recalls, ‘instantly of death’. Indeed the alien fish, whose world is unknown to us, unlike

In the book’s introduction, he describes the horror of witnessing a whole steamed fish
fish-eating, which, particularly as a child, can seem repulsive, even among fish-eaters.

Subramanian’s study begins with a memory of the very real and familiar experience of

rate trips) from Bengal to Gujarat.

along India’s rich coastline (which he made in a number of sepa-

remains something unquestionably magical about his journey

like so many mythic piscine odysseys that have gone before, there

of fish-tales is intended to be ‘plain, old-fashioned journalism’,

inspiration for his first book from ‘the deep’. While his travelogue

New Delhi-based journalist Samanth Subramanian, too, took his

trawl up endless wonders.

throughout history, from Somadeva to Rushdie. Imagined fish

infinite keeper of unknown treasures – has inspired Indian writers

Following Fish: Travels around the Indian Coast

Samanth Subramanian.

Following Fish

in the practice of fishing among younger generations all become ever-growing realities.

futures are envisioned for fishing societies, as overfishing, imported fish, and a decline

and uncatchably fast in their many forms. Pictures are painted from colonial pasts, and

Fish are culture, commerce, sport, history, and society; curative, giant, famous, notorious,

other ‘animals’ is one that we do not hear, or touch, or see particularly well, unless dead,

and is therefore known best by its smell; a powerful, recognisable one that exists at the less

pleasant end of the olfactory spectrum. (The author’s child-self would no doubt recoil to

know that one day he would be swallowing a live fish for part of this book.)

While Following Fish is intensely flavoured with fish eating (pink fish with marbled flesh

washed down with salt-battered age-old recipes, so well described that you can taste the
turmeric), it ‘goes beyond considering fish merely as food’, as the author promises.

Fish are culture, commerce, sport, history, and society; curative, giant, famous, notorious,

and uncatchably fast in their many forms. Pictures are painted from colonial pasts, and

futures are envisioned for fishing societies, as overfishing, imported fish, and a decline

in the practice of fishing among younger generations all become ever-growing realities.

Subramanian’s ‘travel book’ is a testament to his philosophy of what travel writing should
do; that is, destroy preconceptions, and discover ‘the relative and shifting nature of truth’.

Following Fish is a proud, honest, distinct study of diversity of place, people, tastes, envi-

ronments, and of memories of a loved nation, where toddy shops, fishing boats, chaotic

fish markets and strangers’ kitchens become places of nostalgia for the tastes and longings

of simpler times.

Envisioning the Indian City
Spaces of Encounter

Images for the Month

The Bengal Levee (1792)
Hand coloured etching by James Gillray, after a sketch possibly by James Moffat, showing Lord Cornwallis in a crowd of sycophants.

Source of painting and description: British Library Online

Exhibition

“McCluskie’s Picture Map of Calcutta”
E. T. McCluskie
Physical Description: 520 x 512 mm
Courtesy of the British Library online catalogue

Progress Report

In January 2014, following a very successful symposium and workshop at Jadavpur Uni-
versity, the ETIC project welcomed Dr Ijaru Jazael (Department of Geography, UCL) and
Dr Andy Davies (Department of Geography and Planning, University of Liverpool) to the
Liverpool Reading Group to speak on ‘Encountering Pondicherry’.

In February 2014, students from Jadavpur University launched Soundscapes of Kolkat-
a (http://kolkatasounds.org/). This project aims to understand Kolkata through its myr-
iad sounds that incessantly permeate its city spaces. Cleo Roberts (ETIC PhD research-
er) attended the South Asia Archive and Library Group Conference at The University of
Cambridge making important links with the organisation. Professor Sukanta Chaudhuri
presented ‘Many Tagores: Travels through a Variorum Website’. His talk introduced, ‘Bi-
chitra’ (http://bicchitra.jdvu.ac.in/index.php) the online Tagore Variorum, the world’s
largest website of its kind supported by the India’s Ministry of Culture and the Houghton
Library, Harvard University.

In March 2014, Sujana Mukherjee (ETIC project fellow) visited the UK for a research trip.
As part of the Liverpool Reading Group, he presented his current work alongside Cleo
Roberts. Catherine Eagleton (Head of Asian and African Studies, British Library) intro-
Mukherjee spent time at the British Library working on McCluskie’s Picture Map of Cal-
cutta and Romanauth Das’s Bengali Hand map of Calcutta, and other texts relevant to
his research.

Professor Nandini Das (Department of English, University of Liverpool), Cleo Roberts
and Sujana Mukherjee met with Dr Kevin Greenbank (Centre for South Asian Studies,
University of Cambridge) in March 2014. The group was given a tour of the Centre’s ar-
chives and shown rare photographic and film footage of India. Cleo Roberts will be con-
sulting the collection further later in the year.

The Flickr call out continues and welcomes contributions of photographs of the Indian
city (http://www.flickr.com/groups/eticproject/).

(Prepared by Cleo Roberts.)

Recommended Reading

Samanth Subramanian. Following Fish: Travels around the Indian Coast. New Delhi: Pen-
guin, 2010, 184 pages. Rs. 250/-(

(Reviewed by Georgie Carroll of SOAS, University of London)

The association of stories with water, and particularly the sea – an

infinite keeper of unknown treasures – has inspired Indian writers

throughout history, from Somadeva to Rushdie. Imagined fish-
er-folk have simply to cast their nets into the sapphire ripples to

travel up endless wonders.

New Delhi-based journalist Samanth Subramanian, too, took his

inspiration for his first book from ‘the deep’. While his travelogue

of fish-tales is intended to be ‘plain, old-fashioned journalism’,

like so many mythic piscine odysseys that have gone before, there

remains something unquestionably magical about his journey

along India’s rich coastline (which he made in a number of sepa-

rate trips) from Bengal to Gujarat.

Subramanian’s study begins with a memory of the very real and familiar experience of

fish-eating, which, particularly as a child, can seem repulsive, even among fish-eaters.

In the book’s introduction, he describes the horror of witnessing a whole steamed fish

on a platter at an adults’ dinner party – its flesh a ‘wretched grey’ that reminded him, he

recalls, ‘instantly of death’. Indeed the alien fish, whose world is unknown to us, unlike

other ‘animals’ is one that we do not hear, or touch, or see particularly well, unless dead,

and is therefore known best by its smell; a powerful, recognisable one that exists at the less

pleasant end of the olfactory spectrum. (The author’s child-self would no doubt recoil to

know that one day he would be swallowing a live fish for part of this book.)

While Following Fish is intensely flavoured with fish eating (pink fish with marbled flesh

washed down with salt-battered age-old recipes, so well described that you can taste the
turmeric), it ‘goes beyond considering fish merely as food’, as the author promises.

Fish are culture, commerce, sport, history, and society; curative, giant, famous, notorious,

and uncatchably fast in their many forms. Pictures are painted from colonial pasts, and

futures are envisioned for fishing societies, as overfishing, imported fish, and a decline

in the practice of fishing among younger generations all become ever-growing realities.

Subramanian’s ‘travel book’ is a testament to his philosophy of what travel writing should
do; that is, destroy preconceptions, and discover ‘the relative and shifting nature of truth’.

Following Fish is a proud, honest, distinct study of diversity of place, people, tastes, envi-

ronments, and of memories of a loved nation, where toddy shops, fishing boats, chaotic

fish markets and strangers’ kitchens become places of nostalgia for the tastes and longings

of simpler times.

ETIC Project. University of Liverpool, UK, and Jadavpur University, India. Funded by UGC-UKIERI. http://eticproject.wordpress.com