

fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, was translated from the Portuguese and printed in London in 1790. Isaac Orobio de Castro is another instance—also a physician, he arrived in Amsterdam around the time Moreira passed away, and his *Prevenções divinas* were to end up in the Baron d'Holbach's *Israel vengé* of 1770. Second, another comparison can be made between Morreira's *Arguments* and his sermons, published in 2005 by Marc Saperstein, or his voluminous *Tradado da Verdade da Lei de Moisés* of 1659–60, edited in 1988 by Herman Prins Salomon. Future research will have to establish how the *Arguments* should be situated not only against their seventeenth-century Jewish background, but also in the context of Morreira's own religious and intellectual *Werdegang*.

This is an edition and translation; it is not an attempt to deliver an intellectual biography of Morreira. Nevertheless, Kaplan's rendering of the Amsterdam's rabbi's *Arguments* will turn out to be an invaluable source to anyone willing and able to write such a biography.

Wiep van Bunge, *Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam*
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Doubting the Divine in Early Modern Europe: The Revival of Momus, the Agnostic God. George McClure.

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George McClure's ambitious and erudite overview of the many incarnations of the Greek god Momus (blame) from antiquity to the eighteenth century seeks to present a new history of religious unbelief. Interrogating Lucien Febvre's claim that atheism was unthinkable in the early modern world, the book explores how the irreverent Momus, who never shied away from fearless criticism, became both "a medium for dangerous challenges to religious belief and a literary trope for challenges to literary and intellectual authority" (vii). The book's six chapters offer detailed interpretations of the texts where Momus appeared, including Hesiod's *Theogony*, Aesop's *Fables*, Lucian's dialogues, Leon Battista Alberti's *Momus*, Erasmus's *Adages*, Giordano Bruno's *Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast*, and John Milton's *Paradise Lost*. These instances, for McClure, reveal the consistent ways that Momus represented *parrhesia* (frank speech) in challenging different forms of authority in various historical contexts. The author attempts to engage in a "diachronic study that traces a trope from the classical world to the modern era" and that seeks "to examine how Momus authors spoke to one another across time" (xii). McClure also seeks to discuss specific historical contexts that led a variety of authors to "resurrect Momus" (xii).

The book reconstructs the intellectual contexts where Momus was reincarnated. It is especially strong in describing Renaissance Italy, where "proto-atheistic" currents were flowing strongly (43), and in showing how Reformation theologians weaponized the god of criticism and mockery. Such expositions would benefit, however, from

discussions of how early modern authors used pagan myths and reinterpreted them in ways that were compatible with Christianity. The book could also engage with more of the recent scholarship on the history of atheism and naturalism.

McClure does not always demonstrate convincingly that thinkers who revived Momus did so with an awareness of each other's works. While Lucian's influence is clearly established, other connections are quite speculative. The author suggests, for instance, that Alberti's *Momus* "very likely inspired Milton's own antihero" (36), but he admits that "there is no hard evidence that Milton read Alberti while in Italy" (158). Similarly, the assertion that Bruno's *Expulsion* provided "an intellectual link between Lucretius and Spinoza" (124) is not corroborated. Even if such influences could be established with greater certainty, their broader significance is not explained.

Indeed, the book's scope presents problems for establishing continuities in how the figure of Momus was deployed in different periods and places. It would be difficult to argue that Aesop's lack of "respect for divine culture" (6) or Lucian's "assault on religious convention" (25) have much to do with Bruno's "assaults on Christianity" (134) or with Spinoza's questioning of the divine inspiration of the Bible. A comparison of irreverence toward deities in polytheistic cultures with atheism in a Christian world risks confusing fundamental categories. Suggesting that Socrates took a "heretical stance towards the traditional worship of the gods" (7), for example, ignores that heresy was a charge only possible in the context of a Christian culture that sought to establish religious uniformity. Furthermore, it is essential to distinguish between critiques of religious authorities, which have consistently appeared before and after the Reformation, and arguments that question the existence of God. The book would benefit from more precise definition of terms, such as *atheism*, *agnosticism*, and *skepticism*, which appear throughout the text but are neither adequately defined nor situated within their historical contexts.

McClure's account of "currents in secularization" (224) is quite teleological: it suggests that Momus "played a significant role in heralding the modern world" (xi), describing the ancient god as "an emblem for a modernism that bespoke both secularism in the face of the divine, and revolt in the face of literary and cultural convention" (xiii). By depicting authors who made use of Momus as crypto-atheists who anticipated the modern secular worldview, McClure risks imposing contemporary assumptions about connections between freethinking and unbelief on them.

This study is most valuable in its masterful interpretations of ancient and early modern texts, and it concludes by showing how Momus "became a useful trope in the emergence of a self-conscious art of literary criticism" (223). McClure skillfully captures the subtleties of complex works and draws engaging connections between diverse authors. His erudite analysis of Momus's many lives thus offers an intriguing account of how classical sources came to inform early modern criticism and unbelief.

Anton M. Matytsin, *University of Florida*
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