


# Chapter 3

## Messianic Nightmare: Border Poetics in Bouganim's Un Bâtard en Terre Promise

Mohamed Baya

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-8629-8241>

Western University, Romania

### ABSTRACT

*This chapter offers a border poetics analysis of Ami Bouganim's *Un bâtard en terre promise* (2018), revealing migration as an unending struggle marked by fractured identity and irretrievable loss. The novel's hybrid narrative mirrors the fragmented condition of exile through deliberate generic instability. Rather than presenting borders as transitional crossings, the text depicts them as sites of erosion—where displacement consumes rather than transforms. The novel confronts the existential burden of exile, presenting borders as forces that erode the self and complicate the diasporic experience.*

### INTRODUCTION

Although the French Protectorate over Morocco ended in 1956, French has remained a central medium of literary expression for many Moroccan writers. Instead of rejecting it after decolonization, they continued to engage with it to explore the complexities of identity formation. In the twenty-first century, Moroccan literature in French remains dynamic, often engaging with migration as a key narrative thread alongside explorations of identity, belonging, and the impact of colonial history. From Driss Chraïbi's *Les Boucs* (1955) to contemporary works, Moroccan authors have frequently addressed displacement and border-crossing, reflecting on both the physical act of migration and its psychological, social, and cultural consequences.

DOI: 10.4018/979-8-3373-2592-7.ch003

Writers of the Moroccan diaspora, in particular, have placed migration at the heart of their narratives, often using it to examine broader questions of uprootedness and hybridity.

Ami Bouganim, a Moroccan-born Israeli writer and philosopher (b. 1951, Essaouira-Mogador), exemplifies this tradition. Having studied under Emmanuel Levinas and completed the first Israeli dissertation on his work, the author has worked extensively in education and cultural leadership, including roles with the Jewish Agency and the Alliance Israélite Universelle. Since 2010, he has focused on philosophical research and philanthropy, and in 2015, he founded the Euro-Mediterranean Institute for Inter-Civilization Dialogue (Bénayoun-Szmidt & Redouane, 2021). His 2018 novel, *Un bâtard en terre promise*, chronicles the journey of Cid, a Moroccan Jewish boy, and his mother as they leave Morocco for Israel in the 1960s. Told in the first person, with Cid himself as the narrator, the novel is structured as a *Bildungsroman* that follows his passage from childhood to adulthood, with both literal and metaphorical border crossings shaping his personal development. His narrative is marked by recursive motifs that demand layered interpretation—pivotal passages reveal new dimensions of displacement and belonging when analysed through frameworks of border poetics. Through Bouganim’s (2018) exploration of memory, loss, identity, and displacement, the novel positions migration as both a bodily passage and an inner, emotional one.

Migration is central to Moroccan Jewish life writing, as Trevisan Semi (2017) emphasizes, highlighting the role of memory and place in diasporic narratives. She notes:

*The increased production of lifewriting texts of the Moroccan Jewish diaspora thrusts the return of the homeland into the limelight. The contribution made by the autobiographical narratives of the Moroccan Jewish diaspora, especially by those people who belong to the so-called 1.5 generation—the generation that traumatically left the country of origin during childhood [...] is very meaningful. (Trevisan Semi, 2017, p. 84)*

This novel exemplifies the dynamic of the 1.5 generation, as Cid’s childhood migration and subsequent reflections illustrate the negotiation of identity between Morocco and Israel, highlighting how borders—both physical and symbolic—structure narratives of migration. Border poetics provides a lens for this analysis by highlighting the interplay between geographical and temporal boundaries, which create discontinuities and overlaps. Borders dispersed across locations and epochs generate figurations, expressed through manipulations of time and space as well as metaphors. These figurations offer a framework for understanding how borders evolve and manifest in specific socio-historical contexts. As Schimanski (2017) argues in *Reading from the Border*, border poetics is “an attempt to read texts and other forms of presentation from the border,” connecting “borders on the level of

22 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: [www.igi-global.com/chapter/messianic-nightmare/395009](http://www.igi-global.com/chapter/messianic-nightmare/395009)

## Related Content

---

### Multi-Dimensional Understandings of Migration: Threats or Opportunities?

Sureyya Yigit (2023). *Handbook of Research on the Regulation of the Modern Global Migration and Economic Crisis* (pp. 239-256).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/multi-dimensional-understandings-of-migration/318766](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/multi-dimensional-understandings-of-migration/318766)

### Beyond State Policy: Societal Attitudes and the Educational Marginalisation of Refugees in India

Sanjivini Raina, Kumar Mukul Choudhary and Parul Meena (2026). *Barriers and Opportunities in Education for Immigrants and Refugees* (pp. 23-52).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/beyond-state-policy/392333](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/beyond-state-policy/392333)

### Hyper-Visible in Branding yet Invisible in Practice: Conditional Belonging of Racialized International Students at Two Ontario Universities

Shamiga Shamy Arumuhathasand Rebecca Stroud (2026). *Belonging, Identity, and Student Development in International Student Engagement* (pp. 77-110).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/hyper-visible-in-branding-yet-invisible-in-practice/413487](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/hyper-visible-in-branding-yet-invisible-in-practice/413487)

### The Problem of Politicians Framing Their Campaigns in Religious Terms

(2025). *Detriments of Theistic Religion in Politics and Its Effect on the Immigration Problem* (pp. 35-66).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/the-problem-of-politicians-framing-their-campaigns-in-religious-terms/356469](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/the-problem-of-politicians-framing-their-campaigns-in-religious-terms/356469)

### Impacts on Essential Global Industries: The Role of Migrant Workers in the Hospitality Industry

Shivansu Sachan (2026). *Migrant Contributions to Global Frontline Sectors* (pp. 1-32).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/impacts-on-essential-global-industries/397811](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/impacts-on-essential-global-industries/397811)