

Policy, and her nine co-authors. The problem, they explain, is that some aquaculture *increases* the pressure on ocean fisheries.

Aquaculture has grown rapidly in recent years, producing 29 million metric tons of farmed fish and shellfish in 1997, more than twice the tonnage of a decade earlier (but still no more than a third or so of the 85 to 95 million metric tons of wild fish caught each year.) Roughly 90 percent of the world's fish farming is done in Asia, particularly China. Family and cooperative farms raise carp for local or regional consumption, while commercial farms produce salmon, shrimp, and other highly valued fish for tables in Europe, North America, and Japan.

But aquaculture's *net* contribution to the world's fish supplies has been much smaller than its gross one, the authors point out. In 1997, about 10 million metric tons of small wild fish—Atlantic herring, chub mackerel, Japanese anchovy, and other species—were taken from the oceans and used in compounds fed to the farmed fish. Modern compound feeds are not much used in the farming of carp (which are plant eaters), but they are needed in intensive commercial aquaculture. Commercially farmed fish are so crowded together that they cannot subsist on natural food sources alone. With the 10

types of fish most commonly farmed, nearly two kilograms of wild fish are required, on average, for every kilogram of fish ultimately harvested.

Taking ever-increasing amounts of small fish from the ocean to expand the supply of salmon and other commercially valuable fish, say Naylor and her co-authors, "would clearly be disastrous for marine ecosystems." Using small fish for fish food also reduces the supplies available for human consumption. Though humans find some small fish, such as menhaden, distasteful, they eat other varieties, such as sardine, anchovy, and mackerel. In Southeast Asia, these fish serve as important sources of protein.

Aquaculture also can adversely affect wild fisheries indirectly, Naylor and her colleagues say. Hundreds of thousands of acres of mangroves and coastal wetlands in Asia have been transformed into fish and shrimp ponds, resulting in the loss of "essential ecosystem services," including nursery habitats for fish, coastal protection, and flood control.

If aquaculture is to remain a net plus for global fish supplies, conclude the authors, governments must prevent it from degrading coastal areas, and fish farmers must curtail their use of wild fish as feed.

## ARTS & LETTERS

### *Toasting a Black Russian*

"Soul Man" by Anne Lounsbery, in *Transition* (2000: No. 84),  
69 Dunster St., Cambridge, Mass. 02138. ([www.TransitionMagazine.com](http://www.TransitionMagazine.com))

It's a curious fact, often ignored in the past by white Americans, that Alexander Pushkin (1799–1837), the celebrated father of Russian literature, was descended from a black African slave. Pushkin himself was proud of his African heritage—and African Americans have long been proud of *him*, writes Lounsbery, a lecturer in Russian literature at Harvard University.

Pushkin's great-grandfather, Avram Petrovich Gannibal, "was probably born in what is now Cameroon, just south of Lake Chad," she says. "By his own account, he was the son of a local prince. Abducted as a child from his native city and taken to Constantinople around 1705, Gannibal was acquired as a slave

by a Russian diplomat." At the court of Peter the Great, his intelligence so impressed the tsar that he made him his godson and sent him to France to be educated. Under Peter's daughter, the Empress Elizabeth, Gannibal became an engineer and a general in the Russian army. His son also became a general, and his granddaughter, "known in high society as 'the beautiful Creole,'" Lounsbery says, became Pushkin's mother.

In *Eugene Onegin* (1831), Pushkin reflected on his heritage, representing himself as an African in exile longing to live again "under the skies of my Africa," only then to sigh for "gloomy Russia, where I suffered, where I

loved, where I have buried my heart.” For the poet, says Lounsbury, embracing Africa became “a way . . . to reflect on his feelings of alienation—aesthetic, personal, and political—from a Russian society in which he [did] not feel entirely at home.”

Had Pushkin ignored his African heritage, she writes, “it is quite likely that others would have done the same, since race—or, at least, blackness—was not a particular obsession of early-19th-century Russian society.” Pushkin himself chose the nickname *afrikanets* (“the African”). He also used the words *negr* and *arap* (which referred to all black Africans) in describing both his ancestor and himself, and he termed American slaves “my brothers *negry*.”

The Russian national poet “first entered American consciousness as a black man,” Lounsbury notes. In an 1847 essay in an abolitionist newspaper, American poet John Greenleaf Whittier pointed to Pushkin, she says, “as evidence of blacks’ intellectual abilities.” And Pushkin became an “enduring presence in black American culture.” In 1925, the Urban League’s official publication instituted a Pushkin Prize for outstanding black poets. In 1937, the 136th Street Library in Harlem marked the centenary of Pushkin’s death with an exhibit of works by



*In America, said a Harlem newspaper in 1929, Pushkin would have been a victim of Jim Crow laws.*

and about him. Today, the African American Museum in Cleveland has a permanent Pushkin exhibition, and magazines from *Ebony* to *Black Scholar* often run articles on his life and works.

## *Lost in the Funhouse*

“Welcome to the Funhouse” by Jed Perl, in *The New Republic* (June 19, 2000), 1220 19th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

Once it was a center for the collection, study, care, and exhibition of fine art—but not any more, protests Perl, art editor of the *New Republic*. Today, the modern art museum—as exemplified by London’s gigantic new Tate Modern—has become “a funhouse,” in which great painting and sculpture of the last 100 years take a back seat to moving images, electronic noise, “wrap-around drama,” and the museum building itself.

At Tate Modern, which opened in May in a vast transformed industrial building on the south bank of the Thames, Perl writes, “there are three enormous floors of exhibition space, containing some 80 galleries, but only enough classic modern work to fill three or four rooms.” To disguise the paucity, “the curators have

reached for themes that enable them to bulk up their classic holdings with humungous recent works, or else contextualized the random masterpiece until it seems less a work of art than an illustration in a history book.” Though chronology is “the backbone of the historical sense,” the galleries are not arranged chronologically, but according to dubious, ill-fitting categories, such as “Still Life/Real Life/Object.” The museum’s whole mentality, Perl complains, “seems far more keyed to movies or popular entertainment than to painting or sculpture of the past hundred years.”

Tate Modern (not to be confused with the old Tate, designed to showcase British art and now known as “Tate Britain”) is not Perl’s only “funhouse” museum. The Pompidou