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ADAM DROZDEK

EMIN'S PATH TO SALVATION

It is not simple to determine Fedor Emin's early curriculum vitae since there are four published variants of his biography and his own account written as part of his application.¹ He is probably of foreign origin; he traveled a lot. In 1758, he was in London, where he converted to the Orthodox faith and in 1761 came to St. Petersburg to be hired by the college/ministry of foreign affairs. In 1763, he became an interpreter in the chancellery of Catherine II. He died in 1770.

When Emin discovered in himself a writer, he published in the short interval between 1763-1770 four original novels, which gave him a distinction as the first Russian novelist, a history of Russia, a history of the Ottoman empire, translations of fiction and nonfiction, a play, and a religious book; he also edited two journals: *Miscellany* and *Hell's Post*, to which he contributed his translations and original articles.

One work of Emin which is practically never discussed and even seldom mentioned today is *Path to salvation*, published posthumously in 1780. The work was widely popular until the twentieth century having dozens of editions, and in the eighteenth century alone there were eight editions. This popularity overshadowed the popularity of any other of his works, originals and translations, fiction and nonfiction, any of which had at best three editions and only in the eighteenth century (sometimes after his death).

¹ He was very likely born in 1735 in Poland (or in Hungary to a Polish mother or in Constantinople, possibly from Polish parents). He was probably educated by a Jesuit or in a Jesuit school and possibly in the Kiev academy. He traveled in Europe and Asia. He probably converted to Catholicism in Lisbon and then to Orthodoxy in London, E[вгений] Б. Бешенковский, *Жизнь Федора Эмина, XVIII век* 11 (1976), 186–188, 198–201. That a lot of Polish and Ukrainian words and phrases were used in his works and the fact that he did not know Turkish point in the direction of the Polish or Ukrainian origin, p. 189; Мария Ди Сальво, *Несколько замечаний о языке романов Федора Эмина*, in Э. Малек (ed.), *Русская проза эпохи просвещения*, Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego 1996, 27–30.

Path to salvation

A fairly reliable part of Emin's biography begins with the account of his conversion to Orthodoxy. It is not quite certain whether it was a conversion from Catholicism, Islam, or from irreligion, but Emin certainly treated this event very seriously, not only as a means of becoming a Russian citizen active in governmental service, but as an expression of his spiritual desire. This desire is expressed very vividly in the *Path to salvation*, a book-long advice of how to assure for oneself the entry to the blissful side of the hereafter. The book is, of course, designed as advice to every person; however, it is quite cleverly set as a speech to Emin's own soul, so that the reader would not feel offended by accusations of a sinful life, since this is the author himself who is accused of it.

The *Path to salvation* is a combination of a dogmatic and a devotional book. It simply states certain truths of the Orthodox religion without theological investigation, and through frequent and lengthy prayers to God the Father and to Christ it urges the reader to apply these truths in his life.

The greatest problem in human life is sin. One sin is enough to lead people to eternal perdition since sins separate people from God (PS 42).² If each sin is contrary to God's will, then which sin can be considered small? How many times we are mistaken considering a sin small (64). By sinning, people become enemies of God, willing to diminish His rule and, without realizing it, wanting their souls not to be immortal so that they would not have to give account for their deeds. Thus, a sinner is like an atheist: the latter says there is no God; the former wishes it (66). God is merciful but also just. The eternal punishment is not too severe since "just as great is the person against whom we sin, so great is the sin that we commit, and since God is an infinite Being and nothing greater than Him can be imagined, so justice of the Lord sentences to infinite punishment those, who sin against His infinite and immeasurable majesty" (70). Emin seems to consider all sins to be of equally pernicious force. Murder is just as offensive in the eye of God as stealing a cookie and deserves eternal punishment. Because of such fatal

² References are made to the following works of Emin:

NF – *Непостоянная fortuna, или Похождение Мирамонда*, Санкт-Петербург[: типография Сухопутного кадетского корпуса] 1763, vols. 1–3.

NP – *Награжденная постоянность, или Приключения Лизарка и Сарманды* Санкт-Петербург[: типография Богдановича] 1788 [1764].

P – *Письма Эрнеста и Доравры*, Санкт-Петербург[: типография Академии наук] 1766, vols. 1–4.

PF – *Приключения Фемистокла и разные политические, гражданские, философические, физические и военные его с сыном своим разговоры, постоянная жизнь и жестокость фортуны, его гонящей*, Санкт-Петербург[: типография Сухопутного кадетского корпуса] 1763.

PS – *Путь ко спасению*, Москва: Т.Т. Волков 1853 [1780].

danger in sin, it should be blotted out by calling upon Christ's work on the cross where the sin has already been expiated and then by leading an exemplary life.

Sins should be confessed without any delay. There are three reasons to do that quickly: 1. frequent sinning can turn into necessity/habit; 2. God wishes our repentance; 3. the longer we wait, the more difficult it is to repent (PS 12). Besides, how can we know that we will live tomorrow? (28). How can repentance be delayed to the last day if this day is not known? (146). Because of this uncertainty and the possibility of missing an opportunity, satan tries to convince each soul to wait for repentance until old age (19).

Sins should be confessed to a priest even if the priest is a greater sinner than we. Christ gave priests the right to disperse our doubts and forgive our sins in the name of the Lord when they are confessed with contrition (PS 10). However, if confession is made without repentance, just to follow church rites, then "your confession will increase evil rather than decrease it" (15). Hence, three things are needed for a perfect confession: 1. to be truly sorry for our sins; 2. to firmly decide not to sin anymore; 3. to tell the priest precisely about all our sins, to ask him to forgive these sins and the sins we do not remember (163). If there is no contrition, no grief because of committed sins, then there is no forgiveness (164). The grief should be greater than any grief concerning earthly things (166). In this, Emin stressed the necessity of the state of mind during confession over the necessity of confessing before a priest. Is a confession without a priest possible? How about repentance of those not acquainted with Orthodoxy because of living in different places or times? Emin did not raise these issues but indirectly indicated that it is possible to be saved without a priest and outside the Orthodox context when he said that Adam would be sentenced to hell if he did not repent before God and if in 900 years he did not cry over his sin (114). Therefore, the contrite heart would appear to be the only requirement for salvation. However, not so. It may be the only necessary prerequisite, but the genuineness of such contrition should be confirmed by one's life. After confession, people should abandon places, avoid conversations, and all that can cause them to sin. It needs to be remembered, what was lost by a confession and what was gained. Frequent prayer is very helpful in that respect (179). Some people spend life in fun and think they are justified before God since they did not harm anyone, but fun is an evil that harms the soul (37). Some fun which was meant here can be fairly obvious – playing cards (10), drinking, overeating, and the like – but this can be carried to the extreme as in the case of Dimitrii Rostovskii who banned even laughter (*Spiritual alphabet* 2.7.1). In everyone's life, work needs to be done for the glory of God, good deeds for others: "you, my soul, received life so that you can be useful for yourself and for your neighbor" (PS 38).

Confession of sins should not be a one-time event. Because of the weakness of human nature, committing a sin is inevitable in spite of one's best efforts.

Even if someone lived a sinless life filled with good deeds, then “one sin can destroy all of it and in one minute you lose all what you accomplished during your entire life” (PS 73). Emin apparently even wishes this to happen by praying to Christ, “send me to hell for one sin instead of letting me offend You, the in finite Goodness, with many [sins]. One sin is enough for my eternal death” (84). However, should an offence happen, Christ’s forgiving power is there.

Man is not alone on his path to salvation. The providential presence of God is with him, which stems from the overall divine design. Everything was created for a purpose and man was created to praise and glorify God (PS 38). To make this possible, God tries to pull people away from sin by various means, including attacks, illnesses, and misfortunes (21). Many times God punishes people in their body so that they can come to their senses. “The death of our beloved parents, children, and spouses, fires, assaults, imprisonments and exiles are nothing else but God’s admonitions through which He wants to turn us away from sin knowing that in the midst of pleasures we do not think about God” (106). God participates in all works: in good works as the source of goodness; in evil works he allows for our will to act freely, but He still maintains our existence, yet He “does not maintain the nature of evil, which He cannot endure. This comes from our free will given us by God. If God did not give us free will, we would not have an opportunity to deserve His mercy and we would act by coercion” (50). People can blame evil spirits for influencing their behavior; however, although these spirits are quite powerful in the natural world, their influence is rather limited. “By inscrutable wisdom of the Lord, evil spirits can tempt people, but people have reason to figure out what kind the devilish temptations are and to what extent they are harmful. If it were not permitted that devils tempt people, we would not have an opportunity to show how much zeal and courage in the service of God we can show here, consequently, we would be saved without a fight with the enemy, only because of the decision of the Lord” (188).

After death, there is “a two-way eternity, blessed and unhappy” (PS 24). There is no third way: either eternity spent in the presence of God or in separation from Him. The latter is hell, eternal fire (69). Just as the body dies when separated from the soul, so the soul eternally dies when separated from God. This separation is the true death (71). Would thereby Emin open a possibility that eternal existence in hell is eternal dying, which may mean making suffering progressively smaller and smaller? Life in hell would get closer and closer to death, without ever reaching it, but the suffering would be decreased and, possibly, after crossing a certain threshold, it would not be felt at all by the souls, thereby making their existence similar to that of the souls in Sheol.

In sum, we should always remember death (PS 158), which is the *memento mori* principle very close to the heart of Christian theology and which was expressed forcefully by Rostovskii. Thinking about death is also thinking about

God through whom death can be conquered. What consequences can such thinking have on a writer? In a couple of brief remarks in the *Path to salvation*, Emin addressed the problem.

Emin said that many people write multi-volume romances to explain their passions, but it is difficult for them to say the Lord's prayer (PS 44). Was he one of these people? It would mean that his religiosity after the London conversion was not as ardent as required by the *Path to salvation*. He spent more time on self-analysis to pour his feelings into his novels instead of spending some quality time with God in prayer. However, thereby the romance is not necessarily condemned. On the other hand, he said that we do not read a religious book since we consider it to be a monk's task, but we read a romance until we finish it, regardless of time it takes. What kind of excuse is this, "it is a monk's task"? By preferring a romance over a religious book, we prefer worldly things over God (65). This is not a small thing. By not sufficiently respecting God, we act like Judas who sold Christ, since we sold Christ for a short-lived satisfaction (66). That may not be a wholesale condemnation of the romance either. Emin condemned in these statements the preference of romances over religious books, particularly romances that provide only some pleasure which after a time evaporates anyway. It may mean that only those romance readers make themselves akin to Judas who pick a wrong romance. If somehow a religious book can be merged with a romance, then the reading may be acceptable and even have salvific effects. Thus, a lesson seems to be that a romance writer should not neglect God in two respects: he should spend a nonnegligible amount of time in prayer to, among other things, ask God for help in personal and professional life; also, he should bring, as it were, God to his novels by saturating them with religious themes. Also, a book should not be "filled with seductions" (65). How did Emin fare in that respect in his own romance writing?

Four novels

In a very brief time interval, Emin published four original novels, nine volumes in total: *Fortune inconstant or the wanderings of Merimond* (1763), *The adventures of Themistocles* (1763), *Constancy rewarded or the wanderings of Lizark and Sarmanda* (1764), and *The letters of Ernest and Doravra* (1766).³

³ He also published translations of three romances: *The Garden of love or the insuperable constancy of Kamber and Arisena* (1763), *Unfortunate Floridor: a story about the prince of Racalmuto* (1763); and *The sorrowful love of the marquis of Toledo* (1764). Only about the second novel is it known that it is a translation, free translation as it is of Gabriele Martiano, *Il Floridoro ò vero historia del conte di Racalmuto* (1703), with Emin's additions, omissions, and modifications, Мария Ди Сальво, Старое и новое в прозе Ф. Эмина: о переводе

Today reading Emin's novels is an exacting exercise. For example, the *Miramond* is a three-volume work of a thousand pages with dozens of different stories not only of the main protagonists, but also of unrelated, accidentally met characters. Sometimes stories are strung up together; for instance four men try to outdo one another in the amount of miseries they experience from women and tell their stories to Miramond, although he is in a hurry to reach his destination. Sometimes the stories are confusedly nested. For instance, the book is basically the story of Miramond, who at one point listens to the story of Feridat (2.111-330) which includes a courtier's story of falling in love with a *grafina* who just lost her husband (2.251-279), which, in turn, includes a servant's story he recalled about a man who fell in love with his daughter (2.258-259) (such nesting of stories is common in the *Arabian nights*). People in the *Miramond* do not talk to one another but give multi-page, exhausting monologues that most of the time can be summarized in a sentence or two. People fall in love with one another in a twinkle of an eye with an outmost seriousness, which leads to hardly credible situations. For instance, Feridat pretends he is a girl and for an entire year lives in the same room with his beloved Nartsiza, and she never guessed that she was a he (2.139-148). It is also difficult to believe that prince Azem, a successor to the throne in an Indian kingdom, who saw Agata only once and fell in love with her on the spot, in desperation becomes a hermit after he learns that she left the city the same night (3.236-246); truly, "this story will appear unbelievable or foolish" (3.246). It was not beneath Emin's craft to use the *deus ex machina*. There is a sudden and inexplicable turn of heart of the evil wizard Selim who confesses plotting against Miramond (3.20, 42) and an equally inexplicable and abrupt confession made by Belilia who caused many woes to Miramond. Also, Miramond loved two women, Ziumbiulia and Agata; the problem of choice was solved by discovering that one of them was his sister.

итальянского романа "Il Floridoro," in *Traduzione e rielaborazione nelle letterature di Polonia Ucraina e Russia, XVI-XVIII secolo*, Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso 1999, 375-386. However, it is sometimes believed that the other two books are not translations at all, but they were authored by Emin, e.g., David E. Budgen, Fedor Emin and the beginnings of the Russian novel, in A.G. Cross (ed.), *Russian literature in the age of Catherine the Great*, Oxford: Meeuws 1976, 67. In fact, in the preface to *The garden of love* Emin wrote that he found in Portugal manuscripts of two books which were not published, so he took pity on them and published their translations. However, even the original work of Emin is not free of appropriations. For example, in the *Inconstant fortune*, certain historical descriptions are lifted, sometimes with modifications, from an Italian historian T. Boccacini, some from Voltaire's *Philosophical letters*, Вадим Д. Рак, *Статьи о литературе XVIII века*, Санкт-Петербург: Пушкинский Дом 2008, 211-246. Fragments of Voltaire's *Letters* and René Le Pays' *Letters* are included in the *Letters of Ernest and Doravra*, Budgen, *op. cit.*, 90 note 39; М. Г. Фраанье, Об одном французском источнике романа Ф. А. Эмина "Письма Эрнеста и Доравры," *XVIII век* 21 (1999), 173-176.

The adventures of Themistocles is a novel by name. The real content is reflected in the baroque subtitle: "various political, civic, philosophical, physical, and military conversations with his son and cruelty of fortune chasing him." The novel consists of Themistocles' dialogues with his son, Neocles, and with the emperor Xerxes⁴ – or frequently overlong monologues of Themistocles – on disparate topics, and there is only very little on the subject of adventures and cruelty of fortune in Themistocles' life Emin envisioned in spite of historical sources. The adventures are very briefly punctuating transitions from one dialogue to another. The novel figures basically travels from one place to another to allow Themistocles an opportunity to talk endlessly. The adventures themselves, when extracted from the novel would amount to a not quite absorbing novella or a short story, and yet even here Emin managed to inject an unrelated story of one Ispolin (PF 343-354).

The most readable of the four Emin's novels is the *Constancy rewarded*. It tells the story of three protagonists, swerving only once into an unrelated story (told by Kalifas, NP 282-295). There are no treatises included even on the subject of love and general remarks on various themes are very short. There is an even-handed treatment of action and psychology. The novel recycles the way out of the situation in which Lizark loves two women, Izida and Sarmanda, by the discovery that he is a son of Izida's father and thus her brother. Also, it is rather unbelievable that Lizark for a year did not guess that his servant was Sarmanda pretending to be a man (171-172, 193) – also a recycled motif. Moreover, it is a bit too much sighing and too much weeping, which, admittedly, was an indispensable feature of romances of the day, but, on the whole, it is a very good romance as romances go.⁵

The letters of Ernest and Doravra is an overlong novel of 900 pages, this time in four volumes, an exercise in a merciless verbosity. Whereas the *Fortune inconstant*, also an overly long novel, is overflowing with action, there is almost no action here, and thus pages are filled with descriptions of joys and sadness associated with budding and then disappointing love, many times, round and round, with relentless repetition of descriptions of minutiae of the same states of the soul. This is in the first two volumes. The last two volumes are basically series of treatises on various, disparate subjects (vol. 3: capital punishment, how to benefit the society, solitude, the nature of humanness, jurisprudence,

4 After his banishment from Athens, historical Themistocles was hosted not by Xerxes but by Artaxerxes I, Xerxes' father.

5 The *Constancy rewarded* would be in the same category as the three translations (or alleged translations) of novels published by Emin: all of them focus on one story line uncluttered by theoretical musings, richly soaked in tears and readiness of committing suicide, because of temporary romantic setbacks and a share of situations that strain the boundaries of credibility. However, on the whole, they are rather engrossing.

social inequality, insecurity of life, killing of animals, private property, proper upbringing of children; vol. 4: the nature of virtue, divine providence, forced marriages, Stoic ethics, personal criticism, the role and mechanism of trade, peasants and the city) which have very little to do with the love of Ernest and Doravra. Particularly, the third volume makes an impression of being included here by mistake.

Why novels?

The novel was a new literary form in Russia and not quite appreciated at first and even despised. First, it was a matter of form. Emin stated: “I followed some physicians who try to sweeten beneficial medicine and often even gild it because there are now many sick people who will not take without embellishing additions what is beneficial for their health.” In his view, the *dulce*, sweetness, is the best way to achieve the *utile*, usefulness (P dedication). It is interesting that, quoting Rousseau, Emin slighted poetry as merely a candy after dinner (3.4/136) and classified it as less useful than other areas of knowledge (137),⁶ and yet the sweetening argument was used by Trediakovskii in the preface to his versified *Theoptia* when he wrote that serious philosophical matter for the youth is a bitter reading. To make it more pleasant, verse is used in the *Theoptia* since the poetic format “will pour its healing juice filled with delicate sweetness into the insides of the weak youth.”⁷

What is the literary form of the novel supposed to sweeten? In Emin’s words, “well written novels containing various moral teachings and a depiction of various lands with their customs and politics are the most useful books to attract the youth to knowledge. Young people can best learn from a good novel about the state of various lands than from a short geography [book], from which they are unable to understand anything without [the help of] a teacher” (NF 2.289-290). Novels are beneficial for the youth since they expand their horizons by providing factual knowledge included in textbooks, but in a much less readable fashion than in novels. Emin did include in his novels some historical, ethnographic, and geographic information about the lands visited by the figures of these novels. Sometimes the only purpose for these visits is to describe these lands, as, for example, descriptions of European places provided through Feridat in the *Fortune inconstant*, and excising these descriptions would in no wise

⁶ More disparagingly, in *Moral fable* 79 (“On the Egyptian king”) Emin even said that the poet is the greatest liar in the world since what he says is taken to be good and if “another poor man” – presumably, in his own way – what the poet says, this man would end up in the madhouse.

⁷ Vasilij K. Trediakovskij, *Psalter 1753*, Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh 1989, 469.

undermine the understanding of the novel. Quite the contrary, it would improve its flow. However, the information included in Emin's novels is not always reliable. There are some anachronisms; for example, in *The adventures of Themistocles*, we can read about passports, carriages (PF 84), snuffboxes with tobacco, and the title "your highness" (114, 351), all of it unknown in ancient Greece. It resembles more Versailles than Greece.⁸ Themistocles refers to Hippocrates (22) although Hippocrates was born about the time of Themistocles' death. He refers to Greek gods by Latin names: Jupiter (21), Mars (49), Aurora (206), and Venus (83). He speaks about metaphysics (26) and chemistry (27), about professors (27), university (29) and also about gymnasium (26, 29) meaning a secondary school, not the exercise room as the Greeks understood it. Egypt is a setup for his two novels, but many descriptions fit more Russia than Egypt. For example, according for Emin, there are forests in Egypt in which bears can be hunted (NP 28); the aristocracy rides in carriages; people go to dancing parties in which men and women can mingle unobstructedly and dance menuet (NF 2.77); payments are made in rubles and kopeks (3.162); religious services are in the hands of orthodox priests, *popy* (2.62-3, 179, 315); the afterlife is expressed in Greek terms as the soul experiencing joy in the Elysian fields or suffering in Tartarus (NP 232).

The novel is not limited to providing factual knowledge in a digestible form. "The wise learn from it the politics of distant governments, the youth gets moral teaching, women feel satisfaction, and people of lower ranks find consolation" (NF 2.290). The novel "must be useful for society" (291). Moral teaching must be part of the novel and it certainly is in Emin's. This is explicitly announced in the title of one of them, the *Virtue rewarded*. Virtue is one of the key concepts which appears in all the novels and as a recipe for fulfilled and happy life, even if the life is punctuated by misfortune and unsavory events. There is no happiness in this world which would not be intertwined with misfortune and would not end with bitterness and complaint. Even when happy, we feel that we miss something which is peace which only virtue can give (P 3.6/166-167). With this emphasis placed on virtue, Emin initiated in Russia not only novels but also moral novels which were very popular in Europe in the eighteenth century but started in the West a few decades earlier.⁹

Virtue is paramount in every person's life. For a child, teaching ethics, politics, and foreign languages is far more important than teaching mathematics, physics, and other sciences. Science is useless in a man where there is no virtue (NF 2.114; P 3.4/135). The knowledge of conduct in individual life (ethics) and

⁸ А[ркадий И.] Лященко, *К истории русского романа: публицистический элемент в романах Ф.А. Эмина*, Санкт-Петербург: Р. Голике 1898, 10.

⁹ Dorothy M. McGhee, *The cult of the 'conte moral': the moral tale in France, its emergence and progress*, Menasha: George Banta Company 1960.

in the public square (politics) is a necessary precondition of the knowledge of scientific facts and theories. However, knowledge has to have a motivating factor, which for Emin is hope. He even called hope a specific human trait immediately almost contradicting himself by saying that hope is born of desire and animals have desires, but they want what they see (P 1.9/55). Do not humans want to see what they hope for? Presumably, human hopes are on a rational level and mostly detached from the desire of instant gratification, but some reason, memory, and will can be found also in animals (54). Where would the fault line between animal and human kingdoms lie, if the human soul is defined as consisting of reason, memory, and will, according to many scholars (53)? There is probably a certain level of rationality that animals never can reach, and so there are hopes inaccessible to them as well. The distance between animals and humans can constantly be increased since, as Emin phrased it, reason's mother is hope and its father is education. Without a hope to learn something, there would be no education (56) and, presumably, the education can be continued indefinitely. In any event, hope is "the soul of our soul" (57). If I hope for nothing, why should I live and suffer? Even a man under torture hopes that death will end his suffering (58; PS 69). Thus, in a nutshell, the importance of hope is summarized in a rhetorical question, "can any man live without hope?" (NP 105). However, it is important to know the source of this hope; it should come from the judgment that concludes after assessing means that the success is possible (P 3.4/104, 127-8) since, as the conclusion of Emin's fourth *Moral fable* ("Nightingale and rose") states, "who lives hoping for everything, he dies having nothing."

Hope has a religious dimension since along with the image of God it is imprinted on the soul with faith and love, and the soul "through hope begins to possess the heavenly Kingdom and be united with God" (PS 99) where the latter is inflamed by the Holy Spirit (7).

Also virtue has a religious dimension. In every person's life, virtue should be maintained to the end, and who dies without it is lost forever (NF 3.217). Therefore, on one's death bed, only justice and virtue can fill the heart with satisfaction and with an expectation of reward after death (P 3.2/54). This is because "when doing good to people, we make ourselves better, since we become worthy of the Most High's favor, who does not leave virtue without a hundred-fold reward" (NF 2.13); and again, "the Supreme Power does not forget virtue and does not leave it without reward" (2.18; 3.36). Therefore, it is obvious what is the answer to the rhetorical question which is a paraphrase of Christ's words (Mt. 16:26): "What of it, if someone conquers the entire world but fails to reach the height of dignity through the law of being and virtue?" (P 3.4/112). For this reason, each person should follow certain rules, i.e., follow certain duties for a life to be virtuous. The first duty is to know the one from whom we have

our being and who rules over entire nature (96). Without it, man is unable to do good, our works cannot be perfect (97). Our power is limited and we should consider God to be the beginning of all our plans and their end, according to his will. Second duty: self-knowledge as already recognized by the ancients in the maxim "know thyself" (99). This allows for recognizing one's own strengths but also limitations and thus allows one to recognize a higher power above oneself; in particular, to recognize that one's own life is related to the perfect principle from which he received his being (100). Another duty: we should strive for the good of society (99). Because of the strong link between virtue and theology, theological issues are expectedly present in Emin's novels.

Reference to religious issues is made in all novels, but to vastly different extent. In all of them, there are omnipresent references to fate, also called destiny, fortune, heaven, or the gods. In the *Virtue rewarded* such reference can be found on most pages, particularly in unhappy circumstances, as made in exclamations: "oh, cruel fate, why do you . . .," etc. In such exclamations there is a vague reference to the power which surpasses human powers, but many a time fate can just represent natural force, the forces of nature, impersonal, uncaring, and accidental. "Oh cruel fate, what are you and what is your power that you do what you want without considering justice nor circumstances nor times; a ruler of nations and a shepherd are the same before you . . . You prepared for all death and turning into nothingness." Oh, fate and death, "you have no feeling and do not know suffering that man can endure" (NP 222-224). Such exclamations are akin to frozen phrases with only tepid or no religious feeling behind them, just as the phrase "God bless you" wished to a sneezing person usually does not signify any deeply felt religious convictions. References to fate are done primarily to defuse distress just as the exclamation "God damn you" is used by believers (even at the peril of violating the commandment of not using God's name in vain) and unbelievers alike to release pressure, not to declare oneself on the side the religious. The *Virtue rewarded* is limited only to such exclamations. Most of the time, when such references to fate were removed from novels, the novels would not in any way suffer. However, sometimes Emin caught himself in insufficiency of a reference to some generic fate and explained that many people say that our fate is determined by God and we should not care about dangers, but this means that God more needs people than people need God. God can do what He wills, but we should take care of ourselves if we want His help. He gave us will; therefore, we can do good or evil. A doctor never will come to the sick and help him if the sick does not call the doctor, does not describe his problems, and does not ask for help (NF 1.237). Therefore, almighty God is able and willing to set the scene for someone's life, but God's design can be thwarted when someone wants to go against God's will. As explained in the *Path to salvation*, God also acts through what people

consider misfortunes – which the *Fortune inconstant* accepts when it says that Miramond's sickness “was for his benefit, and was arranged by Heaven” to moderate his pride (NF 2.29) – but they should end with good results if God's will and human will, if only to accept it, are behind it. Human participation in designing human life is eventually up to humans and God acts as an enabler through various events. If this is not recognized, or if it is recognized and disregarded, problems or even disasters ensue. Therefore, man is not rational when wanting to get everything from fate or accident (P 3.4/108) or when blaming fate for his own injudicious actions.¹⁰ If everything was predestined then no evildoer would be guilty (109). “The rational man does not know fate and he expects everything [to come] from good judgment that is in agreement with duty and virtue” (P 4.6/33).

People blame fate for their crimes and for their failures. Fate is the god of the base and the weak (P 4.4/32). Fate, if treated seriously, is not an ultimate arbiter. It is, as expressed through Themistocles – controlled by a higher power called permanence (*postoiannost*; the force of equilibrium, PF 177) that is stronger than fortune or fate, since it imposes limits on it (78). Although permanence has small rule and fate rules over the entire world, fate always gives way to permanence.¹¹ Weak and lazy people are ruled by fate, heroes and philosophers by permanence since courage and virtue are “faithful ministers of permanence”; they are attacked by fortune, but in the end, permanence wins (79). This may mean that permanence exercises its rule over the world setting limitations on fate, or, that the natural world is regulated by natural laws, merciless and unfeeling; these laws, in turn, are controlled and maintained by God.

Emin said very little about how he understood God. The existence of God was not a theological problem for him, since in the nature of man there are imprinted three truths: God exists, God is just, and the soul is immortal (PS 112). There are people who may be unconvinced by such a statement and try to prove the existence of God, physico-theology being a very popular means of accomplishing it in the eighteenth century in Europe and in Russia, to mention only Lomonosov and Trediakovskii. However, when criticizing astrology and its scrutinizing of the motions of celestial bodies, Emin also criticized astronomy and science in general, at least in their pretensions concerning their theological relevance. He said, “It seems to me that we glorify God more if we say that he is inconceivable

¹⁰ In *Moral fable* 55 (“A gnat and a fly”), Emin described a gnat that sat on the head of a bald man where it could be easily spotted and squashed, and in the moment of death it blamed fate for its lot.

¹¹ This may be a reflection of the concept of Logos that in Heraclitean philosophy exercises control over the universe in which everything flows, or a reflection of the Pythagorean concept of *harmonia* expressed by Philolaus. The force of equilibrium may be a reference to Epicurus' *isonomia* principle.

in His works than when we scrutinize in detail His holy works” (NF 1.231). However, he admitted that, for example, the harmonious makeup of the human body does indicate that it was not created randomly, but by a powerful Creator (P 4.6/48-50), and thereby indicate God’s existence in the physico-theological spirit. In Emin’s use of this approach, physico-theology speaks more to the majesty of God than to His existence: “All the traces of nature, understanding and perspicuity of reason, perfection of the created world prove to us the power of Being through whom nature lives for so long and can live forever” (2.48/217).

In Emin’s view advocated in his novels, polytheism is just a manifestation of the underlying monotheism. In his view, “God is everywhere the same, only people have many ideas about him.” There are many divine names, such as Jupiter and Mars, but there is only one God, whom soldiers call Mars, civilians call Jupiter, and Jews call Adonai (PF 49).¹² Different nations represent the one God differently: Ethiopians think Jupiter has a black face, Egyptians say it is white (48).¹³ Idol worshipping is not really worship of idols – of carved pieces of wood or pictorial representations of deities; it is just that by looking at them, people think about what they represent (50). This, incidentally, was the way the reverence expressed by Orthodox believers for icons was defended, for instance, by Iavorskii and Rostovskii: people do not revere icons; icons only allow them to elevate their minds to what they represent.

People should earnestly pray to God for guidance, and conscience will tell them that God exists and does not ever forget the righteous man (P 4.6/59). The voice of the conscience is theologically more important than the voice of reason. Although reason is the most perfect gift of God (PS 39), it is also limited (P 4.6/52). As Emin confessed, “The gospel truth I considered to be a fable, like atheists” (PS 55). Although he believed hell exists, he was more interested in where it is rather than how to escape it. He tried to refute the Scriptures forgetting that one philosopher tried for forty years to figure out the working of the beehive. “If such a small thing is inaccessible to human acuity, then how can we think that we can judge the word of God that can be understood only by people filled with the Holy Spirit” (56). Emin did not disparage science in general, but only ideas about its scope. Physicists and chemists should not try to discover designs of God. Their work is useful for society, e.g., they investigate properties of minerals (NF 3.229). That is, great as the human reason is,

¹² The statements are made through Themistocles, although the Jews were mentioned for the first time in Greek literature by Theophrastus, the successor of Aristotle in the Lyceum, born a full century after Themistocles’ death, Menahem Stern, *Greek and Latin authors on Jews and Judaism*, vol. 1, Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities 1974, 8–9.

¹³ Xenophanes in his defense of monotheism made in the sixth century BC the following statement: “Ethiopians say that their gods have snub noses and are black; Thracians – that they have blue eyes and red hair” (Clement, *Strom.* 7.22.1 = B16).

it has limited power and making sweeping rational judgment about the works of God is inappropriate. God Himself took care of that by building into human nature the necessary datum about His existence. Impressive as proofs of physico-theologians may be, they can be turned around by unbelievers to show the self-sustaining mechanism of nature, as it was the case beginning at least with Democritus. Thus, as the opening chapter of a certain book of laws says, the book laid out by a wise monarch in a land in which Miramond eventually became the monarch, we should believe in one omnipotent Creator who created us out of nothing. His sacred works should not be investigated nor should we ask 'what' and 'why' things were created since even if a man had wisdom of all the world, he would not be able truly to understand the tiniest speck of God's doing. If he thinks that he determines in an object the state of nature, he cannot know for what reason God designed it. God is everything, we are nothing. Can nothing know what everything is? Incidentally, for this reason church rites should not be modified (3.177). How many misfortunes in the country are from the introduction of modifications! Also, they are useless. What's the difference between offering a white or a black lamb? God does not need the hide. God looks at our eagerness and purity of heart (3.176-178).

The writer should keep in mind that novels should be useful for society (NF 2.291). Therefore, as Feridat advises a Polish translator, rather than translating comedies and operas, it would be more useful to translate "mechanical books" since they could be used for building industry in Poland (288). It could be assumed that Emin meant in this advice also Russian translators, but how about the usefulness of romances? They should not be pure romances, read only to pass time. In that respect, the *Constancy rewarded* is the least useful or outright useless in the light of the *Path to salvation*. The novel has at best generic references to religion focusing on the love of Lizark for Izida and the love of Sarmanda for Lizark who by unbelievable sacrifices eventually wins him over. However, there is hardly any religious dimension here, even in the support of Sarmanda's constancy in her quest for Lizark's love. Therefore, when Emin prayed to Christ in the *Path*, "I only ask You, the Lord my God!, that You allow me to always think about Your suffering and about Your terrible judgments ... so that I'll be united with You" (P 84), he proposed to the readers a novel which makes them think about anything but Christ's suffering. If nothing else, this prayer indicates that at least parts of the *Path* speaking about total commitment to God, in thought and in action, could not have been written before or at the time of writing the *Constancy rewarded*. However, a serious consideration of including religious tenets in a romance was in his mind before that as testified by his first novel, the *Fortune inconstant*.

In one respect, the *Fortune inconstant* is based on one principle: if so many philosophers and sages say that Orthodoxy gives a way of salvation, why risk

eternal perdition for the short life that is left? (NF 3.39) In this we can recognize a form of Pascal's wager, whose Catholicism (even Jansenism) is replaced with Orthodoxy. God and His presence are marked throughout the entire novel that culminates in conversion to Orthodoxy of the main figures, and in Egypt at that: a Greek priest converted Feridat to Orthodoxy (2.329); after Miramond considers conversion to Christianity (3.38), Feridat baptizes him (3.40). Hating the world, Miramond wants to spend his life in prayers in his cave (3.72), which ended after a turn of events. Miramond also urges Osman to convert to Orthodoxy and his daughter Ziumbiulia who eventually was secretly baptized (3.346). Religious topics are constantly present in the novel and are well interwoven into its fabric making them an integral part of the novel. In that respect, the novel is best crafted and best fitting the requirement of the romance mentioned in the *Path*. Emin could be satisfied with the result and end it with the remark to the reader stating that all events described in this book are "either bringing you pleasure or are useful for your conscience" (3.355).

The *Fortune inconstant* is overloaded with action, and Emin went to another extreme in the *Constancy rewarded*, where there is really only one yarn with only one distraction. However, in the process, Emin limited to generic and uninteresting level the religious side of the story, thereby violating the principle of a good romance, good from the perspective of his prospective *Path*.

In the last novel, *The letters of Ernest and Doravra*, action is slow, but there is a return to the problem of religion, but this is done in a cumbersome fashion. The main figures speak about marriage, but at the outset, three obstacles are listed by Doravra to their marriage: "Your love pleases neither the heaven nor nature since we are equal neither in fortune, nor in birth, nor in faith. If heaven wanted us to be one for another, you would have been born here. I do not mention your poverty since your merits are more precious than your richest possession; but you would be born, grown, and educated with me in the same law" (1.8/38). That is, the position in society, money, and faith are the big problems. And yet, as seen in other letters in the book, the social status is the most important factor¹⁴ in this novel and in other novels.¹⁵ Faith as a problem never appears again. In fact, the reader does not even learn what religious beliefs the protagonists have. It may be assumed that it is Orthodoxy for Doravra and

¹⁴ At least in Doravra's eyes, since the father would permit the marriage had he known his daughter wanted to marry Ernest. This benevolent position is one of the major ironies of the plot, since the expectation was that the father would be against this marriage, I[rwin] R. Titunik, Fedor Emin's *Pis'ma Ernesta i Doravry* and Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Julie ou la Nouvelle Héloïse*, *Russian Literature* 34 (1993), 341.

¹⁵ In most cases, the difference is social status is the main problem underlying Emin's novels: Merimond and Ziumbiulia, Feridat and Nartsiza in *Fortune inconstant*, Lizark and Izida in *Constancy rewarded*, Neocles and Pomena in *The adventures of Themistocles* with its thin romantic motif.

Catholicism or Protestantism or maybe even Islam for Ernest who is a foreigner – a man from distant lands (1.12/83) – but it is only when assumed that the novel is set in Russia, which it almost certainly is, but this is never plainly stated. In this way, the religious aspect of the relationship of the protagonist is removed, at least on the personal level. However, to be a useful novel, some general topics are included, including religion, but far from the way of the first novel. Captivated by the form of Rousseau's *New Héloïse*, Emin wrote a novel in the form of letters exchanged among four people. The epistolary format allowed for separation of the discussion of general topics from personal lives and analyses of the soul. Therefore, some letters turn into 20-30 page treatises, one has over 50 pages (3.8), and one reaches 60 pages (3.4). As the result, the novel includes great deal of material that can be considered useful for individuals and for society, but with a detrimental effect: a regular reader – a clerk, a salesperson, a maid, a gentlewoman – would hardly go through, for example, torturous analyses of the merchant class. Such treatises would simply be skipped as also very likely were the treatises analyzing morality and religion. These treatises are a boon for literary critics and historians – that is why this novel received most attention among literary historians – but they are simply a bother for regular readers and will most of the time be passed over to get quickly to the story of Ernest and Doravra and their two confidants, Hippolyte and Pulcheria. That was probably also the time when the *Path of salvation* was being written. Its now explicit requirement for the usefulness of a novel was poorly realized in *The letters* since its usefulness side had practically no effect on readers except for the very patient and the investigative. A devotional book and a romance were fairly successfully woven together into the *Fortune inconstant* and clumsily stitched together into *The letters*. In the light of the *Path*, Emin's intention was to adopt Rousseau's approach to produce a work which would be pleasant to read and also would set the reader on the path of virtue and religious sensitivity.¹⁶ However, the epistolary format encouraged separating the preachy parts from the yarn of the novel and, ultimately, proved to be unsuccessful as far as the requirement of the *Path* goes. The requirement was realized best in the first novel and thus from the perspective of the *Path*, this novel is Emin's most enduring literary achievement. However, in the end, it turned out that to bring religion to people, no literary sweetener is necessary. If people is serious in their religious searching, they do not reach for a novel, religiously saturated as it may be, but for a religious book. The fate of Emin's books positively testifies to this fact. The modest popularity of Emin's novels – probably because they were novelties in Russian literature – was limited to the last third of the eighteenth century.

¹⁶ The *Letters* hardly were intended as parody of the *New Héloïse*, as claimed by Titunik, *op. cit.*, 344.

The path to salvation was published dozens of times over the period of some 150 years after Emin's death, so he did not witness the fact of what a successful bestseller he had created.

