

# Nietzsche

Sir,—S. S. Praver's reviews are almost always a special treat, and he often lists mistranslations. His review (November 18) of *Studies in Nietzsche and the Classical Tradition*, however, shows that even Homer nods occasionally. Could it be that Professor Praver's antipathy to Nietzsche, whom he accuses in the end of "fundamental wickedness", kept him from reading the book under review with his usual attention to detail?

Professor Praver singles out for praise an essay on Nietzsche and Heine by S. L. Gilman, Chairman of the Department of German Literature at Cornell University, that he simply cannot have read with his usual care. Otherwise he would have noted how many of the quoted passages on which the argument depends are disfigured by serious mistranslations. In some cases this is really hard to overlook because Gilman has very graciously furnished the German texts, too; and in his book *Nietzschean Parody: An Introduction to Reading Nietzsche* (1976), from which his contribution was taken, all of the original texts are furnished along with the author's translations. But Professor Praver does not seem to have been aware of *Nietzschean Parody*.

To give at least some idea of the mistranslations, I shall list a very few of them here: *ungefährdeten* (unendangered) is turned into "harmless"; *ein auch wohl zu missendes* (a dispensable) is turned into "the missing"; *ein Naturell* (a disposition or temperament) becomes "a natural occurrence"; *vergeistigungssüchtigen* (craving spiritualization) becomes "spiritually dependent"; *Bacchus lässt sich von Silen einen Becher mit Wein füllen* (Bacchus has Silenus fill a beaker with wine for him) becomes "Bacchus fills a cup with wine"; *geheimnisvolle* (mysterious) becomes "unusual"; and *Lyriker* in a crucial passages becomes "poet" instead of "lyrical poet".

What happens to Heine's and Nietzsche's poems is even worse; but since the original texts are furnished along with the translations in the book under review, a single example may suffice. Gilman's version: "Ha! Whore's curse/as well as her mockery! . . . To please you, fever?" Here is a more accurate translation: "Hah! Damn the whore/And her distain! . . . You, fever, I should bless?"

Since Professor Praver usually calls our attention to mistranslations, one has come to expect that when he does not do this all is well on that front. Incidentally, the half sentence that he quotes from my contribution to the volume under review is not from "a passage taken over unchanged from his [that is, my] *Tragedy and Philosophy* (1968)", but from the closing paragraph which, though the editor did not indicate this, was written especially for this book.

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