In all likelihood this anticipates the Symbolists' rejection of civic roles for art. Instead of Pushkin the mouthpiece of the Russian populace we soon were treated to Pushkin the mysterious, in effect, the exclusive possession of the elite. And then there was the issue of how to deal with Pushkin in the Soviet Union, where the poet eventually — and rightly — supplanted Lenin as the mythic focus of the country to the point of becoming a virtual saint, a one-time dabbler in atheism who somehow came to be regarded as a martyr who accepted his suffering with "smirenie" in the fashion of Sts. Boris and Gleb. That this does not prevent Pushkin from also playing a role in much profane culture, shows the "multivalence" of his image.

Debreczeny's survey of the many aspects of Pushkin's cult exemplifies Alexander Argyros' dictum that art is a society's means of selecting its future. The question becomes which Pushkin we select and what we make of his work. With all of the cognitive tools that Debreczeny has put to use in this most welcome volume, he makes it all the more possible for us to use Pushkin and other great authors as an index of their nation's character.

Brett Cooke


In a conversation several years ago, an acquaintance and I were struggling to define the narrative poem (poema), and we concluded that not enough has been written on the subject. I recalled only a few studies: Zhirmunskii's *Bairon i Pushkin*, Mann's *Poetika russkogo romantizma*, and a short, probably not widely read, introduction to the anthology *Russkaia romanticheskaia poema* by Andrei Nemzer. Perhaps Luc Beaudoin had a similar conversation, and he certainly saw a similar need for such study. According to his preface, Professor Beaudoin began *Resetting the Margins: Russian Romantic Verse Tales and the Idealized Woman* at roughly the same time as I had my conversation, and the first thing one should observe about this work is that it speaks to a very real need in the study of Russian Romanticism.

*Resetting the Margins* does not define the entire genre but examines one aspect of it. Beaudoin focuses on two poets, Baratynskii and Pushkin, and the parameters of his study are narrow: the role of gender in these poets' narrative poetry and their semiotic coding of gender within the larger context of Romantic idealism and irony. The book consists of three sections: background and methodology; Baratynskii's *Eda, The Ball, and The Gypsy Girl*; Pushkin's "Southern Poems," the narrator in *Eugene Onegin* (not a poema but the epitome of Romantic verse narrative), and Tatiana, the heroine of *Onegin*.

After observations on Romantic idealism and irony, Beaudoin concludes chapter 1 with his theoretical arguments: "Irony becomes a deconstructive semiotic perspective on the Ideal of discourse. The signifier can never encompass the infinite — it can only decreate itself, thereby pointing at the semiotic
distance between it and the signified it sought to signify. . . . The question of perception is tied to the explicit or implicit judgments made by the narrator on his creations, while at the same time the issue of point of view is central to the dynamics of narratorial control over the reader of his creation. Each of these elements are [sic] part of a larger essential problematic in Romantic idealism — the question of gender, which defines all of the parameters listed above and ultimately decides the fate of all of the creation's participants" (p. 16). The argument next moves into psychoanalytic criticism: "Lacan's sign of Desire, the phallus, . . . becomes . . . the sign of masculine differentiation from Woman, which in turn becomes a void without a signifier. The phallus, as a result, becomes a signifier of the masculine appropriation of language itself" (p. 25). Such arguments evoke the names of Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, writing on German Romanticism, and Paul de Man and Tilottama Rajan, writing on Romantic rhetoric and discourse. Such critical reading, with its postmodern view of irony, broaches relatively new ground in Russian Romantic scholarship and places Beaudoin in the company of Monika Greenleaf and Daniel Ran-cour-Laferriere, both of whom Beaudoin cites frequently. Romantic irony is well suited for deconstructive criticism, though Friedrich Schlegel might have objected, and in the hands of a Russian Romanticist such criticism will be compelling to some and perhaps perplexing to others. *Eugene Onegin*, a critical litmus test, here becomes "a parody of Romantic poetics and its inherent philosophy of Romantic idealism and Romantic irony" (p. 208), with Tat'iana's letter being perhaps its most parodic element. In sum, *Resetting the Margins* is likely to appeal to anyone already sympathetic to such theoretical models but is unlikely to convince the non-believer. One's reaction to the citations above will surely typify one's reaction to the work as a whole.

*Resetting the Margins* contains admirable rigor, and the deep study of a select group of works merits commendation. Yet this focus can lead to two problems, if not necessarily weaknesses in argumentation. Beaudoin analyzes the issues of grammatical gender and case morphology so minutely that the analysis often becomes an arcane catalogue of pronouns in oblique cases. The scholarship is sound, but this analysis demands much of the reader, effectively prohibits readership outside of those with a command of Russian, and, most significantly, obscures some compelling points made along the way. In one specific example, Beaudoin makes a beautiful parallelism of wind, visions, dreams, and the heroine of Baratynskii's *The Gypsy Girl*, but the complexities of the preceding calculations and formulae rob the conclusion of the power that is its due. Second, after the introductory chapters Beaudoin generally eschews discussion of the larger Romantic context, and I even felt myself wishing for a digression or two. Contextual discussion of other Russian Romantics, Zhukovskii and Lermontov at least, would have been helpful; and similarly, as we are addressing Romantic irony, an occasional reference to the German tradition would solidify the argument.

Gender identity does represent a template for rendering Romantic idealism and irony; and prototypically operatic plots of the narrative poem — pursuit of an elusive woman, unrequited love, requited love that ends tragically — reflect