

That Funny, Nomadic Boy: Interrogating the Function of Intersecting Spaces in *Funny Boy*

Tarun Deep Singh

Assistant Professor

Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Khalsa College

University of Delhi

Abstract: Set against the backdrop of ethnic and racial tensions between the Sinhalese and Tamils in Sri Lanka which led to the 1983 riots in the country, Shyam Selvadurai's novel *Funny Boy* explores and comments upon the aforementioned backdrop via the medium of the coming-of-age story of a Tamil boy Arjie (Arjun Chelvaratnam) whose fears, anxieties, and curiosities become the pretext for a scathing commentary on the madness that ensues in the name of cultural and racial preservation, which ultimately results in far reaching consequences for the whole Tamil community in Sri Lanka. So the personal space of a young boy becomes a medium to explore the public space of the whole country, a process that is symptomatic of the outer world impinging upon the inner and the inescapability of it.

The texture of the novel *Funny Boy* is informed by a host of different places and spaces which become either the symbolic representations of or the sites where contesting ideas and ideologies clash with each other; more often than not we see a binary oppositional relationship between these spaces which reinforces the theme of difference that stands out in the novel—the difference between the Sinhalese and Tamils, between heteronormativity and homosexuality, between masculinity and femininity. Some of the kinds of spaces that we encounter in the novel are: (i) Fictional Spaces (the game of bride-ride, Henry Newbolt's poems), (ii) Metaphorical Spaces (childhood and adulthood), (iii) Conceptual Spaces (Gender and Sexual Orientation), (iv) Physical Spaces. It is this matrix of spaces that makes up the web-like texture of the novel—a mish-mash and crisscrossing of various influences within the bounds of spaces and locations that drive the action of the novel. This paper will specifically seek to understand how this intersectional structure of spaces operates upon and has a formative influence on the individuality (the personal space) of Arjie, who, because he cohabits multiple spaces at the same time, operates as the Deleuzian nomad when negotiating with these, thereby making him the site where contesting ideologies battle it out and contribute to the mental make-up of the young boy caught up in the quagmire of ethnic and racial violence and gender crises.

More crucially, this nomadic thought is replicated at the generic level as well because the novel confounds any attempts at neat categorization. This plays into the hands of the author, himself the inhabitant of multiple subject-positions, very much like Arjie, and then utilizes this Lukacsian “transcendental homelessness” for a specifically political purpose of exposing and unraveling various larger forces at work in the political and social landscape of Sri Lanka—racial, ethnic, linguistic, legal, and sexual. Selvadurai thus engages in a literary map-making exercise, making possible the emergence of a textual space which vies with its cartographic counterpart and official channels of history for authenticity.

Keywords: Deleuzian “nomad thought,” Lukacsian “transcendental homelessness,” literary cartography, textual space, genre, bildungsroman, school story, focalization, Jamesonian “cognitive mapping”

The spatial study of the novel *Funny Boy* by Shyam Selvadurai, published in 1994, that this paper aims to conduct follows a largely bifurcated pattern. The first portion of the paper is aimed at delineating the host of places and spaces found within the novel, analyzing their intersectional relationship with each other which has a tremendously formative influence on the individuality of the protagonist Arjun Chelvaratnam (lovingly known as Arjie in the novel) and his characterization in the novel. This portion of the paper will rely heavily on Gilles Deleuze’s theory of nomadology, which he developed in collaboration with Felix Guattari. We will seek to establish how Arjie embodies the Deleuzian “nomad thought” which allows him to navigate between various physical, metaphorical, and conceptual spaces and categories, with little to no success in the project of assimilation. We will also comment on how Arjie’s own lack of a fixed space is a direct consequence of his inhabiting multiple spaces at the same time, which mirrors the ontological condition of this novel itself, which also cohabits so many generic geographies that it runs the risk of becoming a non-genre. Read this way the mish-mash of spaces, both on Arjie’s level and the generic level, serves to exemplify the notion of thrownness of Martin Heidegger who states in *Being and Time* that “the ‘essence’ of Dasein lies in its existence” (qtd. in Tally Jr. 65), wherein Dasein represents the condition of being in the world itself. However, this perceived Lukacsian “transcendental homelessness,” again at both the individual and generic levels, does not degenerate into an apolitical hopelessness or helplessness. In fact, this positioning at the outside, or forever-in-betweenness allows Arjie and the novel to be transgressive and occupy an agential vantage point. This links up the first portion with the second portion of the paper which specifically deals with how the private space of Arjie gets intertwined with the public sphere, with the

latter constantly impinging upon the former in various ways through racial discrimination, gendered expectations, and ethnic violence. In this latter portion of the paper, we have argued for an expressly political positioning of the author Shyam Selvadurai, very much engaged with the pressing cultural contemporary scenario of Sri Lanka and actively involved in the process of observing, interpreting, and representing this scenario for his readers. Selvadurai thus engages in a literary map-making exercise, which results in Sri Lanka emerging as a textual space, an “imagined space,” thus leading to the generation of an alternative discourse to the dubious claims forwarded in the official channels of history of the nation. Robert T. Tally Jr. in his work *Spatiality* describes this exercise in the following terms:

(L)iterature ... functions as a form of mapping, offering its readers descriptions of places, situating them in a kind of imaginary space, and providing points of reference by which they can orient themselves and understand the world in which they live ... Literature provides a way of mapping the spaces encountered or imagined in the author’s experience ... the stories frequently perform the function of maps. (2)

As hinted above, this literary cartography of Sri Lanka happens through the narrative forces aimed at characterization of Arjie, thus the exercise and its results seem only incidental and secondary to the demands of the genres of bildungsroman, children’s story, and school story, all of which energies are harnessed towards Arjie, the protagonist. So the personal space of the young boy becomes a medium to explore the public space that implicates the whole of Sri Lanka, a process that is symptomatic of the outer world impinging upon the inner and the inescapability of this process. This narrative stance of focalization on an individual for exploration of larger forces at work, which is not unlike Frederic Jameson’s practice of “cognitive mapping,” “which would allow the individual subject to locate itself and to represent a seemingly unrepresentable social totality” (Tally Jr. 155), links up well with Ricardo Padron’s assertion of superiority of literary cartography over geographical cartography:

By telling stories that take place in them, or by sculpting characters associated with them, (literary texts) give those places life and meaning. Indeed, any iconographic maps of the worlds...might even miss the point, by reducing their rich engagement with space and place to the fixity of a cartographic image.” (Tally Jr. 3)

The novelistic discourse of Selvadurai’s work is largely dependent upon the multiplicity of spatial locations emerging and intersecting with each other, so much so that the whole spatial

structure of the novel seems to derive its thrust from the seemingly binary oppositional relationship these spaces share with each other, lending a very complex spatial arrangement to the novel. The most fundamental spaces in so far as Arjie's character development is concerned are the Physical Spaces--School (Victorian Academy), Family Home, and Paradise Beach Resort; Metaphorical Spaces--Childhood and Innocence, Adulthood and Common-Sense; Conceptual Spaces--Heterosexuality and Homosexuality, Masculinity and Femininity; Fictional Spaces--game of bride-ride, Henry Newbolt's poems. It could be argued that the Metaphorical or Conceptual Spaces that have been pointed out have the potential of being as fictive, performative, voyeuristic, and exhibitionistic as the game of bride-ride, which allows Arjie to "leave the constraints of myself and ascend into another, more brilliant, and more beautiful self, a self to whom this day was dedicated, and around whom the world, represented by cousins putting flowers in my hair, draping the palu, seemed to revolve" (Selvadurai 4-5). However the intention of this paper is not to obfuscate categorization and deconstruct the exclusivity of compartments but to facilitate this very categorization of spatialities to understand how they contribute to the process of meaning-making.

The physical spaces, the most visible and obvious sites operating according to the notions of middle class respectability which becomes a necessary precondition for a nationalist and patriotic agenda, are the first spaces where Arjie undergoes the process of seclusion, exclusion, and alienation from the majoritarian discourse, thereby making possible his emergence as the "impossible subject" of the nation, as Gayatri Gopinath in her book *Impossible Diasporas: Queer Diasporas and South Asian Public Cultures* puts it. However this process of exclusion is accompanied by a sense of empowerment as well, because these sites inhere potentialities of transgression as well. It is in the family home where Arjie explores his transgender, and possibly transvestite, desires, when playing the game of bride-ride. The space of school serves the purpose of ironic commentary on the masculinization agenda of Arjie's father because it is here that Arjie meets with Shehan and embarks upon his sexual exploration. The spaces of the school and family home get intertwined when Arjie's first same-sex encounter receives its expression in the latter space, with a person who distinctively belongs to the former, Shehan. What is telling is that this first act of sexual encounter takes place at the margins of the family home, "a neglected space ... that very alveoli of domestic non-space" (239) in Tariq Jazeel's words. This symbolic ousting of forbidden taboo desires is replicated in Arjie's father's Paradise Beach Resort, where the process of solicitation and pandering happens out on the beach, which Appa willingly turns a

blind eye to. Crucially for Arjie, he witnesses his father's hypocrisy and realizes the transgressive potential that is immanent in every space, no matter how sacred and sacrosanct they are upheld to be. As Jazeel points out in "Because Pigs Can Fly: Sexuality, Race, and the Geographies of Difference in Shyam Selvadurai's *Funny Boy*":

Two familiar middle-class Sri Lankan spaces--the family home and the school ... these everyday geographies regulate and normalize carnal desire in a society which still operates anti-homosexual legislation. It also suggests how the erosion of the meanings of these familiar spaces is a tactic central to the main protagonist's sexual liberation. (231)

Arjie, the precocious young boy, is more than adept at this task--"erosion of the meanings"--as we see that through his ingenuity and imaginativeness he is always able to discover "some new way to enliven (a well-loved fairy story), some new twist to the plot of a familiar tale" (Selvadurai 4). His creative imaginativeness then assumes the shape of a very credible threat to the prescribed meanings given by the chauvinist, sexist, masculinist ideology to the space of the backyard of family home, an arena reserved only for girls. The complementary space to this is the field in front of the house, where boys play cricket. The implications for mobility, or the lack of it, in these complementary yin-yang spaces is too obvious to be commented upon. What is interesting is how Arjie de-territorializes and reterritorializes these strictly regimented Cartesian spaces, until Tanuja "Her Fatness" arrives on the scene and reclaims the feminine territory from Arjie. Tanuja, recently returned from the West, espouses the no-nonsense, unimaginative heteronormativity, another conceptual space which Arjie has to negotiate with. On a formal level, the novel also breaks away from a utopian, idealistic tone with imminent arrival of Tanuja. Arjie observes, right before Tanuja enters onto the scene that "the remembered innocence of childhood ... is a picture made even more sentimental by the loss of all that was associated with them ... (t)hose Sundays, when I was seven, marked the beginning of my exile from the world I loved" (5). This wistful, nostalgic tone taken right before Tanuja, who stands in for the hetero-norm, enters, is indicative of the troubled waters this novelistic ship is about to chart into now. With Tanuja's arrival, Arjie's difference from the norm will be exacerbated even further and he must now navigate these geographies of differences between Heterosexuality and Homosexuality, Masculinity and Femininity which will take him away from the "safe harbor of childhood towards the precarious waters of adult life" (5). In fact, Tanuja's arrival makes Arjie embark upon the process of learning the codes of this adult world which revolve around the opposition

between forces of Secularism and Fundamentalism, Socialism and Neoliberalism, Tamilian and Sinhalese languages, which process will ultimately act as a catalyst for his initiation into this world and the concomitant rejection of those aspects of this adult world which do not fit in well with his own ontology of difference. In an exemplary case of his deification of this difference, Arjie rejects both Lokubandara, the stand-in for nationalist Sinhalese fundamentalist sentiments as well as Black Tie, the Williamsian “residual” of colonial secularist thought, who is the lesser evil of the two and the only choice for Tamilians in the microscopic world of Victorian Academy. But Arjie realizes that:

The taken-for-granted microgeographical theatres of everyday life constitute crucial technologies that attempt to discipline his body, to regulate sexual desires, to safeguard heteronormative masculinity, thus producing in this case a boy who feels “funny.” (Jazeel 234)

Arjie is the “funny” one in the family—“the ambiguity of the word “funny” disorients Arjie’s sense of meaning and comprehension. When Arjie hears the word uttered it is inflected with ridicule and his parents react with shame and disgust” (Jayawickrama 121). The idea of fun or laughter being the subversive other that destabilizes the existing hierarchies makes our protagonist the inhabitant of the psychological space of the “Other,” where, to appropriate W.E.B. Du Bois’ postcolonial terminology, he embodies “double consciousness”—(a) his emergent/latent same sex desires, and (b) the shame that he feels is associated with the taboo. At the beginning of his process of learning the codes of the adult world, Arjie is as much a product of the masculinist patriarchal ideology as he is a victim of it. He is unable to imagine his mother as anything other than a goddess and imagines only the sentimental, mawkish, feminized responses from Radha Aunty in a courtship. The shame and guilt that he feels at “betraying” his family members after his sexual encounter with Shehan are indicative of the fact that initially, Arjie is both an insider as well as an outsider, both a partaker of and a conscientious objector to the geopolitics of Sri Lankan society. However, *Funny Boy* is the tale of Arjie’s quest to unlearn whatever he has learned about sexuality and gender roles. Soon, “guilt and fear fade and it becomes clear that this was a necessary unsettling of the trust and respectability invested in the home-space, a subversion of the impossible demands that domestic patriarchy and gender expectations make of Arjie” (Jazeel 240). Arjie has to inhabit, investigate, and then reject multiple local and localized spaces which resemble Foucauldian capillaries of power which enable the power relations of the hegemonic order to be suffused throughout the social space rather than just at the nation-state level, which is

immediately visible. These localized spaces serve as microscopic renditions of the same hegemon, power-structure, and ideological relations as the macroscopic spaces, “revealing how the nation’s political rift is similar to its social upheavals” (Lesk 31). Arjie’s “persistent ‘disidentification’ with such topographies, spatialities, and their political goals ... (are) ... crucial to the re-articulation of democratic contestation” (Jazeel 246). But disidentification can come only after identification and Arjie’s subversive treatment and negotiation of his psychological of “Other” and numerous other conceptual, metaphorical, symbolic, and physical spaces that police his “transgressive otherness” becomes crucial for the ultimate coming-of-age.

Arjie, in this process, becomes the Deleuzian nomad, inhabiting multiple spaces at a time, which resembles Selvadurai's own position as a Sri Lankan diasporic writer, writing in exile from Canada, after receiving his training in North American academia, writing about Sri Lanka. The problem of neatly categorizing his "hyphenated identity ..., an in-betweenness" (Bakshi 13) empowers Selvadurai to transcend and challenge generic limitations as well, resulting in a nomadic work of art. Kaustav Bakshi in "Funny Boy and the Pleasure of Breaking Rules: Bending Genre and Gender in ‘The Best School of All’” convincingly argues that Selvadurai's text derives its disruptive potential from the "rule-breaking that takes place not only at the narrative, but also at the generic level" (13). Bakshi applauds Selvadurai for his successful "queering a traditionally masculinist genre of the English canon" (3). In a similar argument about genre of novel, Katherine Bell in her essay "Breaking the Narrative Ties that Bind in Shyam Selvadurai's *Funny Boy*" speaks about how this novel departs from the classic bildungsroman, which depends upon the soul-nation allegory--"to come to age means to work on inner development so that *vernunft*--the spirit of the private self--might fuse with the evolving socio-political body" (259). If "the trajectory of the Bildungsroman joins the singular protagonist to the collective cultural movement" (Bell 271), the obviousness of the failure at such integration of Arjie with the nation's destiny foregoes any commentary whatsoever. What is important however is that Arjie takes a conscious decision to not emulate the alternative to this national spirit either --nation-space as conceived by the LTTE revolutionaries who would willingly support Black Tie's secular agenda-, the Tamilian zeitgeist, when in a representative space of school, the microcosmic spatial reflection of political turbulence in Sri Lanka, Arjie refuses the chance to embrace the opportunity of "representability," wherein "the value of the youth lies" (Bell 259) in a classic bildungsroman, the opportunity afforded to him by Black Tie. The resulting novel thus

shuttles between various generic geographies--school story, counter-bildungsroman, novel, collection of short stories, diary entries etc. This novel is the generic equivalent of both Arjie and Selvadurai, the Deleuzian nomads, who traverse various and vast fields for fun. The result is a "disruptive queer narrative that effectively transcribes the homoerotic onto a site of approved homosociality ... Selvadurai's revisiting of the English school story invests the genre with a disruptive potential unknown to its original form" (Bakshi 1).

The various frameworks and their attendant spaces that the novel wittingly or unwittingly investigates--the linguistic, the legal, the economic, the racial, the communal--all serve to highlight a highly regularized, deeply divisive, and politically turbulent Sri Lanka, which rightly becomes equated in the mind of our innocent protagonist with the ruling dispensation. The disturbing trend is that this ruling dispensation does not even make an attempt to mask its discriminatory practices--the revision of the Constitution by the Sri Lankan government in 1972 to preserve the imagined privileges of Sinhalese majority and its religion Buddhism through state protection being emblematic of its unabashed racism and communalism. Sri Lanka thus emerges as a deeply fraught place, inhabited by opposing extremist camps and those caught in the crossfire. Selvadurai's literary mapping project is expressly concerned with delineating the national contours of Sri Lanka and he highlights the discriminatory aspects which effectively contribute to the socio-political reality of the country. However, Selvadurai's intention is also to map the psychological terrain of his child protagonist and there the questions of gender, sexuality, even genre become as important, if not more, as the larger reality, so much so that the latter often appears merely incidental than rigorously maintained. Emily S. Davis in "The Betrayals of Neo-Liberalism in Shyam Selvadurai's *Funny Boy*" quotes the novelist at length:

I felt I couldn't get into the novel, when told through the child's perspective, the sophisticated explanation of what is going on, how the "liberalization" of the economy played into communal tension, how everything was being taken from the poor, with the government's consequent need for scapegoating the minorities ... It wasn't possible to bring that in through Arjie's consciousness." (217)

The impossibility of a direct sophisticated exploration results largely from the generic constraints. Therefore all these concerns are merely suggested than delved into in detail. However it is in its suggestiveness, evocativeness, and deceptive simplicity where the force of the argument gains its clarity. In the narrative map-making of *Funny Boy*, the perceived innocence of Arjie serves as a literary tool to bring out the geographical divisions of Sri

Lanka on the basis of ethnicity which leads to a "territorialized geography," the uneven terrain of Sri Lankan political sphere inhabited by conniving, politicking, populist, murderous leaders, qualities which bring out Arjie's innocence in sharp relief.

During the course of the novel, Arjie experiences what Tally Jr. refers to a "cartographic anxiety, or spatial perplexity that appears to be part of our fundamental being-in-the-world" (1). To overcome this spatial disorientation, a marker or a sign like that of "You Are Here" in a map is most useful. This "sign," in the case of Arjie is his queer identity which acts as both a map to navigate his surroundings as well as his own forever ontological position. Queerness then acts as both the symptom of his outsider status as well as the key (the map) that explains to him the whats and whys of his existence. Queerness is both his map as well as the key through which he understands and makes sense of this map; "queerness then becomes a path of political resistance against heteronormativity and refusing to engage in traditional essentialist identity politics" (Aute 1). Moving very close to R. Raj Rao's assertion that "gay fiction needs to be mapped differently, with sexuality rather than nationality, race, or gender as the determinants of identity, so that if a writer is gay it does not matter that he comes from the developed or developing world, or is white or black" (118), our constant harping upon Arjie's queer identity is aimed towards understanding his subject-position as a strategic essentialist position, to appropriate Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's postcolonial phrase.

Colombo, the geospace, is the cartographic equivalent of Arjie's location. But this statement refuses to shed any considerable light when compared with the novel's unraveling of Colombo as an organism, a textual space which showcases the conventional attitudes of patriarchy, sexism, ethnic violence, and homophobia, exposing the geospace for what it truly is, in all its complexity. This information the cartographic entity refuses (or is unable) to divulge and appears to be closer to the official history of Colombo and by extension Sri Lanka, which cannot accept this reality. As opposed to that, the textual Colombo in *Funny Boy* reveals a fictive reality of a society laden with various social ills and appears closer to the truth. The irony and hypocrisy of labeling Arjie and Shehan the "ills and burdens of society" is all too evident in this non-propagandistic, unfiltered, de-sanitized vision of Colombo. This spatial reconstruction then vies with official history for authenticity. Literary spatiality thus lends itself to re-writing of history--a New Historicist endeavor. The "black-dots" on the pages of *Funny Boy* thus produce a highly charged, pulsating, threatening, volatile, destabilizing space that possesses the power to give the lie to history. Thus, Selvadurai is able to offer a literary space that questions itself--"by reappropriating the genre

he shows how postcolonial nation *ought* to be imagined--by acknowledging differences, sexual or ethnic, and not in monolithic homogeneous terms" (Bakshi 13).

What we have attempted here looks like Bertrand Westphal's preferred mode of Geocriticism which "attempts to pry criticism loose from an egocentrism, with respect to either the writer or the reader" (Tally Jr. 142). We have been more concerned with the author's apprehension and arrangement of various spaces throughout the novel, to reveal the political, economic, and highly gendered structuring of Sri Lankan society. However, the aim is not to see whether Selvadurai achieves or what he sets out to do--gauging that and assessing a work on the basis of that is not only impossible but also undesirable, even a fallacy for some--but the final effect of the novel in its unwitting or deliberate spatial analysis; what Sri Lanka looks like after reading the novel, to ponder on that question has been our endeavor--a highly repressed, striated (both in commonplace sense of "divisive" as well as a highly specialized meaning the word has in Geophilosophy), discriminatory, sexist, neo-liberalist, capitalist world order. In this world order, Arjie initially functions as the epitome of both "nomadic thought" as well as "state philosophy." To quote Robert Tally Jr. at length:

Deleuze distinguishes between nomads, who are understood as such because of their border crossings or re-crossings, but also because of their conceptual demolishing of the boundary lines themselves, and the state and "state philosophy," which are defined in terms of sedentary ordering, spatial measurement, the segmenting of the rank and file, and a conceptual gridding that attempts to assign stable places. In their occupation of space, their deconstruction of boundaries, and movement across surfaces Deleuze's nomads continually map and remap, altering spaces even as they traverse them. They are, in Deleuze's language, forces of de-territorialization, unsettling to a greater or lesser extent the metric ordering of space that is subject to the power of the state." (136)

As we have seen, in the years growing up, Arjie inhabits both the thought-spaces, but only to later negotiate himself out completely of the limiting state philosophy, which ends in a poignant realization that he is forever going to be outside and never reconcile with his family members, who, after their own respective processes of negotiation, have re-acquired the state thought-space. Arjie's own map-making and its negotiation is representative of him moving towards the "smooth space" of a nomad, his own smoothening out of the striations, so to speak. However, as a word of caution against liberation that apparently comes in the wake of acquiring smooth space, Deleuze and Guattari state that the "smooth spaces are not in

themselves liberatory. But the struggle is changed or displaced in them, and life reconstitutes its stakes, confronts new obstacles, invents new paces, switches adversaries" (qtd. in Tally Jr. 138). Arjie's struggle then is more of a political re-alignment than a romantic acceptance of his queer identity in a vacuum.

The genre of bildungsroman itself is appropriated for a "smooth" spatial philosophical argument, which makes it transgressive and thus a counter-bildungsroman. "This concept of space allows for a more dynamic or transgressive movement that (this novel) explores in its frequently problematic representations of space, in which the lines between fictional and real spaces are constantly crossed and re-crossed" (Tally Jr. 141). What we have in the end is a complex matrix of Edward Soja's "real," "imagined," and "real-and-imagined spaces" (qtd. in Tally Jr. 146).

Works Cited and Consulted

- Aute, Kailas B. "Study of Spatiality in Shyam Selvadurai's Novel--*Funny Boy*." *International Journal of Multifaceted and Multilingual Studies*, vol. 3, no. 7, pp. 1-5.
- Bakshi, Kaustav. "*Funny Boy* and the Pleasure of Breaking Rules: Bending Genre and Gender in 'The Best School of All.'" *Postcolonial Text*, vol. 10, no. 3 & 4, 2015. *Research Gate*.
- Bell, Katherine. "Breaking the Narrative Ties that Bind in Shyam Selvadurai's *Funny Boy*." *ESC*, vol. 38, no. 3-4, September/December 2012, pp. 255-275.
- Davis, Emily S. "The Betrayals of Neoliberalism in Shyam Selvadurai's *Funny Boy*." *Textual Practice*, vol. 29, no. 2, 2015, pp. 215-233.
- Gopinath, Gayatri. *Impossible Desires: Queer Diasporas and South Asian Public Cultures*. Duke UP, 2005.
- Jayawickrama, Sharanya. "At Home in the Nation? Negotiating Identity in Shyam Selvadurai's *Funny Boy*." *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, vol. 40, no. 2, June 2005, pp. 123-139.
- Jazeel, Tariq. "Because Pigs Can Fly: Sexuality, Race, and the Geographies of Difference in Shyam Selvadurai's *Funny Boy*." *Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography*, vol. 12, no. 2, pp. 231-249.
- Lesk, Andrew. "Ambivalence at the Site of Authority: Desire and Difference in *Funny Boy*." *Canadian Literature*, vol. 190, Autumn 2006, pp. 31-46.
- Rao, R. Raj. "Because Most People Marry Their Own Kind: A Reading of Shyam Selvadurai's *Funny Boy*." *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature*, vol. 28, no. 1, January 1997, pp. 117-128.
- Selvadurai, Shyam. *Funny Boy*. Penguin, 1994.
- Tally Jr, Robert T. *Spatiality*. Routledge, 2013.