/“Awad” is already preparing the reason why bones apparently will not be found there, contrary to his student’s argument, but elsewhere.

Only Fatima, “the best runner in the class” knows the truth about where the victims were buried. As a child she managed to see the trucks onto which the bulldozers loaded the bodies that took them away from the village, and then dug pits for them on another hill, where they were tossed and covered up. Not only were pine tree planted then over them, a well-known accusation for the Zionist method of hiding the sins of the *nakba*, but the grove became the memorial site for the Israeli army unit that captured the village and committed the massacre. Fatima seems to want to show her son and the diligent student the real place of burial, knowing that where the army is digging by virtue of the court order nothing will be found—and the researcher and his instructor and all their witnesses,

and the entire *nakba* argument, will emerge as delusional. Against her son's imploring, and against Yaakov who tries to stop her because there is a curfew in the village, she breaks into the run of the "best in the class"—and is shot, cut down by the gunfire of the soldiers stationed around the village. The last witness, like her massacred forefathers and fellow villagers, is gone and she has taken the secret to her own grave.

This chapter illustrates Pappé's academic method throughout this book; that is, he plants imaginary tales in a book purportedly concerned with the struggle for academic freedom in Israel. Why does Pappé, take on the identity of an Arab and assume a new name? Why does he elect to kill off the sole witness, the only one who knew the location of the hidden grave of the hundreds of Arabs allegedly slaughtered in Tantura? And why does he deliberately place the villagers under a curfew seemingly meant to permit undisturbed excavation of the mass grave?

I argue that the fantasy is necessary because Pappé knows that the evidence of the massacre is fabricated. He also knows that once he has asserted the burial place is under the parking lot—as Katz did in his thesis—the entire house of cards he and his student have built will come tumbling down if human bones are sought but not found. So in Pappé's fabled version, he shifts the burial place—albeit symbolically, and somewhat maliciously re-inter the Tantura dead, plants a pine copse over their bodies, and, to add insult to injury, names the place for the fallen of the army unit that committed the imaginary atrocity.

I have described this chapter in some detail because it reflects the author's mindset and demonstrates his take on how history should be researched, giving free reign to imagination, fantasizing plots, and confounding past with present, politics with history, ideology with reality, actuality with illusion. Tantura, in fact, is the defining trauma that shaped his world from the moment the incident burst onto the public sphere—but it is only one instance of the grand cause to which he affirms he has resolved to dedicate his life, specifically: the Palestinian *nakba* of 1948 which, for Pappé, is the Original Sin of the State of Israel (21).

Chapter 1 elevates the *nakba* to the level of key element in understanding Pappé's trek to his new world. He recounts its absence from the history books he studied, relates the disdain shown by the guides on his school trips in Haifa for the remains of the Arab building in the city and blames the deliberate destruction of the Arab city on its overbearing Jewish mayor (13).

I went to the same school, and all my teachers and guides taught me that Haifa was a mixed city that set an example of integrated life. They praised the Arab quarters of the city as the product of fine indigenous

building, in contrast to the new/Zionist residential blocks, and pointed out that on 22 April 1948, Mayor Shabtai Levi publicly, and in the presence of British army officers, exhorted the Arabs of Haifa not to leave. It was not Levi who destroyed the old city; indeed, he clashed with Ben-Gurion in order to preserve it.

Pappe will not give credence to such a “narrative,” nor to the MA thesis written under his supervision by his own student Tamir Goren, who demonstrated all these facts. Pappe is well acquainted with Goren’s sources and even endorsed them as correct and sound however he does not trouble to mention them, and of course denies their implications.

Since his doctoral studies, the demon of the *nakba* never left him. Already when writing his doctoral dissertation, he ascribes to himself the “elimination” of one of the great and essential Zionist myths, namely the myth that Britain was the enemy of Zionism and Israel; quite the reverse: Britain enabled the Zionists to create a state in Palestine, and to operate “ethnic cleansing” of the local population (17). This phrase did not flow trippingly from Pappe, while he was engaged in his dissertation back in the 1980s, and he embellished and developed it in the following years so as to align himself with the “political correctness” of the circles he joined later on, especially after it was used often in the post-Yugoslavian wars (215–17).

From this chapter on, Pappe elaborates a story that merges his academic and personal life history with the annals of the Middle East and Israel—as if the two parts are mutually influenced and dependent in absolute equality. Pappe’s story now becomes “The Story” of general history. With great pride he describes how his dissertation, combined with the studies of Avi Shlaim and Benny Morris, created the “new history” of the rise of the State of Israel, in particular, the story of the “crimes” involved—the conspiracy with the Hashemites, the expulsion, the *nakba*—and the most heinous and unforgivable of sins, the disappearance and concealment of the *nakba*. From that time forth, he explains, his career has been devoted to preserving the memory of those tragic events. Along with this he also assumes a wholly non-academic task: to expurgate (!) the evil perpetrated.

On his return to Israel from his studies in England in 1984, he encountered “denial of the *nakba*”, another term that was to become an integral part of the Papean lexicon. No one had learned, taught, or been at all aware of the Palestinian tragedy until Pappe’s return to Israel and his teaching in the Department of Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Haifa or until his regular appearances on the subject in the media followed by the publication of the book based on his PhD dissertation and the outbreak of the first intifada.

He goes on to describe his many activities in the 1990s for the propagation of the *nakba* and its recognition in public discussion, as if no one except himself had done anything of the sort before. He does not acknowledge any scholars of Palestinian history who did not dedicate themselves and all their work to the *nakba* alone: not Yehoshafat Harkabi, who mentioned the phrase *nakba* and explained it in about 1964, not Yehoshua Porat, not writers such as S. Yizhar, who had already written *Hirbet Hizaa*—a poignant story of the deportation of an entire Arab village in the war of 1948. Apparently none of these is worthy, in contrast to his own Sisyphean labor on the Israeli and Palestinian sides of public opinion.

At this point of the book Pappé lays an additional foundation stone in the construction of the image he wishes to pass on to history: that of the victim and a scholar persecuted for his academic opinions (24). Beginning with the publication of his dissertation, and along with a series of TV programs and public events in which he articulated his views on the *nakba*, he tells us that he had received threats on his life, warnings about his academic future and the unlikelihood of his being granted tenure. He notes that Prof. Yoav Gelber a senior historian at the University of Haifa, even labeled one of Pappé's "brave" lectures "treason in battle." Pappé very quickly became skillful in building his career on the image of the victim who pays a high price for his academic views—which even in the early years of his academic life could hardly be separated from public political views.

In 1993, Pappé had come to be on intimate terms with the victims of the *nakba*, and with all due respect had been invited to Tunis, where Arafat and the PLO command had sojourned since the first Lebanon war. At that time he found a partner to his view of the Oslo Accords and what ensued between the leader of the Palestinians and Israel; this was Edward Said. He, like Pappé, held that the accords betrayed the true mission of the PLO as a national movement. The fight was to be directed against abandoning the Palestinian refugees and losing sight of their plight, that is, against the absence of a resolute stand on the return of the 1948 refugees to their homes throughout Israel. In this regard Pappé erects in this context another cornerstone of his analytical lexicon, the likening of Israel to South Africa (38). Not only is Israel an Apartheid state in real life, but also in the conduct of historical research. Just as the archives of the South African Bureau of State Security (BOSS) were not needed for one to learn about the crimes against the blacks, so the Palestinians did not need the Israel Defense Forces' archive to find out what actually happened on the battlefields in 1948. Certainly, when Pappé resumes his story of Tantura in the appendix, it becomes clear why he does not require archival or historical sources to

write history and elaborate a narrative: any testimony from any Palestinian is accepted at face value—as the whole truth.

Pappe devotes Chapter 3 to his secret student, Theodor Katz, progenitor of the Tantura Affair. In this chapter he lays the foundation for the whole issue of Tantura, which became central in his academic life. He describes the student, how he chose the topic of the research, and his main findings.

Pappe withholds from his readers the fact that in his introduction to the thesis Katz thanks him as the one who in practice was his informal advisor and aide in the writing, and thus conceals the truth of his involvement in its every stage. He describes the process of exposure of the thesis to the public, and the uproar that arose when the allegation came to light that troops of the 33rd battalion of the Alexandroni Brigade had massacred hundreds of the villagers at Tantura after the night battles fought for its capture. The battalion veterans, who were not *au courant* with the intricacies of post-modernism and Pappe's historiographic outlook, initially demanded that the University annul the thesis and remove it from the library's shelves.

The hesitancy to establish a committee of inquiry inside the University caused the veterans' representatives to file suit against Katz personally. Very soon gaping contradictions emerged between the oral testimony—which was in any case of questionable validity as a sole historical source—and what Katz had written in the thesis itself. For example, when Katz in a conversation with an interviewee tried to verify if indeed he had seen actual shooting, and asked, "Did you see it?" the latter replied, "No, I didn't see it." But in the thesis that same witness is cited as one who did witness shooting. This is but one small example of many abuses that amply demonstrate the researcher's contradictions, distortions, and flawed methodology. In another case Katz claimed that he could not produce the evidence because the tape in the recorder ran out just as the interviewee began to give the testimony quoted in the thesis. Katz soon broke down, and agreed to sign a declaration of apology, admitting that he had no evidence that there had been a massacre at Tantura.<sup>4</sup>

Neither Pappe, nor the *nakba* front, were going to let the prey slip from their grasp. Pappe, who reports he "began three consecutive days and nights of listening to the 60 hours of tapes" (!) (79), was shocked upon hearing the accounts of the cold-hearted and cruel slaughter that rolled off the tape recordings; of the mass burial of about 225 victims; of the treatment of the women and the refugees; and of the destruction of the village.

From that stage in the affair, Katz became a puppet controlled by subsequent events and perhaps even by Pappe himself, who took him under

his wing. It is certainly possible that even earlier Pappé was fully familiar with the scandalous thesis that Katz submitted. If we take Katz at his word, Pappé may well have been the clandestine supervisor of the thesis. And it is at least plausible to imagine that he awaited—perhaps even urged—its publication to exploit the findings in the historical timeframe in which the Katz affair took place, this being the high point of the events of the second intifada. Was this yet another weapon to substantiate the contemporary claims of the brutality of the IDF and its methods as having been forged already in 1948? We will never know.

By 2001 Katz's thesis had become a *golem*<sup>5</sup> that turned upon both its maker and its spiritual guide, also striking at the prestige of the University and at the personal relations of Pappé with most of its members. Pappé emerged from the tapes marathon to harshly attack anyone who dared come out against the thesis and question its research methods. When the University set up a neutral committee of experts to examine the tapes and their match with Katz's text, Pappé viciously attacked its members in a series of e-mails on the University intranet and elsewhere: "One of them [Prof. Baram] had already set his position before he read the thesis, and published his opinion in [the daily] *Maariv* . . ." When he realized that as usual he had made a mistake with the dates, Pappé wrote brazenly that he had erred when he detailed the interview was published in *Maariv*, 21 January 2001 when it had actually been published in [the local weekly] *Yedi'ot Haifa*, 9 April. However, he noted, "Prof. Baram has a sister—but I was mistaken about the color of her hair . . ." and "the other one [the late Prof. Talmon] propagated in the work the accepted method of the Israeli security services, where he served and still serves in the reserves . . ." and "another researcher [Dr. Gereis] is an expert in pre-Islamic poetry but he was brought in *because there had to be an Arab as a fig-leaf* [in the original!].<sup>6</sup>

In the book (80–82) he does not repeat these crudities, forgets to cite himself, and notes only the committee members' specializations. Was such a weighty committee called to examine the work of an MA student alone, and one who was not required to have expertise in Arabic? Pappé muses. Pappé's reservations notwithstanding, the committee found that Katz had actually faked evidence, cited himself, and other such methodological failings. Pappé, as is his wont, misleads the readers of the book when he argues that there were "only" six minor cases of mistaken use of the tapes, since the committee found, in addition, dozens of falsifications, instances of words being put into the interviewees' mouths, and disregard of testimonies that did not support the thesis, with varying degrees of gravity of lack of academic integrity.<sup>7</sup> Pappé scorns this serious 40-page report, which reveals,



among other things, that Katz made up his story mainly by referring to his handwritten sheets, not by listening to the 60 hours of tapes that he had somehow neglected to reference.

At the time, as a researcher with expertise in the historical geography of the region, and not in my capacity of Dean of Humanities, I wrote a 15-page report for the Council of Advanced Studies of the University which discussed the matter, noting that it was a third-rate thesis academically, and was distorted through and through to serve the goal predetermined by its author (or his secret supervisor?).<sup>8</sup> Pappé makes no mention of this report, and is content to allude to other reports written by “friends” of Gelber and Ben-Artzi. Despite the academic failure and the public offense, the University allowed Katz to submit a revised thesis, which he did about a year later, when he handed in a study more voluminous than its predecessor. This time, the thesis was sent to five anonymous external referees, and the weighting of their marks did not even approach the original grade. Katz received his MA degree on the track not requiring a thesis, because his thesis was not deemed satisfactory.

Throughout this period, Pappé conducted a wide-ranging campaign of electronic skirmishes with most of the faculty of the University of Haifa.<sup>9</sup> In the context of the methodological debate that arose on the subject of oral history, Pappé developed an additional foundation stone in the Pappéan system—intended to pierce the heart and cause pain to every Jew everywhere: “Palestinian testimony on the *nakba* is equivalent to testimony of survivors of the Holocaust suffered by the Jewish people”. On the face of it this is legitimate and stands to reason. However, in fact this is an untenable claim, outrageous to any true student of history and not a political pamphleteer.

Testimonies of Holocaust survivors are indeed heard and read as authentic, but they are wholly different in terms of the quality and weight of the history written in their light. These are not attestations about an ongoing conflict, delivered with an eye to their effect on public opinion of one kind or another, or about a political or economic demand. Their great import and the horror reflected in them notwithstanding, they were never taken as the sole source for the historiography of World War II, or even of the Holocaust itself. At most they affirmed millions of historical documents of diverse origin, which upheld the memories—and vice versa were affirmed by them. With the propagandist’s masterly sophistry, and in full awareness of the weak points of the average Israeli’s nervous system, Pappé’s comparison is calculated to make the blood of every Jew and Israeli, or any fair-minded person, boil. Accordingly he flaunts it in his struggle for Israeli recognition of the *nakba* (74, and throughout).

Nor can Pappé end his therapeutic book without revisiting the great trauma of Tantura. So, after the epilogue, the reader is met by yet another account of Tantura, now in the form of an appendix. Wholly unconnected to the book and its title, Pappé again presents his version of the Tantura Affair of 1948. For 20 pages he recycles everything he has ever written—in articles and books, as well as countless interviews. He summarizes for the reader the episode of the battle, the rumors, the testimony, the executions (!), the burial, the treatment of women, and so on and so forth. This appendix is based entirely on Katz's thesis and on the interviews he conducted back in 1997.

No new source is cited, even though Pappé claims that he himself researched the affair. This is not the place to deal yet again with the Tantura episode, still less with Katz's wretched thesis and the attention Pappé has given it since 2001, even in this book which was supposed to deal with a different topic. The cracks, the contradictions, the absence of proof to support the charge of massacre all deserve a separate article. However, to allow Pappé to get off scot-free would be a mistake.<sup>10</sup>

I will refer only to one document, perhaps one of the most important in the Tantura Affair, which Pappé withholds and which he withheld at the time of the Katz affair from his readers. In August 1998, about six months after Katz submitted his original thesis, a book was published in Damascus titled *Al-Tantura*, written by a former inhabitant of the village, Yahya Mahmud al-Yahya. The author was not an eye-witness to the capture of the village in 1948, but describes it in detail from testimony he collected from Tantura refugees in Syria. He notes several unusual actions, but nowhere mentions the word "massacre". On the contrary, he describes a "battle" and terms the fallen "battle casualties."

This book is in the University of Haifa library, accessible to all. In an appendix to his book *Al-Yahya* gives a list of 52 casualties of the battle for Tantura, a list of those wounded in the battle, and a list of ten more people "among the elderly and the notables" who died after the war of "sadness and a broken heart" en route from the refugee camp at Tul-Karm to Syria. Katz in an appendix to his amended thesis lists 101 victims by name, which he assembled from various sources without noting which name was given by which source, while elsewhere in the thesis he claims that there were 200–250 victims. A comparison of Katz's list with that of al-Yahya, who knew the people personally, shows that Katz included among his dead the names of people who appear in al-Yahya's book in the list of wounded and in the list of those who died after the war.

*Al-Tantura* was published 50 years after the battle for Tantura, without dread of the security forces and without fear of the academic authorities of the University of Haifa. The author learned from the Tantura refugees in Syria everything there was to know after so many years, but wonder of wonders—not a single word referring to a massacre at Tantura! Could it be that there was no such massacre? Did Pappé and Katz actually know 50 years after the fact something that this Tantura resident did not know? Perhaps most telling is Pappé's own silence on this matter. Since the affair first burst onto the scene in 2001, several people have pointed out this source, and it has since been published on the internet.<sup>11</sup> But Pappé has held this decisive evidence back from his reader for the ten years in which he has continued to engage in the subject, fearing his entire house of cards will come crashing down at the touch of a finger. Such is Pappé's academic integrity—such is the quality of his scientific work. Research and science are of use merely as instruments for a political ideology with a single goal: the destruction of the state of Israel as a national Jewish entity.

In this book on Israeli academic freedom, Pappé unfolds his viewpoint of his persecution, the discrimination against him, and his exclusion, “I became a pariah in my own university,” (90). He relates how he preferred appearing in any forum abroad rather than in Israel to express his [anti-Zionist] opinions, because in Israel there was no chance at that time to speak out against the Zionist idea and the iniquity of the oppression of the Palestinians, certainly no opportunity to mention the *nakba* or defend the claim that there was a massacre at Tantura. One by one he reviews some panel or other from which he was disqualified, and in every case he blames this or that personality in the establishment who hounded him. His perception of his non-inclusion at a conference on the novel by A.B. Yehoshua, *The Liberated Bride*, is noteworthy. The novel includes, among others, a character who is a kind of “new historian”—and Pappé in his overweening vanity is convinced that it is he who served as the inspiration of the writer, who had no notion of it (90–91).

But in his usual way Pappé does not let his readers understand why such an attitude to him took shape. The blame is clearly on “the other.” He denigrates the Department of Land of Israel Studies:

In a department in which almost all its teachers are not Arabic speakers the history of the country is presented by those who got their wages from the Jewish Agency, and did not produce even a single critical study, as against the dozens of scripted research studies on the 1948 war . . .<sup>12</sup>

Several other faculty members in other departments received similar calumnies and imprecations. Matters came to actual threats when he wrote to academics in the world of Middle East experts, "I call on you to take a stand on the disgraceful decision by the University of Haifa, 18 November 2001," in connection with Katz's thesis. Later, "Academia in Israel still largely depends on the opinions of your colleagues and your [professional] societies . . . You are required most decidedly for the completion and advance of the tenure procedures . . ." <sup>13</sup>

Under these circumstances, when Pappe hyperbolized the threats against the professional advancement of colleagues, when he called every one of his opponents by a different derogatory sobriquet, when he responded arrogantly and crudely to all. By virtue of my position, and after many months of restraint, filed a charge according the regulation "Duties of the Academic Member" of the University, resting on one clause alone—**collegiality**. Even before the presiding judge of the University's Faculty Disciplinary Court decided whether to hear the charge at all, Pappe turned to world opinion, which inundated the university with identical chain letters and others, an episode which Pappe presents so proudly in his book (96–108). What he does not present are the hundreds of protests received by the university about his appearances worldwide, about his invective hurled at the place that gave him his livelihood and his vitriolic onslaughts against faculty members who dared to oppose him, or failed to become involved in the controversy. Not without reason did he soon feel that he had become an outcast at his workplace.

Pappe, who decided long ago to devote his life to redeeming the *nakba* and obliterating the disgrace of its concealment from the Israeli public, was not one to yield. He carried this struggle from the public arena to his private home . . . (ch. 7). Feeling utterly isolated in his university home, and by contrast being warmly received by the "Palestinians," Pappe decided to perform a Narodnaya Volya-style act, and go to the (Jewish) people direct. He uprooted himself from the city of his birth and moved to the small quiet town of Kiryat Tivon, 15 kilometers away. He invited his neighbors to a friendly evening at his home, where he laid out before them his worldview of the disappearance of the *nakba*, and asked them thorny questions about the origin of the land on which they resided and then about other events on whose myths they had been raised as Israelis. He used documents (135–39) on the "expulsion" of the Haifa Arabs showing how they had been penned up in the "ghetto" of Wadi Nisnas, and on the slaughter of the Arabs of Lydda.

But even this simple analysis in this chapter is a fabrication, and even when he held an allegedly historical document in his hand he manipulated it like clay in the hands of the potter. In his account of the evening, Pappé cites a document of 5 July 1948, according to which all the Arabs remaining in Haifa were ordered to cram themselves into Wadi Nisnas, “the poorest quarter in the city.” He then contributes something of his own: 65,000 Arabs of Haifa were expelled! 10,000 had fled earlier, so that only a few thousand, whose number he does not state, were left in the city.

Pappé poorly researched the 1948 events in Haifa<sup>14</sup> and his “facts” are erroneous, his truths only partial. He quotes Nimr al-Khatib’s book on the *naqba* concerning Tantura, but conceals from his readers that the same author blames the Palestinian leadership and militias for the loss of Haifa.<sup>15</sup> About 35,000 of Haifa’s Arabs—three times more than Pappé’s figure—left before the battle for the city began. About 20,000 fled during the two days of battle in April 1948 and received aid from the British army. Even Walid al-Khalidi, so lavishly praised by Pappé as the greatest scholar of the *nakba*, wrote as early as 1959 about the loss of Haifa not so long after the events and blames the British, not the Jewish side.<sup>16</sup>

The census of the residual Arab population in Haifa in May 1948 returned the figure of 3,566 persons, and a special committee, the Minorities Committee, was established to extend help to them. The great majority were Christians, who packed the courtyard of the Carmelite monastery on Mt. Carmel in severe conditions. Accordingly it was decided to allow them to live in the former Arab area.

Wadi Nisnas was the residential area of the upper-middle class until 1948, not the poorest quarter as Pappé claims. He could have shared all this information with his Tivon neighbors, who shed a tear on hearing his tale, but he apparently was ignorant of the facts or preferred, as with the readers of this book, to disregard the truth and the facts which run counter to his fictions, and that might complicate his firm and unequivocal view. Nor does he forgo a comparison of Jews to “Nazis” (140), although he holds back from saying it himself and ascribes it to one of his listeners. Pappé’s neighbors, it seems, were ready to listen to him, but the whine of the missiles and Katyushas that struck not far from Tivon—more precisely the thousands of missiles that killed and wounded, and destroyed civilian villages in Israel, soon silenced the sounds of the battle of 1948. For Pappé, only one stage now remained before he left Israel for good.

The last straw, which finally added unbearably to the whole weight of the *nakba* down the generations, was the second Lebanon War in summer

2006 (ch. 8) and the “killing field in Gaza” (ch. 9). Pappé describes how the IDF embarked on total war against the Lebanese people and the innocent organization answering to the name of Hizbullah, which only “wanted back the piece of Southern Lebanon over which Israel still retained control” (148). For a moment he again misleads his readers: he forgot to remind them that from May 2000 Israel’s boundary had been the “Blue Line,” namely the international border fully recognized by the United Nations, so the Hizbullah did not have a valid territorial claim.

Pappé cannot but connect the struggle in the north to Israel’s ambition to destroy Hizbullah which he sees as part of a consistent ideology since the *nakba* in 1948. “It is not new,” he writes of the huge and disproportionate offensive launched by the IDF in 2006 against a “low intensity action” of kidnapping soldiers on the frontier: this is precisely what Israel did in 1948. It is worth quoting verbatim his entire theory of 1948:

In 1948, the Palestinians opted for a low intensity conflict when the UN imposed on them a deal that wrested away half of their homeland and gave it to a community of newcomers and settlers, most of whom arrived after 1945. The Zionist leaders launched an ethnic cleansing operation that expelled half of the land’s native population destroyed half of its villages . . . (149)

In Pappé’s eyes the Palestinians wished only to protest against the UN Partition resolution which would enable them to establish their own state alongside the Jewish state. It was against this modest, “low intensity” protest that the “Zionists” reacted with a campaign of systematic and murderous ethnic cleansing, tearing out and expelling, destroying and eliminating . . . Later in chapter 8, he perfects the methods of the State of Israel, for now it no longer conducts only “ethnic cleansing” or wishes to destroy Hizbullah. According to him, “In September 2006, Israel commenced a genocidal policy against Gaza” (153). **Genocide!** No less than that! And why did Israel operate in Gaza at all? From summer 2005 not a single Israeli soldier or settler was to be found in the Gaza Strip. Israel carried out a unilateral disengagement that gave rise to some internal Israeli discord, but to the relief of most Israelis the unfortunate episode of control of Gaza came to an end.

Pappé does not trouble to explain this to his readers, but of course finds a way out from doing so. He notes in one sole sentence that after the withdrawal of the IDF missiles were fired by separatist groups such as Hamas or the Jihad. But why should they fire missiles at Israel and the inhabitants of the Negev precisely after the evacuation of Gaza? What else is there to demand of Israel in summer 2006 on the Gaza border? He has

no explanation, nor is there any need for one: it is all part of a general plan, whose end is “the total de-Arabisation of Palestine” (149).

The Epilogue is a heavy and dreary look at Pappe by Pappe himself. If the reader has expected to get a grasp on the struggle for academic freedom in Israel, which in 2009–2010 assumed a new and dangerous visage, unconnected to Pappe he will not find it even in the Epilogue. He is still preoccupied with himself, with his own life course, and with turning himself from a product of the Israeli education system into a citizen of the world and seeker of its good. He plots the course of his leaving Israel as the inevitable end of a purely ideological struggle. It is a twofold struggle: for Israeli admission of guilt for the *nakba* and the need to correct the wrong done to the Palestinians by Zionism by dismantling the Jewish national state and creating a secular and democratic Palestinian state; and finally, for academic freedom, embodied in fact in Pappe’s own experience. He closes the circle begun in his book with a full account of the iniquities of the Zionist act: from the start of the settlement, which in the 1880’s concealed its aims of taking control of the land, to Israel’s war crimes in Gaza.

And *academic freedom* in Israel? What of that? My regrets, but for that the questioner must go elsewhere. Pappe offers not even a morsel of the great controversy over academic freedom in Israel, on the two planes on which the struggle is going forward. One is the academic boycott of Israel, with Pappe among its supporters, perhaps even its instigators, and the other is the internal struggle of the right wing against lecturers, curricula, and various universities in Israel. Pappe identifies academic freedom in Israel with Pappe alone—what he has done, what has been done to him, what has been denied him.

His life is set forth in the book as if it were the history of the struggle for academic freedom in Israel. Before him no one fought for it, nor has anyone after him. He refers only by allusion to his part in the imposition of the academic boycott on Israel by the British lecturers’ organizations. Because he knows that the wrath of Israeli academics was directed mainly at him on account of his part in the calls for the boycott beginning in 2004 and more especially in 2005, and thereafter in its various transformations, he greatly minimizes his own place in the boycott, being content with its moral justification (192–95). Pappe knows that the academic boycott is likely to cause incalculable damage to Israeli academe. He finds nothing wrong in the fact that the academic boycott is in the first place an act opposed to the nature and to the very existence of academe, which he supposedly rises up to protect in his book. He ignores the fact that he called for a boycott of the institution that provides a living for himself and his family,

and that had he done such a thing at any other university in the world—or at any other workplace—he would have been dismissed there and then.

Pappe is able to enumerate the emails he received from supporters when a complaint was made against him for his collegial behavior, but he does not refer to the struggle for academic freedom waged by his own university and others against the boycott, to the thousands of expressions of support for Israeli academe and condemnation of the boycott as anti-academic to the core. Hundreds of emails and protests of Israelis at home and abroad, more than expressing amazement at how a person could call for a boycott against the source of his own livelihood, were dumbfounded that no one cut him down officially. Pappe enjoyed unbridled academic freedom, not limited by the institution he called to ban.

Still more, although he blackened its name, and besmirched the honor of his fellows at the institution, the University allowed Pappe freedom of action even when time after time he violated the regulations. He was even considered for promotion in rank, another fact he forgets to share. Since he left Israel, the matter of the boycott has been raised again from different quarters, and in every case true academics in the world of scholarship have proved able to ignore it, and to ridicule the boycott and those who call for increasing its severity. To everyone, except Pappe's and his friends' circle of hatred, it was clear that academe in Israel is the fortress of democracy in the country, safeguarding its semblance and image as a state and society possessing liberal, democratic, and universal values—despite the deeds of governments of Israel and perhaps indeed against them.

In 2009–2010 when he was preparing his book, had he shown any interest, Pappe could have witnessed academics in Israel struggling against tendencies to curtail academic freedom. The struggle is taking place at present against politicians, ministers, and right-wing and pseudo-Zionist organizations that seek to intensify supervision of curricula, course syllabi, and lecturers singled out by the oppressors of the academy. But what has any of that to do with him? True, he promises his readers in the book's title to deal with this—but instead confines his account to himself and his own doings.

For all that, what does the reader learn from such a book? This book is interesting in that it seems to embody Pappe's entire worldview masked in a would-be academic approach and founded on his entangled inner world. He wants to explain why he left Israel, and why his place is with those who do anything and everything they can to put an end to the "Zionist project." On its ruins he wants to see a secular democratic Palestinian state arise, in which he and his friends will live in tranquility. To that end he has



woven a tale beginning and ending with the Zionist vision that he views as colonialist and nationalistic.

The State of Israel, according to Pappé, was born in dreadful sin, the sin of the Palestinian *nakba*, and it has turned into a disfigured state, power-driven and directed by a strong brutal army. Israel intends to rid the country of all its Arabs, and to complete the “ethnic cleansing,” which it began in 1948 but had planned many years earlier.

For this purpose Pappé fabricates a plot that combines general historical processes with the personal process he has undergone, and he blows the Tantura affair up as an actual historic turning point—personal and worldwide. The affair ripped the mask off the true face of the state of Israel from the moment of its creation. The refusal to recognize his student’s thesis is like the refusal to acknowledge the *nakba*—the cause to which he has dedicated his life and for which he has been hounded, isolated, and betrayed. In his book he reflects the worn-out equipment he has used in all his publications and arguments in the public debate, intended to terminate the existence of the Zionist entity: disregard of facts, unfounded manipulations of historical material, exploitation of sensitive points by likening the *nakba* to the Holocaust to justify the use of oral testimonies as a historical source, specifically in accounts of the Arab defeat, and abuse of contemporary expressions such as “ethnic cleansing” and “genocide.”

There is one side that sins and is evil, the Israeli, and one side that is innocent and oppressed, the Palestinian. Pappé will naturally not mention to his readers that after the 1948 war 156,000 Arab residents remained in the state of Israel, but that every territory occupied by Arab armies was totally “cleansed” of Jewish settlements, or every Israeli military unit taken by the Palestinians in 1948 was wiped out with unspeakable cruelty, and the corpses of the combatants defiled. Such, for example, were the slaughter and destruction at Gush Etzion, Kfar Darom and Be’erot Yitzhak, Hartuv, Mishmar Hayarden, or the convoy of the 35 and the fallen of Nabi Samuel. Those who perpetrated ethnic cleansing were in fact the Arabs, wherever they won a victory. But why spoil his theory.

This book has gone entirely out of academic focus, and Pappé has lost not only any semblance of a historian but any measure of self-evaluation by representing himself as embodying within himself personally all history. The tactic of claiming victimization combined with personal paranoia color every chapter of the book.

He misses the qualitative contradiction in his theory: if Jewish nationalism embodies only military force and colonialism, and if in nationalism generally liberalism, socialism, and humanism cannot exist, how can he

indeed welcome the possibility of Palestinian nationalism? Nationalism is nationalism, isn't it? Not in Pappé's view. His prayer is that the 200th anniversary of Herzl's birth, in 2060, or perhaps the 200th anniversary of his death later, will be "celebrated in a democratic, secular state of Palestine" (12). This sentence is the whole book in a nutshell.

## NOTES

1. A disclaimer: I am involved in the book personally and publicly at once, and the critique before us is not a routine review of a new book but a polemic with its author. Nor could this be a dry academic scrutiny of the work's content and scholarly argument, it being weighed down with political ideologies and the writer's sheer narcissism. Therefore the survey too is somewhat personal, and somewhat historically objective. I was personally involved in a considerable share of the "Pappé incidents," the author's grievances, and ultimately his departure from the University of Haifa and my computer is bursting with hundreds of relevant documents. The fact that he and I have apparently preserved the same materials does enable me to gauge how he uses them astutely, partially and selectively, to fabricate the story of his life and his personal ostracism, a narrative which he has camouflaged under the titillating title "The Struggle for Academic Freedom in Israel."

2. This has been taking place in the country in recent years, and it engages many, myself included, who are assailed throughout the present book for harming that freedom.

3. The author's name is variously spelled as Pappé and Pappé. This present volume appears under the name Pappé.

4. <http://www.ee.bgu.ac.il/~censor/katz-directory/00-12-19katz-apology.pdf>

5. In Jewish folklore, a *golem* is an animated anthropomorphic being, created entirely from inanimate matter created by magic, often to serve its creator.

6. Pappé to Segel-Plus and to Aleph lists, 1.7.2001; 22.1.2001; 20.11.2002, to mention just three out of hundreds.

7. <http://www.ee.bgu.ac.il/~censor/katz-directory/01-06-26haifa-committee-1.pdf>

8. <http://www.ee.bgu.ac.il/~censor/katz-directory/01-11-20ben-artzi-council-advanced-studies.pdf>

9. I possess—and so does he dozens of aggressive, slanderous, threatening, and coarse email messages, in which he comes out against everyone involved in the Katz affair.

10. Yoav Gelber, *Palestine 1948: War, Escape and the Emergence of the Palestinian Refugee Problem* (Brighton, 2006), 319–27.

11. <http://www.ee.bgu.ac.il/~censor/katz-directory/03-04-21al-yahya-al-tanturah-excerpt-arabic.pdf>

12. Pappé to Faculty, 22.I.2011 and 20.II.2001.

13. Pappé's e-mail to presidents of professional associations who might be approached to give assessments regarding promotions of Israeli academics, 19.II.2001.

14. However, I myself have done so, and so did our joint student Tamir Goren in his MA thesis and PhD dissertation; these works are packed with documents containing relevant statistical, urban and other data and figures.

15. Muhamad Nimar al-Khatib, *In the Eyes of the Enemy* (Tel-Aviv, 1954) [Hebrew].

16. Walid Khalidi, "The Fall of Haifa Revisited", *Journal of Palestine Studies* 37.3 (2008), 30–58.