Wisdom of the Outsider

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She learns nothing of his circumstances otherwise and, like most people in the film, displays little curiosity about him as he enters the life of the school.

Lazhar carries his alien status trusted teacher. stolidly. He is courtly, a bit stiff, and his approach to the class seems at first overly formal; for example, he instructs the students to move their desks from an egalitarian semi-circle into themadictation assignment from have had experiences that Balzac that is way over their uniquely equiphim to understand heads.

But in time, the children relax into the structure he imposes: with it comes a kind of freedom that is missing from this typical rigidity.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the school's response to the teacher's suimeetings with the children so from pedagogy." He is instructed not to discuss the suiinformed of the school's "zero teachers from physical contact of any kind with students.

consequence, the other teachers seem to marginalize a student who acts out but is clearly struggling after being the one to discover the teacher hanging in the classroom.

All of this is supposed to be expressions of anger and confuaimed at protecting the children, sion with patience and kindness. but it seems as though the adults Small moments of attentiveness are asserting their own need for eventually lead to a larger moprotection from the implications ment of release for the troubled of the violence that has been boy who the rest of the school visited on the children by their has written off.

head to indicate his disbelief. It does not seem to occur to anymore traditional rows, and gives one that Lazhar might actually how to help the children.

parent-teacher conference that one of the students is perhaps overly fond of enforcing rules North American school, which with her classmates, her parents perceives itself as free-thinking icily inform him, "You are not but actually embodies its own from here so certain nuances escape you."

only one who is missing nuances. Bit by bit the film reveals that cause of third-party verification. cide. A grief counselor is called Lazhar is in the midst of seeking in and bans Lazhar from her asylum following the murder of his wife and children in Algeria. as to "separate psychology He never speaks of it outside the asylum proceedings, where he is treated not with care but with cide with the class and is also suspicion, and subjected to harsh questioning as though he is attolerance" policy that forbids tempting to scam the Canadian government.

The school also enforces an safe zone, for himself and the pure of heart among us. "anti-violence" policy that for- students. One of his assignments Darleen Ortega is a judge on bids such playground games as invites them to prepare presen- the Oregon Court of Appeals "king of the hill; as an apparent tations about the problem of violence, which opens up space for serve in that capacity. Her movie a particularly astute student to review column "Opinionated express her grief over the vio- Judge" appears regularly in lence that disrupted their class- the Portland Observer. You can

Ultimately Lazhar tells the stu-Lazhar sees all this from the dents not to look for meaning in vantage point of the outsider, their teacher's death because generally acquiescing with little there isn't one. But he finds ways more than a slight shake of his to guide them back to their task as sixth graders, which is to emerge from a metaphorical chrysalis -- the school, their safe place -- to fly free.

His efforts get him into trouble -- and here again, his experience When he gently notes in a resounds with that of many outsiders. His wisdom not only goes unrecognized; it leads to his dismissal. The asylum proceedings are a microcosm of his experience inside the school: they culminate in the pronouncement that what he has been saying is true Perhaps. But he is not the in the eyes of the law, not because of his testimony but be-

> The arrogance of the proceedings, in which a smug bureaucracy deems itself qualified to pass judgment on the experience of an outsider while according no regard for his own testimony, was almost more than I could bear to watch.

But to the children, the pure of heart, this man is a gift. This His classroom, though, is a lovely film offers that gift to the

and the first woman of color to find her movie blog at He responds to the children's opinionatedjudge.blogspot.com.

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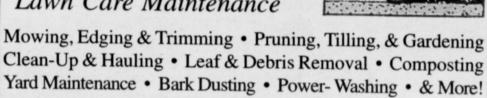
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