

The Symbolism of the Flood: The Core of the Soul in the Poetry Collection “The Flood of al-Aqsa” (The Chant of the Wind-Drinker & His Goodness Is Molded by Embers) by the Poet Mohamed Abou

La symbolique du déluge : Le noyau de l’âme dans le recueil poétique « Le Déluge d’Al-Aqsa » (Le chant du buveur de vent & Sa bonté est façonnée par les braises) du poète Mohamed Abou

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Date of receipt:14/02/2026	Date of revision:19/04/2026	Date of acceptance:10/06/2026
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Abstract

This research aims to examine the symbolism of the flood in the two poetic collections produced by the creative intuition of the Algerian poet Mohamed Abou, using an interpretive approach based on deconstruction and reconstruction. It seeks to articulate what Yahya al-Sinwar did not explicitly express, through a poetic discourse that resonates with the language of the land, the masked figure of the protagonist, and the sacred soil stained with the language of blood. This language depicts a Gazan scene that inscribes an ode of rage, exposing the faults of the Arabs while weaving, with highly elevated symbolic craft, a narrative unlike any previous model. Accordingly, the study addresses the following questions: How does Mohamed Abou depict the Flood of al-Aqsa? How does the Flood of al-Aqsa achieve its poetic and aesthetic dimensions? Did the poet channel Gaza’s fight into pre-existing linguistic molds, or does the symbolism present the resistance through innovative forms that go beyond conventional patterns?.

Keywords: Symbolism of the Flood; Mohamed Abou; Palestinian Resistance; Poetic Intuition; Deconstruction and Reconstruction.

Resumé

Cette présentation vise à examiner la symbolique du déluge dans les deux recueils poétiques issus de l'intuition créatrice du poète algérien Mohamed Abou, en utilisant une approche interprétative basée sur la déconstruction et la reconstruction. Elle cherche à articuler ce que Yahya al-Sinwar n'a pas exprimé explicitement, à travers un discours poétique qui résonne avec la langue de la terre, la figure masquée du protagoniste, et le sol sacré teinté par la langue du sang. Cette langue dépeint une scène gazaouie qui inscrit une ode de rage, exposant les failles des Arabes tout en tissant, avec une haute facture symbolique, un récit qui ne ressemble à aucun modèle précédent. En conséquence, l'étude aborde les questions suivantes : Comment Mohamed Abou dépeint-il le Déluge d'Al-Aqsa ? Comment le Déluge d'Al-Aqsa réalise-t-il ses dimensions poétiques et esthétiques ? Le poète a-t-il canalisé le combat de Gaza dans des moules linguistiques préexistants, ou la symbolique présente-t-elle la résistance à travers des formes innovantes qui dépassent les schémas conventionnels ?.

Mots clés: Symbolique du déluge; Mohamed Abou; Résistance palestinienne; Intuition créatrice; Déconstruction et reconstruction.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Arab creativity in general, and Algerian creativity in particular, draws its substance and material from both local and global issues. The Palestinian cause, in particular, has formed a central focus and a foundational pillar for the establishment of creative identity on one hand, and for embodying the Palestinian entity in the Promised Land on the other.

The presence of the Palestinian cause in literature and creative production has not been limited to historical volumes or narrative facts; rather, it represents an artistic reality, intensively contemplative, raising questions of identity, civilization, and humanity. In literature, this presence constitutes a literary unveiling of the question of being and existence, especially in poetry. "The talented artist does not merely observe nature; rather, he must take it as a model and, like it, engage in shaping, creating, and innovating." (Miftah, 2008, p. 137) In this sense, creative work in

general, and poetry in particular, is an inner act of creation, revealing the essence and spirit of things. It is the spirit of the cause, the spirit of Palestine and of truth itself, that manifests as a tangible existence, making its presence evident. "It is no wonder that Novalis defined poetry through the concept of *poiesis* as the representation of the depth of the world's spirit in its entirety." (Miftah, 2008, p. 138) On this basis, the Arab creator and writer represents the Palestinian cause in its spirit, essence, and core.

Throughout the literary engagement with the Palestinian cause, Arab poetry has articulated the nature of Palestinian existence, consistently denouncing the illegitimacy and injustice of the Zionist entity, while anticipating the existential reality of the land of Sinwar¹. Although Palestine cannot be fully encapsulated in a poetic text to define its identity and entity poetically, the triumph over any oppressive tyrant constitutes a victory for the cause.

Our poet, Mohamed Abou², the subject of this study, evokes Palestine in his two collections *The Flood of al-Aqsa*, reviving the national spirit of the Palestinian people. In this poetry, he reconstructs its narrative from its earliest stages—the stage of sin—toward the flood that purifies it from corruption. In doing so, "he does not simply depict or replicate reality; rather, he portrays, through living language,

1 -Al-Sinwar: Full name Yahya Ibrahim Hassan al-Sinwar, a prominent Palestinian politician and leader in the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) in the Gaza Strip, regarded as a key decision-maker in the conflict with Israel.

2 - Mohamed Abou is an Algerian poet with several poetry collections. He won the Al-Babtain Prize in the *Martyrs of Pride* category in 2024, for his poetry collection *Molded with Ember (Al-Aqsa Flood 2)*.

the emotional struggle of consciousness with reality, history, and existence simultaneously." (Al-Youssef, n.d., p. 11)

Thus, the present study aims to elucidate the symbolic employment of the *flood* motif, intertwined with al-Aqsa on the one hand, and to conduct a vertical exploration of the semantic layers of "*The Chant of the Wind-Drinker*" and "*His Goodness Is Molded by Embers*" on the other. The objective is to examine their aesthetic and artistic dimensions within the poetic work, as well as the humanistic layers embedded within the two collections.

2. The Poetic Flood / Gaza in the Poetry of Mohamed Abou:

The poetic intellect is "one of the spectra of the mind, concerned with the production of poetry and the theory of poetry... It is distinguished in a specific way from other forms of intellect presented throughout the history of thought and philosophy. It is a particular intellect because it is concerned with creativity, invention, and innovation in general. It is an intellect that does not merely think but creates and discovers new pathways for human thought as a whole." (Al-Majdi, 2011, p. 8)

It is necessary to begin this section with the words of *Khozhal al-Majdi*, who emphasizes the importance of the poetic intellect as grounded in production and vision, where the former pertains to poetic structure and the latter is based on contemplation and reflection. These two dimensions converge in the collections under study, weaving a text imbued with Sufi spirit and poetic flights. The poet expresses this in "*The Poem of Those Who Return to the Sky*":

They returned... to the luminous tablet to study,	And they came in throngs... to it as they departed,
Renewing themselves like water upon its clouds.	And they stretched toward a homeland they saw striving.
They ascended to the spirit of the place and awakened it,	A host of angels soared in the sky to boast,
Their invocations scattering like roses upon...	The hand of truth... inspiring the passerby.
They opened the veils of the unseen and tamed them,	They traversed the journey of the place, their insight guiding them,
Leaving a father's sigh upon the ruins,	While a mother's tears there... stubbornly resisted.
And glowing like a cloud bearing its lightning	Thus, their concerns and emotions intertwined (Abbo, 2024, p. 29).

In this passage, the poet's metapoetic mastery becomes evident, as he draws from Sufi heritage, particularly the experience of Al-Hallaj, which alludes to the celestial origin of Gaza's martyrs, foremost among them the "Phoenix of Palestine," *Shireen Abu Akleh*. "The veils appear as symbolic keys to the unseen, perceived by the heart but beyond the reach of description, as if every martyr constitutes a Qur'anic surah beginning with letters that have long puzzled the exegetes." The aesthetic experience then unfolds through binary oppositions that elevate the text through exquisite structuring and the beauty of contrasts, such as: (*mouthpiece and journey, star and lightning, homeland and horizon, two tears and a poet, two qiblas and a*

reciter, hand and loaf of bread...). These binaries evolve into corresponding triplets, signaling the multiplicity of martyrs and the emergence of new worlds, for example: *(anger, sigh, and apparition; phantom, star, and interpreter; migration, apparition, and deeds; voice, clamor, and spirit...)*, while the binaries continue along a parallel line.(Abbo, 2024, p. 10)

In a Sufi-flood journey aboard a tempestuous vessel, intensified by the strength of the winds, the poet constructs his text through a circular system centered on "Jerusalem" and "Gaza"—no others—as the locus of transformation and purification. This entails the purification of minds from the perceived legitimacy of Israeli aggression against Palestine, and the exposure of political and Zionist falsehoods to the world. The poetic texts thus converge to seize the poetic and existential truth, affirming that the Zionist presence is ephemeral and cannot affect the core. In this context, poetry is "the essence of existence itself, the *hyle* we perceive solidified in the form of walls, locks, wood, and flesh—I mean, the texts themselves."(Al-Majdi, 2011, p. 43)

The poet channels his poetry through writing and language to place the reader at the heart of the event and the essence of the *Flood of al-Aqsa*. He favors writing and symbolic expression in a tale dedicated to *Shireen Abu Akleh* and to every Palestinian woman rising from the ashes of destruction. He expresses this in his poem "*The Tale*":

The essence of every story is that it Circled the Kaaba of its heart and looked around...	It played its melody at the corners of the crossings
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Like a butterfly in the light, it dove here and there, It arrived while night was but a part of a cloak. And it walked upon the land of diaspora, From the ancient realms of the divine, its shadow fluttered, And from its hand, its prayers scattered,	And touched the stone and the corner of life. And it bore the burden of visions... oh, its support, The clouds donned the water, sending forth its beauty. As an angel whose presence the universe forever remembers. And its soaring eyelids cradled meaning aloft. Rising like a mountain, bearing its sorrow.(Abbo, 2024, p. 25)
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"The Tale" is a central poetic work dedicated to the Palestinian woman, embodied in the symbolic figure of Shireen (the butterfly, the little bird, the towering mountain, Mount Tur...), who embraced death in order to awaken in every Palestinian woman the spirit of life and the love of sacrifice.

The poet transforms his poetry into an artistic vehicle aimed at reaching the truth of existence, simultaneously revealing and concealing it. He writes:

Here is my shirt—here, I still wear it;
I am still alive, though blood stains this shirt.
I renounce before God your open denial;
You are not my blood... I am now beginning to sever myself from you.

I accepted you as a pit and a snare,

But leave my blood now... for I shall take my revenge.(Abbo, 2024, p. 64)

With a language both more piercing and innocent, the poet invokes the story of Prophet Joseph (Yusuf, peace be upon him) in the poem *"Joseph Emerges from the Rubble"*, presenting it as an objective parallel to the Palestinian cause, betrayed by the Arab regimes. In this way, "Joseph" becomes a symbol of the treacherously victimized Palestinian, and he writes:

I am Joseph, the betrayed, O my dream;

This shirt—my shirt—has come to judge.

O sorrow of my soul, the palms of life have starved it,

This bleeding... and yet the dream embraces me.

It withdraws with the waters of visions... withdrawing to dissolve it,

A phantom sees what I see... and the pulse is crushed.

An old man, weighed down by worry and age,

O mighty dream, if only my father...(Abbo, 2024, p. 61)

In this passage, the alchemy of language manifests at the height of its deviation, revealing the emotional state that permeates the text, in which "emotion and thought are unified, forming a new structure that unfolds and presents the condition of contemporary humanity."(Badawi, 2015, p. 27)

3. The Symbolism of the Flood / The Flood of al-Aqsa (Gaza):

The poet Mohamed Abou invokes the flood in both its religious and social dimensions, creating a poetic model that elucidates the essence of the cause and the

nature of Palestinian identity through a contemplative vision grounded in inquiry and revelation. In doing so, he centers on the question of essence and purpose, the latter poetically structured to move from sin to purification; this unfolds within a circle of vision and profound, sincere insight aimed at understanding and probing the depths of Palestinian reality. He expresses this in the poem *"The Flood"*:

Pass over the speck of history and be split apart...	The water of truth cascades beside the soul,
Pass over the form of days, saddled and aligned.	Some of its words the dream recalls. Fragments open from the flood of its
Pass... and leave the smile of the dream as a window,	images, From those who scattered the veil of
And gather the jeweled scene therein to behold.	darkness and spread. (Abbo, 2024, p. 35)

Both collections share the same subtitle, making the concept of purification the dominant function of the text, which engages with memory and imagination to animate the image of a shattered, rocky reality that moves minds before hearts. In this way, the *Flood of al-Aqsa* becomes an intellectual solution to perceiving truth, and thus a necessary imperative for purification and the construction of a new Palestine with a renewed spirit and a new generation.

The spirit of tragedy sent forth its shadow, and it became...
Two spirits, O my pain... two children who never played.
Two children... and the time that raised them opened,

Their young hearts inflamed with death, thus they were veiled.

A child stands watch at the appointed place, awaiting

Rain that comes as a cloud, quenching anger.

He walks upright upon the cries of oppression,

The shadow of martyrdom flowing from his veins.

In his eyes echoes of rage are inscribed...

A spirit stands upright upon the ruins.(Abbo, 2024)

In a rhetorical and symbolic manner, the poet alludes to the violence and turmoil that the children of Gaza endure daily. This is expressed through the repeated phrase:

The wind hurls it in the flood, overturned...

The wind hurls it in the flood, overturned...

The wind hurls it in the flood, overturned...

The daily fall of children due to violence assumes a mythical dimension, where the wind sweeps up the children, moving them from one state to another. Tragically, this flood claims the lives of children rather than the wicked. The ship tosses them, and the fierce winds play with them amid a flood that leaves nothing untouched.

The image of the flood devouring the children is both mythical and wondrous, particularly as they are on a fragile vessel shattered by the winds. Their stability is uprooted while, as young as they are, they confront the claws of the Zionist oppressors and the silence of both allies and enemies. It is the child who grows hardened and declares what "al-Sinwar" did not articulate. The poet writes:

Do not look — leave. My vision is now clear,
for the womb split it open, declaring its meaning.
Here is my shirt, still I wear it;
I am still alive, though blood clings to the shirt.
Before God I disown you—plainly, openly;
you are not my blood... I have begun to break away.
I accepted you as a well and as a caravan,
so leave my blood—for I shall take my revenge.

4. The Spirit of Poetry in the Collections *The Flood of al-Aqsa*:

Poetry occupies the apex in the chronicles of the spirit. It does not appear as a mere mechanical reflection of historical events; rather, it represents the history of spiritual and aesthetic intensities, which internalize events and channel lifeblood into the deep soil from which even their terrors and destinies may eventually emerge (Al-Majdi, 2011, p. 157). Although poetry possesses a linguistic alchemy that elevates it above all human knowledge, its influence “is essential and profound, beginning to infuse its spirit into the new vision of the humanities. Yet the greatness of poetry lies in its ability to overturn what these sciences can reveal—the systems, constraints, and hidden or manifest forces. Poetry, then, lies in wait for the silent, creeping mechanisms of historiography.” (Al-Majdi, 2011, p. 158)

The concept of poetry has transcended the subjective vision and expression of the poet’s soul, evolving toward a cosmic perspective. Poetry has become the product of discourses and knowledge within the system of language, granting the poet a space

for the freedom of the spirit—that is, a language freed from authoritarian systems, in which the poet reconstructs the spirit in a manner beyond conventional norms. In the space of language, poetry is born; thus, the poet does not merely express his soul but its fractures and fissures, becoming a Sinbad traveling through the ruins of words in search of the jewel of meaning lost amid the cracks, situated between silence and sound, hidden within the fissures of memory and consciousness shaped by the shifting tides of history from one locus to another. The poet writes:

**I am a human bullet that has set out on its journey.
Against the path—so pardon me— I rise in revolt;
I shall persist in provocation and exposure—
in broad daylight, across all horizons... for I am a poet.
My letter is a blade; my pulse, a charge;
and the years of my life are feathers and notebooks.
The sea releases its tides toward the shores,
and their arms extend toward me— bonds that hold me fast.
In my heartbeat lies my road; in my appearance, my being;
and in exile, my soul and spirit soar like a bird.
Read not my letters, for my letter is a serpent—
white, advancing— and the realms of knowledge, a sorcerer.
I am—in its hidden fold— the Moses who... yet when
I heard the call, what reached me was: *"You are another."*
Cast your letters upon the turns of fate— and through them
you shall find a path to the water of eternity... so beware.(Abbo, 2024, p. 33)**

In this passage, the poet acknowledges that his poetry is a human bullet, propelled by the discourses and hands around him. He unleashes it to restore to poetry—and to language—its madness, taking it as a vehicle for freedom and a new covenant, a covenant in the aftermath of the flood.

5. The Spirit in the Language of the Diwan *Tufan al-Aqsa*

Tufan al-Aqsa comprises two poetic collections written in words that echoed the cries of walls, children, and innocent victims—cries that had taken residence in the poet's soul, becoming the soul of the soul itself. As the poet expresses:

**I still linger here in the embrace of a minaret,
Finding solace in its warmth... with time, I wrap myself in it.
Even if its adornment were shattered by bombardment,
Beneath its wing, mended by the feathers of the soul, it heals.
I still hear it engraved within the spirit:
"Allah is the Greatest, O purity, O enchantment."
The sound of the minarets is the dawn of the soul, its gasp,
The sound of the minarets remains, a shadow that recalls.
O reader of prayers, now hear my tale:
Towards the heavens, for therein lie both pardon and burden.**(Abbo, 2024, pp. 18–19)

In this passage, the poet writes to a wound inscribed in consciousness, using a language that escapes the prison of history to dwell instead in silence—silence burdened with wounds—yet holding within it the hope of a new birth lying in the fissure between meaning and non-meaning. The homeland's unsteady journey

leaves its imprint on the poet's soul: the perpetual voyage into the unknown, towards freedom, becomes another form of wandering that ultimately returns to the self—indeed, to the knowledge of the self, which must rely upon itself to alter destiny (“but to the wind, I offer my apology”). It is a journey that assumes responsibility for the pain lodged deep within his spirit, a pain that erupts through the language of the poem— a language that stands alongside the language of sacred scriptures because of its transcendence and its spirituality that surpass time. In a richly symbolic image, the soul is embodied as a bird beginning its sacred spiritual and existential journey that has existed since eternity. The language continues to intensify its symbolism, articulating the experience of wandering lived by the Palestinian—an experience destined to culminate in a deluge that returns him to the primordial origin upon which he was first created, sanctified and untouched by impurity.

The reader of Mohammed Abbo's two diwans cannot overlook the phenomenon of intertextual entanglement between identity and history, deployed to elucidate reality and navigate its geopolitical terrains. These terrains are tightly interwoven with the narrative of the Flood in both its realistic and symbolic dimensions—its religious and creative/poetic registers, its signifier and symbolic signified. All of this affirms that the two diwans (*Tufan al-Aqsa*) constitute a meta-historical narrative of the events of al-Aqsa and of the eschatological catastrophe—the Deluge—through which Palestine is resurrected anew: Palestine after the Flood.

6. Conclusion

The diwan embodies the Palestinians' desire to reconstruct their state—a post-Flood, post-uprising Palestine—through an alternative vision founded on the

principle of purification. This vision is reflected in the poet's language, imbued with a chemical-like energy that portrayed the cause in unprecedented ways. The poet expressed the "spirit of the spirit," endowing every inch of the text with symbolic vitality across dimensions fractured by the destabilized Palestinian reality.

In the poet's conception, the image of the Flood transcends conventional and familiar perceptions, evolving into a cosmic vision that emerges from the interweaving and entanglement of texts, discourses, and knowledge within the symbolic system of language. This approach granted the poet the freedom to break free from authoritarian frameworks that constrain creativity, while offering readers a broad, multifaceted interpretive space for engaging with the poetry under study. The poet presents the Flood in a manner that diverges from customary representations: as a human torrent seeking transformation and renewal. It becomes, moreover, a human projectile, propelled by both visible and hidden hands and discourses, to be recreated through a liberated, almost frenzied language—a vehicle for freedom and for a new covenant, the covenant of the post-Flood era.

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