

## ARTS & LITERATURE AND NATURE (ALAN)

### “Centrifugal” by Adithya Patel (2020)

#### **Recommended by Jaswant Guzder**

‘Centrifugal’ is a brilliant one-minute black and white film by a 19-year-old Kerala student, depicting women’s lives within the traditions of Indian gendered hierarchies. His college film assignment during Covid became a short film with camera focussed only on the feet of women subjects. Yet he was able to convey multitude of subtle themes opening in death with her toes bound together before she travels to the funeral pyre and tracing a trajectory from infancy. It is a brilliant meditation on the progression of a restricted life which remains the reality of so many women whose invisible silenced narratives are woven into the myth of the idealized maternal. The film ends with an offering of alternative possibilities of a girlhood that encourages engagement, expressiveness and movement.

Adithya Patel co-created this film with his mother, who conceived and wrote the script though her name remains invisible. Nonetheless she has expanded her son’s gaze and influenced his reflection on women’s lives. This film was made in Kerala which remains one of the most progressive states in India, with the best Covid statistics in the country and highest literacy of any state population, nonetheless gendered hierarchies continue to influence the lives of girls and women. This young filmmaker offers us a cultural imagination co-constructing his work with a remarkable mother who supported his reflective life and offered values influencing his evolving manhood. Though the collective space might resonate with centuries of patriarchal values and the sacred feminine whether as the Virgin Mary or Durga, gender identity continues to evolve and shift course. Families and parents transmit generational patterns within our myriad cultural contexts, and lay the bedrock for possibilities of children to languish or to thrive beyond childhood potential. At the same time this small film was launched, Pope Francis has declared same sex marriages have a new status.

Link to the film: <https://youtu.be/Vfo0WHMCJel>

**Jaswant Guzder**, professor and child psychiatrist, McGill University

### “The Spiritual Life of Children” by Robert Coles (1990)

#### **Recommended by John McLennan**

I continue to work my way through several of the works of Dr. Coles, a child psychiatrist, Pulitzer Prize winner, and Harvard professor. Of the works I have read, I find them to be engaging and accessible, providing extended dialogue with the participants in his field work, enriched with his psychological reflections, and drawn from extensive time interviewing children and families in community settings over decades. This particular book draws from his repeated and extended interviews with children and youth about their thoughts and experiences of God and spirituality (extending from his past work which has included exploration of other domains leading to other books such as those on the moral and political lives of children). Coles proposes that *“the emphasis in this book is not so much on children as students or practitioners of this or that religion, but on children as soulful in ways they themselves reveal”* (Loc 142). In this piece on spirituality, there were purposive efforts to seek out children growing up in different places with different faith traditions. A curious thread throughout are his moments of self-reflection on his own struggles to articulate his religious beliefs blended with consideration of ideas drawn from his psychoanalytic training. Refreshingly, he also critiques such considerations, making this psychoanalytic foray more palatable. For a more extended description, see the New York Times’ book review from 1990: <https://www.nytimes.com/1990/11/25/books/what-they-think-about-god.html>

**John D. McLennan**, clinician investigator and psychiatrist, University of Calgary

### “City of Thorns” by Ben Rawlence (2016)

#### **Recommended by Peter Braunberger**

Subtitled “Nine lives in the world’s largest refugee camp”, Rawlence re-tells parts of the complicated and tragic and hopeful stories of nine of now over 200,000 (registered) people living in the three refugee camps of Daadab in Kenya. Although Rawlence also helpfully develops historical, economic and social understandings of the larger challenges of displacement and poverty and immigration, the strength of this book is that personal needs and aspirations are not limited to numbers and issues. An important read.

**Peter Braunberger**, child and adolescent psychiatrist, Thunder Bay