

## The Politics of Cultural Identity and cultural Auto-criticism in Tahar Ben Jelloun's L'Enfant de Sable

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### Abstract

The European invasion of what would be known as its peripheries was deeply rooted in the desire to conquer other people and exploit other territories. Basically, the conquerors aim at gaining indirect control over the political or economic life of other areas. In order to justify its exploitative endeavor, any colonial enterprise tries to make the subjugators believe that the colonizer is the bearer of progress, enlightenment, and other supposedly universal liberal value in the colonized countries. 'Nobel mission' is the well known phrase which is used heavily in this context. A panoramic view of the colonial discourse would definitely reveal that while the west and its cultural practices are conceived to be the norm/standard, the non-white and the formerly subordinated cultures are constructed as its antithesis, primitive and backward. The goal of this article is to shed light on the politics of identity both as concept and in its relation to the postcolonial world. Generally the aim is to identify this concept before proceeding to highlight how both the colonialist and the nativist approaches to it are obviously tendentious and ideologically moved. A discussion of the importance of cultural auto-criticism as carried out in Tahar Ben Jelloun' Novel about the status of women in Morocco will bring the article full circled.

**Keywords:** Cultural identity; Postcolonial literature; colonial discourse; cultural ambivalence; Cultural syncretism; multiculturalism