

# The Incomplete Translations of Christie's *Death in the Clouds* in Italy

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Translations of Agatha Christie's works in Italy began to appear as early as the 1930s, and dozens of re-editions have been published since then. Surprisingly, no re-translations were commissioned before the 1980s and, even then, re-editions of the Fascist-era translations kept circulating. Several critics have argued that Fascist era translations of Christie's novels are incomplete, with sentences or entire passages of the original works omitted, or significantly reshaped in the Italian translations. But are Fascist-era translations the only ones that made changes on the original? By comparing Christie's (1935/1987) novel *Death in the Clouds* with three of its Italian translations—namely a Fascist era translation from 1937, its 1986 edition, and the 2019 edition of a second translation from 1983—I found that both the 1937 and 1986 translations are incomplete and have made considerable modifications to the source text; the 2019 translation is the only one to have remained unabridged. Surprisingly, the 1986 re-edition of the Fascist-era translation actually displays a significantly higher number of modifications and omissions that came after the fall of the regime. In addition to offering a comprehensive account of the differences between these translations of Christie's work, this article also discusses the constraints and conventions that might have influenced the process of translation. Four features of the translations are discussed: femininity, morality, intrigue and explicitation. My analysis reveals that the 1937 and 1986 versions are more conservative in their depiction of femininity; that the 1986 translation also tends to add judgments about certain morally dubious behaviors, as well as clues that might help readers to solve the mystery; finally, all three translations show a tendency towards explicitness, but the 1986 version is the most consistent.

*Keywords:* detective fiction, Christie, Fascism, ideology, retranslation

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## 不完整翻譯： 克莉絲蒂《謀殺在雲端》的義大利文版

施喬佳

阿嘉莎·克莉絲蒂偵探小說的義大利翻譯版本在原版出書後不久出版，自1930年至今，已有數十版譯本出版；令人驚奇的是，其出版的譯本幾乎皆為法西斯時期的首譯版之再版，直至1980年代才有重譯版。許多評論文章提到，法西斯時代的首譯版並不完整，原作中有過多的句子乃至整個段落被刪減或是被竄改，可以想見接下來的再版中，也有同樣的改變；然而筆者發現，再版的版本比起法西斯時期首譯版有更多顯而易見的更改處。目前許多以法西斯時代的審查制度和偵探小說為主題的研究，尚未出現有關首譯及再譯版差別處的系統性探討。本論文藉由比較克莉絲蒂《謀殺在雲端》於1937年、1986年、2019年3個義大利翻譯版本，試著全面探討這3個譯本的差別，以及不同時代背景下譯本所遵守的習俗及約束。這些譯本的特色主要表現在4個面向：女性特質、道德規範、破案線索和明晰化。其中1937年以及1986年的譯本對於女性特質的描述較為保守，另外1986年譯本除了對於不道德行為的評判以外，也給出原文未提及的破案線索以幫助讀者「破案」，而明晰化則為3個版本的共同傾向。

關鍵詞：偵探小說、克莉絲蒂、法西斯、意識形態、重譯

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## Introduction

Christie gained considerable popularity in Italy since the publications of the translations of her first novels in the 1930s. The success, however, was not only Christie's: Since the very launch of the Mondadori Publishing House's series "Libri Gialli" in 1929, which was dedicated to mostly foreign detective fiction, the genre had an unparalleled fortune, with the second book of the series selling ten-times more copies than the average Italian novel of that time (Rundle, 2004, p. 65). In those years, the country was ruled by Mussolini's Fascist Party, which tried to "purge" Italy of everything that was foreign (for instance, all characters in translated novels were given an Italian name) and which considered as dangerous the themes discussed in detective-fiction; therefore, Fascist-era Italian translations of foreign literature became the subject of several studies dealing with questions of censorship and ideology. Since they do not deal with issues as politically or morally poignant as other texts of that time, translations of detective fiction have only recently begun to be studied. Nonetheless, as it emerges from research such as Federici's (2018), Christie's works too underwent considerable modifications under Fascism: Parts of her novels were unnecessarily omitted and some elements of the story dealing with taboo topics, such as suicide, were changed. Spurio (2011) also argues that Fascist-era translations of Christie's fiction were subject to alterations and denounces the fact that these translations kept circulating until well into the 1980s, when new ones were finally commissioned; he provides examples of discrepancies between five of Christie's novels and their Italian translations, noting how translators from the Fascist period modified dialogues and descriptions of characters or omitted entire sentences in order to trim the books from whatever was not necessary to the investigation, to avoid taboo topics or to foster the regime's ideology (para. 3).

Spurio's study is the inspiration behind the present one: While Federici lists a Fascist-era edition of the novel she examines, Spurio refers to later editions, ranging from the 1950s to the late 1970s. I started to think whether it could be possible that, since the Fascist era translations were reedited numerous times through the years, some of the copious modifications imposed on Christie's works could be imputed to one of their re-editions, rather than to the Fascist-era translation. A similar study by Robyns (1990) on French translations of detective-fiction seemed to support this idea: He discovered that while first translations published in the 1940s and 1950s were usually unabridged, translations from the 1960s and 1970s were blatantly incomplete and operated considerable alterations to the original text (p. 40). In order to verify this hypothesis, I chose to examine Christie's 1935 work *Death in the Clouds* and three of its Italian translations all published by the same publishing house, Mondadori. The first translation, *Un delitto in cielo*, was translated by Luigi Bosa in 1936; here I use the 1937 edition (from here on *DiC1937*). The second is a 1986 re-edition of the same translation, which appears in a four-novel volume edited by Alberto Tedeschi and Gian Franco Orsi (from here on *DiC1986*); this version is considerably shorter than both the original and the first translation, which suggests that the editors might have eliminated some "unnecessary" passages in order to reduce the overall number of pages. The third, *Delitto in cielo*, is a translation by Grazia Maria Griffini that first appeared in 1983; here I use the 2019 edition (from here on *DiC2019*).<sup>1</sup> *Death in the Clouds* was selected for several reasons. Firstly, it can be considered representative of Christie's work because it is a classic whodunit with a closed circle of suspects as in most of Christie's novels. Secondly, by 1937 two campaigns

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<sup>1</sup> The most recent reprint was employed due to the impossibility to find the first edition of the 1983 translation. However, the translation did not undergo any modifications as suggested by the fact that *DiC2019* is referred to as a reprint of the first edition of Griffini's translation in the colophon.

against translations had already been launched with the intention “to impose some sort of quality control on translations” (Rundle, 2010, p. 28), which suggests that the publishing house would have started paying extra care to the content of its translations. Thirdly, the novel presents themes that could have been problematic under the Fascist regime and this gives us the opportunity to see how they were approached by the Fascist-era translator and, when alterations were made, whether the text was restored to its original appearance by the editors of the 1986 edition. Moreover, since both the re-edition and the re-translation of *Death in the Clouds* were published in the 1980s, the text offers us a chance to understand whether different conceptions of translation could exist at the same time.

## **Fascist Italy and Translation**

Translations were crucial to the Italian publishing industry at the time of the Fascist regime and in fact, during the 1930s, Italy was the country that produced the highest number of translations in the world (Rundle, 2010, p. 25). The success of foreign fiction relied mainly on the fact that readers looked for a sort of “escapist fiction,” such as detective or adventure novels, that Italian authors did not provide (Rubino, 2010, p. 149) and, possibly, to a lack of interest in Italian literature, with its “excessive emphasis on style” (p. 158). Despite the fact that translations “tend to attract censorial intervention” (Billiani, 2014, p. 3) because they allow to select which information can be passed from the source to the target culture, the Fascist regime, originally, did not interest itself much with translations, and felt more threatened by periodical publications as possible sites of subversion (Dunnett, 2002, p. 99; Rundle, 2010, p. 29; Talbot, 2007, p. 15). However, the reliance of the publishing industry on translations did not sit well with the Authors and Writers Union who saw translations both as an economic threat (Rundle & Sturge, 2010, p.

6) since, for instance, translations of foreign detective fiction works sold a staggeringly higher amount of copies than the average Italian author (Rundle, 2010, p. 22), and as a threat to the Italian language and culture because they were “poorly written” examples of “low quality literature” (Rundle, 2010, pp. 22-23).

The regime started to consider more seriously the problem of translations once it became an ideological question. Italy was very receptive to foreign literature, but Italian literature was not exported in other countries (Rundle, 2010, p. 18); this stood in stark contrast with the situation of a country like Germany, which was undoubtedly very receptive to foreign fiction, but whose literature was also widely translated abroad. Italian literature did not enjoy the same international prestige accorded to German or French literature and the country’s one-sided receptiveness to foreign cultures was thought to be potentially detrimental to Italian “national and cultural prestige” (Rundle & Sturge, 2010, p. 9). The threat posed by translations was already clear in 1930, when the regime asked that the Mondadori Publishing House should only select translations that did not “threaten [the] national cultural hegemony” (Billiani, 2014, pp. 16-17), but the first actual measure to control translations more closely was taken only in 1937, when the regime started to require publishers to submit a notification for every foreign text they wished to translate (Rundle, 2010, p. 29). In 1938, publishers were asked to provide a list of all the translations that they had published that far, as well as one of the books they were planning to translate (Rundle, 2010, p. 32). That same year, Italian embassies abroad were required to draft a list of undesirable foreign authors who were opposed to Fascism; moreover, all authors of Jewish origins were removed from the publishers’ catalogues following the promulgation of racial laws, and a Commission for the Purging of Books was established (Fabre, 1998/2014, pp. 32-33; Rundle, 2010, p. 35). In 1942 it was decided to impose a translation quota of 25 percent on all publishers, a percentage which could be raised if the publishing

house managed to export Italian works abroad (Rundle, 2010, pp. 39-40). The collapse of the regime in the summer of 1943 finally brought an end on the strict control imposed on the publishing houses.

The contents of the translations were subjected to continuous scrutiny throughout the whole period of Fascist rule in Italy, either by the censorship organs or by the publishing houses. Even though the regime did not set out specific guidelines, Fascist domestic and foreign policies “provided publishers . . . with a series of official and unofficial censorship criteria” (Nottola, 2010, p. 192) to follow: Taboo topics included abortion, incest, suicide (Dunnett, 2002, pp. 101-102), pacifism (p. 101), negative references to Italy or allusions to communism (p. 109), disrespect for the Catholic church, references to antifascism, and anything else that went against Fascist morality and policies on family. If a work discussed one of the aforementioned topics, then, publishers ran the risk of being denied permission to publish their translation. In order to avoid this, and potential financial loss, publishers asked for the regime’s authorization in advance or applied preventive self-censorship (Nottola, 2010, p. 194) by either modifying or cutting passages of the original text that did not fit the aforementioned criteria. While highbrow literature may have been subjected to stricter censorial controls (for instance, none of Hemingway’s novels could be published in Italy until the end of the Fascist regime) (Dunnett, 2002, p. 101), publishing houses were also careful to purge works of popular, or lowbrow, fiction from potentially problematic passages. After all, it was translated popular fiction that Italian readers devoured, that “stole readers away” from Italian fiction, and exposed them to the “*esempi di malcostume provenienti in particolar modo dalle più moderne . . . società anglosassoni* [examples of immorality coming from the more modern English-speaking societies in particular]” (Cembali, 2006, para. 10).

Detective fiction, specifically, was on the regime's radar. Introduced in Italy with Mondadori's series "Libri Gialli" (yellow books in Italian), books of detective fiction were for the major part translations of foreign works, since the genre was not considered a worthwhile occupation by the majority of serious Italian authors. It soon became extremely popular, so much so that Mondadori launched two other series, "I Gialli Economici Mondadori" (cheap Mondadori yellows), which was targeted at lower-income readers and came out twice a month, and the "Supergiallo" (superyellow), which was not published at set intervals of time and contained several detective novels (Dunnett, 2010, pp. 64-65). The success enjoyed by Mondadori's series, especially by "I Gialli Economici Mondadori," did not go unnoticed, and the regime started to take action specifically targeted against them. In 1941, the regime first prohibited to publish detective fiction in the form of instalments or periodicals; later that year, it was decided that publishers should obtain an authorization before they could publish detective fiction; then, that only publishing houses that were already publishing detective fiction were authorized to issue only one book per month (Rundle, 2010, p. 39). That year, Mondadori stopped publishing the series "I Libri Gialli" and, in 1943, all detective fiction was banned from publication because of a paper shortage (Rundle, 2010, p. 40).

Why exactly was detective fiction singled out? Jane Dunnett answers this question in her article "Crime and the Critics: On the Appraisal of Detective Novels in 1930s Italy," where she examines the opinions expressed by Fascist-era critics on this genre of literature. Most of them looked at detective fiction with suspicion, as "morally corrupting" (Dunnett, 2011, p. 746), a "social illness" (p. 751), "a disease that was spreading uncontrollably throughout Italian society" (p. 750). Some even claimed that "detective stories may quite literally be dangerous and incite the public to carry out criminal acts" (p. 751) and rejected the possibility that a detective story might take place in Italy because "the Italian cities . . . would be



improbable crime scenes” (p. 754), thus suggesting the alienness of crime to Italy. Again, some questioned the idea of justice presented in works belonging to this genre, as it sometimes went against state-administered law (p. 755). On the other hand, fewer critics commended detective fiction for its entertainment value, as opposed to the boring Italian literature that was being produced at that time and encouraged Italian authors to cater to their audience’s taste (pp. 758-759). However, even they still conceded that the genre was extraneous to serious literature (p. 760). The extreme popularity of detective fiction made it a potential vehicle of literary and moral corruption, hence the necessity to control it more closely.

### **Agatha Christie in Italy**

Agatha Christie’s early novels were part of the aforementioned series “Libri Gialli,” by Mondadori; the first of her works to be published in Italian was *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, which appeared in 1931 with the title *Dalle nove alle dieci* (From nine to ten). According to the Catalogo storico Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 27 more Christie’s books were published in different series before Mondadori stopped publishing detective fiction in 1941 (Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori, 2006). While this number might pale when compared with the 113 books by Edgar Wallace, another detective-fiction writer, that Mondadori published between 1929 and 1941, it is certain that the publishers were well-aware of Christie’s worth. For example, in a personal letter sent to Mondadori himself in 1934, Lorenzo Montano, the creator of the series “Libri Gialli,” suggested that Mondadori should acquire the rights to translate Agatha Christie’s work in Italy because “l’astro della Christie è decisamente in ascesa . . . contrariamente a quel che accade per Wallace [Christie’s star is definitely rising, contrarily to what is

happening to Wallace]” (Gallo, 2002, p. 200). Montano’s prediction proved to be right and, after the war, Mondadori went on to publish more than 300 books and collections of Christie’s works.

Since detective fiction was not considered real literature in the 1930s, “there were very few reviews of single authors or books of detective fiction” (Dunnett, 2011, p. 748); this, added to the impossibility of consulting archives in Italy, made it quite difficult to find any references about the reception of Christie’s work in Italy under the Fascist regime. Exceptions include an article on the popularity of detective fiction published in 1930 in which she is mentioned as one of the best female authors of detective fiction (Sorani, 1930, p. 217); two reviews of two plays, Christie’s *Black Coffee* and Morton’s *Alibi* (which was an adaptation of Christie’s *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*), which recognize the plot twists and ultimate solution to be absolutely unexpected and surprising (“Al Chiarella: Una tazza di caffè di Agatha Christie,” 1932, p. 4; “‘Alibi’ di M. Morton,” 1933, p. 2); and an advertisement of a movie based on a “avvincentissima trama della celeberrima scrittrice Agatha Christie [most-enthralling plot by the renowned author Agatha Christie]” (“Imminente al Vittoria,” 1938, p. 5). Even though her works might not have received critical attention, these short excerpts indicate that Christie was both known and appreciated by the general public, and not solely in book-form.

As I briefly mentioned in the introduction, research by Spurio (2011) and Federici (2018) discusses how Christie’s novels, sharing the same destiny as most other fiction, underwent considerable modifications and cuts under the Fascist regime. These alterations could usually be attributed to moral and ideological reasons (Federici mentions a suicide turned into a disappearance in the translation of *The Murder on the Orient Express*) (Federici, 2018, p. 46); to the necessity to make the book more economical by cutting passages, thereby reducing the number

of pages (Federici, 2018, pp. 41-42; Spurio, 2011, para. 2); or to stylistic reasons, as translations were seen as a vehicle to foster the standardization of Italian (Federici, 2018, p. 42) and were expected to be fluent, vivacious and easy to read (Albonetti, 1994, pp. 53-54). Numerous reprints and re-editions of Fascist-era translations were published by Mondadori, either as stand-alone books, or in volumes collecting several novels by Christie or other authors, as in the case of *DiC1986*. Christie's Italian audiences had to make do with these incomplete translations at least until the 1980s, when re-translations were commissioned. The production of re-translations, however, did not translate into the disappearance of the incomplete first translations from the market (I personally have in my library a 2010 edition of the Fascist-era translation of *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*). This year, in occasion of the one-hundredth anniversary since the publication of Christie's first novel, Mondadori has started to republish Agatha Christie's works in their most recent translation, which suggests that, today, the economical but incomplete translations that used to circulate might not represent a popular choice anymore, and also that, even after a whole century, the popularity of this queen of crime in Italy is still exceptional.

## **Femininity**

Agatha Christie was and is often seen as a conservative author with regard to class ideology (Schaub, 2013, p. 13; York, 2007, p. 70) and politics (Makinen, 2006, p. 9), longing for a return to Victorian social mores (Rowland, 2000, p. 40). However, Christie has also been rediscovered for her representation of "diverse, dominant, swashbuckling and violently active" (Makinen, 2006, p. 1) female characters who populate her novels. Christie's modern women were definitely not acceptable models in Fascist Italy, where the image of the ideal woman was still the

traditional one of wife and mother who stayed home to care for her family. None of the three principal female characters that appear in *Death in the Clouds*, namely, Jane Grey, Venetia Kerr and Lady Horbury, fits that image. The following paragraphs will discuss some of the passages in which these women appear and how or whether they were altered in translation.

Jane Grey is one of the characters that accompany Poirot the most in his investigation and one the readers grow most attached to. She is an assistant hairdresser in a London establishment who, having won some money with the Irish Sweep, decides to travel to the renowned locality of Le Pinet: Herself belonging to the lower class, she wants to have a taste of the lifestyle of some of her richest clients and, at Le Pinet, she meets for the first time Norman Gale, with whom she falls in love in the course of the novel, and who is later discovered to be the murderer. Jane is one of Christie's modern women, who strives for independence and is not afraid to go after what she wants. While this characteristic is kept in *DiC2019*, it is sometimes toned down, or even omitted, in *DiC1937* and *DiC1986*. In Table 1 we see that Jane, sick of being questioned about the murder she witnessed by multiple clients, decides to demand a raise from her employer if he wants her to keep up the recital to attract new clients.<sup>2</sup>

Jane emerges from the passage in Table 1 as a woman with self-control who is able to turn an exasperating situation into an advantageous one. This image, however, is modified in both *DiC1937* and *DiC1986*: They both turn Jane's comical exasperation into a fit of hysteria, thus turning this comical passage into one evocative of stereotypes about women's inability to control their own emotions. Moreover, when Jane's smart solution to her problem is presented, both *DiC1937* and *DiC1986* describe it as an emotional response to her situation: She

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<sup>2</sup> All translations from Italian are mine; text in bold font is marked by me.

Table 1

*Jane Turns an Unpleasant Situation Into an Opportunity*

<i>Death in the Clouds</i>	<i>DiC1937</i>	<i>DiC1986</i>	<i>DiC2019</i>
Jane felt her nerves giving way under the strain. Sometimes she felt that if she had to go through the recital once again she would scream or attack her questioner with the dryer. However, in the end <b>she hit upon a better way of relieving her feelings.</b> She approached M. Antoine and <b>boldly</b> demanded a rise of salary. (Christie, 1935/1987, p. 123)	Giovanna non ne poteva più e pensava che se avesse dovuto raccontare un'altra volta la sua avventura, le sarebbe venuto certamente un attacco isterico. Per consolarsi, pensò di andare da Monsieur Antoine e di domandargli un aumento di paga [after a week, Giovanna couldn't take it anymore and thought that, if she had to tell her adventure one more time, she would have gone in a fit of hysteria. To cheer herself up, she decided to go to Monsieur Antoine to ask a rise of salary]. (Christie, 1935/1937, p. 127)	dopo una settimana, Jane non ne poteva più. Temeva sempre di cadere in preda a un attacco isterico, quando qualche nuovo cliente cominciava . . . Per consolarsi pensò di andare da Antoine a chiedergli un aumento [after a week, Jane couldn't take it anymore. She always feared she would have a fit of hysteria when some new client began asking. To cheer herself up she decided to go to Antoine and ask for a raise]. (Christie, 1935/1986, p. 233)	Jane si accorse che i suoi nervi cominciavano a risentire della tensione. Talvolta le sembrava che, se avesse dovuto descrivere ancora una volta quello che era successo, si sarebbe messa a urlare o avrebbe aggredito con l'asciugacapelli la donna che la bombardava di domande. Tuttavia, alla fine, <b>trovò un modo migliore di manifestare i propri sentimenti.</b> Chiese un colloquio a "monsieur Antoine" e gli domandò, <b>audacemente</b> , un aumento di stipendio [Jane realized that her nerves were giving way under the strain. Sometimes she felt that, if she had to describe one more time what had happened, she would have screamed or would have attacked with the dryer the woman that bombarded her with questions. However, in the end, she found a better way of relieving her feelings. She approached "monsieur Antoine" and boldly asked a rise of salary]. (Christie, 1935/2019, p. 129)

asks for a raise “per consolarsi” (to console herself). The boldness of Jane’s demand is also lost in these two translations. *DiC2019*, instead, faithfully replicates Jane’s original reaction; however, the hypothetical next “questioner” that Jane might be facing is turned into “la donna che la bombardava di domande” (the woman that bombarded her with questions). This “exaggeration” is a stylistic choice of the translator, who might have wished to make the image more vivid for her readers.

In another passage, having obtained the raise from Antoine, Jane is congratulated by her friend Gladys, who praises her for her ability to “fend for herself,” her “grit” and tells her that “[m]eekness doesn’t pay in this life” (Christie, 1935/1987, p. 124): While this passage is preserved in *DiC2019* (Christie, 1935/2019, p. 130), both *DiC1937* and *DiC1986* omit it. *DiC1937*’s decision is naturally motivated by the same reasons which led it to modify the passage in Table 1: The Fascist regime’s ideal woman was not the woman in the workplace, because a woman should be a “sposa e madre esemplare [exemplar wife and mother]” (Dittrich-Johansen, 1995, p. 812), she should stay at home and submit herself to the patriarchal authority (pp. 816-817), and dedicate her life to raising “[i] futuri soldati della patria [the future soldiers of the motherland]” (p. 822). According to the regime, real women had to possess the womanly qualities of “passività, innocenza, rassegnazione [passiveness, innocence, resignation]” (p. 825). Therefore, a character as independent and strong as Jane would not have fit the regime’s agenda.

Venetia Kerr, a noblewoman and one of the suspects in the murder case, also presents some problematic traits. The most evident one is probably her boldness in pursuing a relationship with her friend Stephen, who is already married to Lady Horbury. Table 2 shows how the translations render the passage in which Venetia Kerr proposes that she and Stephen elope together, so that Lady Horbury will be forced to consent to divorce him.

**Table 2***Venetia Asks Stephen to Elope*

<i>Death in the Clouds</i>	<i>DiC1937</i>	<i>DiC1986</i>	<i>DiC2019</i>
'Stephen, if you care - what about it? If we went off together Cicely would have to divorce you.' He interrupted her fiercely. (Christie, 1935/1987, p. 120)	—	—	«Stephen, se ce ne andassimo insieme, Cecily sarebbe costretta a chiedere il divorzio da te.» Stephen la interruppe con enfasi ['Stephen, if we went off together Cecily would be forced to divorce you.' Stephen interrupted her earnestly]. (Christie, 1935/2019, p. 125)

While the divorce plotline is preserved in all translations, despite the fact that in the 1930s divorce was still illegal, Venetia's suggestion that she and Stephen run away together as an unmarried couple might have seemed too risky for the translator of *DiC1937* to preserve. Firstly, Catholicism rejected the possibility that two people could live together before marriage; secondly, the idea that a woman could entertain such ideas was highly improper, so *DiC1937*'s censure is not surprising. *DiC1986*, too, decides not to reintegrate the passage, which is preserved only by *DiC2019*.

The last female character to be discussed is Lady Horbury, who is the epitome of what a woman should not be: Not only does she openly have affairs despite being married, but she also takes drugs and gambles her money away. Originally a chorus girl, she becomes a Lady by marrying Lord Stephen Horbury and the fact that she is not a true noblewoman is made clear throughout the novel by her often-inappropriate behavior: For instance, she often curses when she speaks, an idiosyncrasy that is omitted from both *DiC1937* and *DiC1986*.

**Table 3***Lady Horbury Swears*

<i>Death in the Clouds</i>	<i>DiC1937</i>	<i>DiC1986</i>	<i>DiC2019</i>
Cicely Horbury said, 'Hell!' (Christie, 1935/1987, p. 17)	—	—	Cicely Horbury esclamò: « <b>Accidenti!</b> » [Cicely Horbury exclaimed: 'Damn it!']. (Christie, 1935/2019, p. 10)
My God, what shall I do? It's the <b>hell</b> of a mess – the <b>hell</b> of a mess. (Christie, 1935/1987, p. 16)	E ora che cosa faccio? È un bel pasticcio, un bel pasticcio! [And what do I do now? It's a big mess, a big mess!] (Christie, 1935/1937, p. 16)	E ora, cosa farò? È un pasticcio [And what will I do, now? It's a mess]. (Christie, 1935/1986, p. 170)	Mio Dio, cosa farò? Che <b>maledetto</b> pasticcio . . . che <b>maledetto</b> pasticcio [My God, what will I do? What a damned mess . . . what a damned mess]. (Christie, 1935/2019, p. 9)
Didn't I give evidence in that <b>damned</b> court and say that I had never heard of the woman? (Christie, 1935/1987, p. 116)	Ma non ho forse già dichiarato di non conoscerla neppure per nome? [Didn't I already declare that I didn't know her, not even by name?] (Christie, 1935/1937, p. 121)	Ma ho già dichiarato all'inchiesta che non conoscevo quella donna neanche di nome [I have already declared at the inquest that I didn't know that woman, not even by name]. (Christie, 1935/1986, p. 229)	Non ho forse fatto la mia deposizione a quella <b>maledetta</b> inchiesta e non ho detto di non aver mai sentito parlare di quella donna? [Didn't I give evidence in that damned inquest and say that I had never heard of that woman?] (Christie, 1935/2019, p. 121)

Table 3 shows that the swearwords are preserved only in *DiC2019*, while they are omitted in the other two translations. At a first glance, it might be possible to think that *DiC1937* and *DiC1986* are trying to better the image of the lady, but that



is not the case, since Lady Horbury is presented throughout the novel as an unquestionably negative character.

If we take a look at the other instances in which swearwords appear, we will see that they are treated in a similar way. Let us, for instance, look at the gender-directed insults thought, not said aloud, by Lady Horbury and Venetia Kerr: Lady Horbury refers to the soon-to-be-victim Madame Giselle as a “bitch” while Venetia Kerr calls Lady Horbury a “tart” twice. The first insult is the only one to be rendered in all translations, although it is worth noting that none of them opts for a word as offensive as the original “bitch,” but rather use “megera” (*DiC1937*, *DiC1986*) and “strega” (*DiC2019*), which can be translated as “hag.” The choice not to render the original with a swearword made by *DiC1937* is understandable, as it would have been highly improper for a woman to speak like that at that time. Conversely, *DiC2019* could indeed have selected one of the more vulgar words that are used nowadays to translate “bitch,” but it is possible that the translator, mindful of the fact that the novel was originally published in the 1930s, did not want to use any word that would sound unsuitable for that time. “Tart” is translated only by *DiC2019*, while *DiC1937* and *DiC1986* omit the sentence in which it appears: References to women’s lewd behavior were to be avoided at all costs under the Fascist regime,<sup>3</sup> consequently, passages containing this sort of allegations against women could not be preserved. Likely, *DiC1986* either merely followed *DiC1937*’s choice or intentionally omitted the passages because seemingly unnecessary.

While all instances in which women use swearwords (or in which swearwords indicate sexual promiscuity on the part of women) are eliminated, it is still possible to see male characters using them, as can be seen in Table 4.

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<sup>3</sup> For instance, there were Fascist guidelines requiring magazines and papers to offer only virginal images of women (Albonetti, 1994, p. 33).

**Table 4***Swearwords Uttered by Men*

<i>Death in the Clouds</i>	<i>DiC1937</i>	<i>DiC1986</i>	<i>DiC2019</i>
If we pass the dividend the fat's in the fire . . . Oh, <b>hell!</b> (Christie, 1935/1987, p. 18)	E se non paghiamo il dividendo sono guai . . . <b>Al diavolo!</b> [If we don't pay the dividend we'll be in trouble . . . To the devil!] (Christie, 1935/1937, p. 18)	—	Se lo voteremo in consiglio, questo dividendo, sarà una bella frittata . . . Oh! <b>accidenti</b> [If we vote it in the counsel, this dividend, the fat's in the fire . . . Oh! darn]. (Christie, 1935/2019, p. 12)
That <b>cursed</b> maid had destroyed everything. (Christie, 1935/1987, p. 86)	Quella <b>stupida</b> cameriera aveva distrutto ogni cosa [That stupid maid had destroyed everything]. (Christie, 1935/1937, p. 90)	—	Sì, quella <b>maledetta</b> cameriera ha distrutto ogni cosa [Yes, that damned maid had destroyed everything]. (Christie, 1935/2019, p. 87)

The only translation in which the swearwords are not preserved is *DiC1986*, but this is due to the fact that the passages in which they appeared were either shortened or omitted. Conversely, they are rendered in both *DiC2019* and *DiC1937*, which supports the idea that the elimination of the previously cited swearwords can be attributed to the fact that the persons uttering them were women.

Clearly, Christie's assortment of swearwords is quite limited and most of them would probably not even be considered offensive today; however, in the context of 1930s England, her decision to have characters, especially female characters, utter this type of language is not to be taken too lightly, as she herself reminds readers in the novel *The Murder on the Links*: Here Captain Hastings, one of Poirot's recurrent companions, is shocked when he hears a woman say "[h]ell" and comments that "a woman should be 'womanly'" and that "he has no patience with

what he thinks of as modern girls who dance, smoke and swear” (York, 2007, p. 85). According to Makinen (2006), Christie “consistently problematises attempts to stereotype what constitutes femininity” and strives to present “a whole variety and complexity of viable models of femininity” (p. 118): Therefore, it can be assumed that Christie’s decision to make her female characters swear is a way of implementing this intention and is in no way meant to be considered negatively. Proof of this is the fact that not only “bad” characters, such as Lady Horbury, but also “positive” characters, such as Venetia, use swearwords. Therefore, *DiC1937*’s negation of Jane’s resourcefulness and its decision to omit the swearwords, along with *DiC1986*’s failure to restore the original passages, take away an important element of characterization of Christie’s women.

## Morality

In detective-fiction, a crime constitutes a disruption of an equilibrium and return to order can only be attained when the crime is solved and the culprit identified. On the road that leads to the discovery of the criminal and of his motives, detective stories unfailingly touch upon questions of “guilt and responsibility,” so that the detective’s final solution “has a marked moral dimension, engaging the reader in moral evaluation as well” (Pyrhönen, 1999, p. 4). In particular, detective fiction published in the interwar period, among which *Death in the Clouds* can be counted, was published at a time of social instability and, according to Ackershoek (1997), satisfied the public’s need to be reassured, “at least for the length of a novel, that crises can be overcome and viable, if different, social order be reclaimed from chaos” (p. 121). Therefore, Christie novels do indeed present moral judgements and uphold certain moral values. However,

they are not necessarily mirrored in their Italian translations and, in fact, in *DiC1986* it is possible to identify some differences from the original with regards to morality, which mostly take the form of either omissions or additions.

## Crime

Inspector Japp, who cooperates with Poirot in several of his stories, is the first policeman to arrive on the scene of the crime and the one who allows Poirot to join the investigation. Even though he is a good-humored man who likes making jokes, he is also very austere and quite close-minded when it comes to his work. However, there are instances in which Japp's reactions to crimes are exaggerated in *DiC1986*, possibly for moral reasons. In the example reported in Table 5, Japp has been informed by the police that the victim, Madame Giselle, had instructed her maid to burn all the documents containing information about her debtors in case of her demise. Following is Japp's comment on the old lady's shrewdness.

**Table 5**

*Japp's Comment After the Documents Were Burned*

<i>Death in the Clouds</i>	<i>DiC1937</i>	<i>DiC1986</i>	<i>DiC2019</i>
'What? But that's amazing!' Japp stared. (Christie, 1935/1987, p. 64)	- Come, come? Ma questo è straordinario! - esclamò Japp ['What, what? But this is extraordinary!' exclaimed Japp]. (Christie, 1935/1937, p. 66)	« <b>Ma questo è delittuoso!</b> » esclamò Japp ['But this is criminal!' exclaimed Japp]. (Christie, 1935/1986, p. 198)	«Cosa? Ma è incredibile!» esclamò Japp ['What? But it's incredible!' exclaimed Japp]. (Christie, 1935/2019, p. 63)

While *DiC1937* and *DiC2019* translate the passage quite literally, *DiC1986* changes Japp's reaction. In the original, Japp seems to be surprised and shocked by

Madame Giselle's far-sightedness, but *DiC1986*'s word-choice indicates that the policeman is condemning her actions: This decision seems to suggest that the editors of *DiC1986* thought it was not acceptable for a policeman to admire the sagacity of someone whom he should consider a criminal. As will be showed in the following paragraphs, this is not the only addition of a moral nature encountered in *DiC1986*.

## **Money**

*DiC1986* ultimately proves to be the translation that makes more alterations also in the passages that describe some of the characters' vices and business endeavors: gambling, moneylending, and drugs. Interestingly, these alterations all have a moral connotation.

Le Pinet is a locality famous for his casinos and, during her holiday, Jane allotted a daily sum for gambling. The passage of Table 6 describes her lack of luck.

*DiC1986* has made considerable changes to the original, which in translation read like a moral judgement: First of all, the verb "dilapidare" (squander) implies that Jane is using her money in an irresponsible way; secondly, the addition of "dopo soli pochi minuti di gioco" (after only a few minutes of gambling) seems meant to scare the reader, to warn him about the dangers of gambling, something that is absent from both the original and the other translations.

Another delicate topic connected to questions of morality is Madame Giselle's career as a moneylender. Naturally, several characters express their disapproval of her profession in the original text. However, that might not have been enough for the editors of *DiC1986*, who decided to add a few details in the translation to remind readers that her profession is morally wrong. The first example is taken from a conversation between Poirot, Japp, Fournier and Madame Giselle's attorney.

Table 6

*Gambling*

<i>Death in the Clouds</i>	<i>DiC1937</i>	<i>DiC1986</i>	<i>DiC2019</i>
<p>Contrary to the prevalent superstition, Jane's beginner's luck had been bad. This was her fourth evening and the last stake of that evening. (Christie, 1935/1987, p. 14)</p>	<p>Contrariamente alla corrente superstiziosa, ella aveva avuto poca fortuna come principiante. La quarta sera aveva già quasi del tutto esaurito la somma giornaliera dedicata al gioco [Contrary to the current superstition, she hadn't had much luck as a beginner. On the fourth evening she had almost already finished the daily sum devoted to gambling]. (Christie, 1935/1937, p. 12)</p>	<p>Al contrario di quanto succede ai giocatori alle prime armi, aveva avuto poca fortuna. La quarta sera, <b>dopo soli pochi minuti di gioco, aveva già dilapidato</b> quasi tutta la quota giornaliera destinata al tavolo verde [Contrary to what happens to beginners, she hadn't had much luck. On the fourth night, after only a few minutes of gambling, she had almost already squandered the daily sum devoted to the green table]. (Christie, 1935/1986, p. 169)</p>	<p>Contrariamente a una superstizione molto diffusa, Jane non aveva avuto la classica fortuna dei principianti. Era accaduto la quarta sera, quando stava per fare l'ultima puntata [Contrary to a widespread superstition, Jane hadn't had the classic beginner's luck. It happened on the fourth night, when she was about to place her last bet]. (Christie, 1935/2019, p. 6)</p>

Table 7

*Moneylenders*

<i>Death in the Clouds</i>	<i>DiC1937</i>	<i>DiC1986</i>	<i>DiC2019</i>
<p>but I may tell you that she had her own methods of getting paid. (Christie, 1935/1987, p. 62)</p>	<p>ma vi posso assicurare che i metodi per farsi pagare erano tutti suoi [But I can assure you that the methods of getting paid were all hers]. (Christie, 1935/1937, p. 64)</p>	<p>ma i metodi che aveva <b>per costringere i suoi creditori a pagare</b> erano particolari [But the methods that she had to force her debtors to pay were particular]. (Christie, 1935/1986, p. 197)</p>	<p>ma posso garantirvi che aveva suoi metodi personalissimi per farsi pagare [But I can assure you that she had her own personal methods of getting paid]. (Christie, 1935/2019, p. 60)</p>

In Table 7, *DiC1986* adds “per costringere i suoi creditori” (to force her debtors) to a sentence that was originally devoid of any negative judgement, so that the reader might not be tempted to admire the sagacity and shrewdness of the old lady. This addition appears a total of two times on the same page. Another device used by the editors of *DiC1986* is to substitute the name of the character, Madame Giselle, for “l’usuraia” (usurer), a term that implies a strong negative judgement and that leaves no room for pity. As stated above, the characters in the novel already express their censure in the original, so *DiC1986*’s intensification of their aversion must be due to the editors’ wish to remind readers of the immorality of that profession.

## Drugs

As I previously mentioned, Lady Horbury is undoubtedly a disagreeable character for whom readers are not supposed to feel sympathy. Her highly immoral behavior is commented upon negatively by several characters. Interestingly, despite the fact that these comments are already quite negative in Christie’s original text, there are several instances in which her image is worsened in *DiC1986*, as shown in Table 8.

Here, Jean Dupont, one of the passengers on the plane where the murder was committed, is expressing his opinion about Lady Horbury to Jane Grey. While *DiC1937* and *DiC2019* render his speech quite literally, *DiC1986* makes several additions which exacerbate Dupont’s statement and turn it into a harsh judgement of both the Lady and her vices, which are described as “disgustosi” (revolting).

Even though *DiC1937* might have been expected to feature alterations meant to make the text adhere to Fascist morality, it is *DiC1986* that operates the most changes. Instead of merely following the decisions taken by *DiC1937*, which is the usual strategy adopted by the editors of *DiC1986*, this translation includes

additional details that seem to be meant to warn readers against the behaviors depicted in the novels. This is undeniably a surprising finding, which reminds us that the manipulation of translations can indeed happen even in the absence of an ideologically-charged context as the one in which the translator of *DiC1937* worked, and also shows how substantial an influence editors can exercise on a translation.

**Table 8***Jean Dupont on Lady Horbury*

<i>Death in the Clouds</i>	<i>DiC1937</i>	<i>DiC1986</i>	<i>DiC2019</i>
'She lives for sensation, that one. For high play, perhaps for drugs'. (Christie, 1935/1987, p. 129)	Non vive che per provare delle sensazioni, e forse fa uso di stupefacenti [She only lives for sensations, and maybe she does drugs]. (Christie, 1935/1937, p. 132)	Quel tipo di donne vive per provare sensazioni nuove e, <b>quando non ne trova, sprofonda nei baratri più disgustosi. Non mi meraviglierei che fosse dedita agli stupefacenti</b> [That kind for women live to feel new sensations and, when they can't find any, they sink into the most revolting depths. I wouldn't be surprised if she did drugs]. (Christie, 1935/1986, pp. 235-236)	Vive unicamente per le sensazioni forti, quella donna. Per puntare in alto, magari anche per la droga [She only lives for strong sensations, that woman. For high play, perhaps for drugs, too]. (Christie, 1935/2019, p. 135)

## Intrigue

Agatha Christie's stories have enjoyed enormous success and have never stopped satisfying readerships since they were first published. The reason of this



success, naturally, can be attributed to the intrigue of the novels: Whoever has read Christie's novels will have experienced the frustration of being unable to guess who the culprit is or, as it has sometimes been the case with me, to correctly guess the culprit (usually before any clue is actually given) but still be unable to explain why or how the murder was committed. Obviously, Christie has different ways to mislead her readers: For instance, Hark (1997) identifies an important strategy adopted by Christie, namely, that her detectives usually turn the most likely suspects into nonsuspects by "accepting their alibis or otherwise vouching for them" (pp. 112-113). For instance, the culprit of *Death in the Clouds* is asked by Poirot to help in the investigation by pretending to blackmail another one of the suspects, and this leads the reader to eliminate him from the list of suspects. The way characters are depicted also encourages the reader to form a certain opinion of them and to make hypotheses about their innocence or guilt. For example, Norman Gale is portrayed as a shy young man who is always nervous in the presence of the girl he likes, which endears him to the reader and makes it easier for him to hide his true nature; conversely, the egotistical nature and objectionable conduct of Lady Horbury would make her a more easily predictable villain. While *DiC1937* and *DiC2019* closely follow the plot of the original, there are instances in which *DiC1986* modifies the original intrigue by adding details that point the reader to a specific character as the culprit, which suggests that making the solution more accessible to the reader is prioritized over the necessity of shortening the story.

By the end of the novel, Poirot informs the readers that Norman Gale is the murderer of both Madame Giselle and her daughter, and explains his motive and how he carried out the crime. Usually, at this point in detective novels, readers halt their search for an answer and begin to listen to the detective's explanation as "the most passive of consumers" (Hark, 1997, p. 111); as soon as the mystery is revealed, they lose interest in the novel because what is posited as the central

meaning of the text is the mystery itself (Hühn, 1987, p. 458), thereby missing the chance to check whether the explanation given by the author is plausible and whether they would have been able to get to the solution if they had paid more attention. Going back to the text indeed allows readers to find those inconsistencies or subtle clues that the author has left for them so that they could have a chance at finding the murderer; however, in the case of the Italian translations under analysis, readers of different translations are not all given the exact same clues. Interestingly, *DiC1986* tends to give quite different clues than the original.

The first additional clue can be found right before Madame Giselle's murder is disclosed, when Christie writes that Norman Gale goes to the toilet: Since the movements of other characters on the plane are also being discussed (for instance, Mr. Ryder and Mr. Clancy's), the fact that Christie would write this does not arouse any sort of suspicion in the readers.

**Table 9***Norman Gale Leaves His Seat*

<i>Death in the Clouds</i>	<i>DiC1937</i>	<i>DiC1986</i>	<i>DiC2019</i>
Norman Gale rose and went to the toilet. (Christie, 1935/1987, p. 18)	Ermanno Gale si alzò e andò al lavandino [Ermanno Gale rose and went to the toilet]. (Christie, 1935/1937, p. 18)	Herman Gale si alzò, <b>prese la borsa di cuoio</b> e andò alla toilette [Herman Gale rose, took his leather bag and went to the toilet]. (Christie, 1935/1986, p. 171)	Norman Gale si alzò e andò alla toilette [Norman Gale rose and went to the toilet]. (Christie, 1935/2019, p. 12)

The first difference that readers can notice is that in *DiC1986* Gale is said to be carrying a leather bag with him: Why would he take his bag to the toilet? We would immediately ask. Gale's trip to the toilet and his taking his bag with him are mentioned again in Chapter four: The police are asking the passengers whether

they saw anyone leaving their seat and Mr. Ryder claims to have seen Norman Gale going to the toilet with his bag, a detail that, as shown in Table 10, is absent from both the original and *DiC1937* and *DiC2019*.

**Table 10**

*Mr. Ryder's Deposition on Norman Gale*

<i>Death in the Clouds</i>	<i>DiC1937</i>	<i>DiC1986</i>	<i>DiC2019</i>
'Was he carrying anything in his hand?'	- Aveva nulla in mano?	«Aveva nulla in mano?»	«Portava qualcosa in mano?»
'Nothing at all.'	- Nulla.	« <b>Una borsa di cuoio sotto il braccio.</b> »	«Assolutamente nulla.»
'You're sure of that?'	- È ben sicuro di questo?	«Siete ben sicuro di questo?»	«Siete ben sicuro di questo?»
'Quite.' (Christie, 1935/1987, p. 48)	- Assolutamente.	«Nel modo più assoluto.»	«Sicurissimo.»
['Did he have anything in his hand?'	['Did he have anything in his hand?'	['Did he have anything in his hand?'	['Was he carrying anything in his hand?'
'Nothing.' 'Are you quite sure about this?'	'Nothing.' 'Are you quite sure about this?'	'A leather bag under his arm.' 'Are you quite sure about this?'	'Nothing at all.' 'Are you quite sure about this?'
'Absolutely.'](Christie, 1935/1937, p. 48)	'Absolutely.'](Christie, 1935/1937, p. 48)	'Absolutely.'](Christie, 1935/1986, p. 188)	'Absolutely sure.'](Christie, 1935/2019, p. 43)

Since the detail of Gale carrying his bag with him to the toilet was added in the first passage presented in Table 9, this passage has to be consistent with that and therefore Mr. Ryder's deposition is modified. This changed detail leads readers to suspect that there might be something important in this bag and naturally they would expect to find out what that is during Gale's interrogation: At that point, however, the police ask no question about the bag. Then, in Chapter eight, when Poirot is given a list of what the passengers were carrying in their hand baggage, readers are told that Gale was carrying a white-linen coat (Christie, 1935/1987, p. 79): Why would a dentist on holiday carry a white-linen coat with him? For the

most expert readers, it would be easy to make hypotheses about how the linen coat could have been used: Gale might have worn the coat to conceal his identity and pretend to be someone else. If the police themselves ignore this piece of evidence, why would *DiC1986* decide to mention it at all? It is true that, at the end of the original novel, Christie tells us that Gale had indeed gone to the toilet with his bag and used the white-linen coat to impersonate a steward in order to get close to Madame Giselle unnoticed; however, she decides that this important detail should be concealed from the readers until the moment in which the murderer is finally revealed. One possible explanation as to why *DiC1986* should anticipate it is that the editors of *DiC1986* decided to reintegrate it earlier in the novel in order to give readers a fair shot at finding the murderer.

So, was Christie purposely playing dirty by withholding information from readers? I would not say so. In 1928 S. S. Van Dine, who was very critical of Christie's devices, wrote "Twenty Rules for Writing Detective Fiction," in which he described what techniques writers of detective stories were or were not allowed to use if they wished to create successful mysteries. Two of these rules state that the reader needs to be given the exact same clues that are available to the detective and that the reader cannot be deceived unless the deception is played by the criminal on the detective too (Van Dine, 1946, p. 189): The decision of arranging the story so that the other passengers do not notice that Gale takes the bag with him, then, does not violate these rules because Poirot, who was asleep for most of the journey, does not know that either. Poirot and the readers are given the same amount of information. Another possible explanation for this addition is that the editors did not think it convincing that no one should have noticed the bag and so decided to add it in to make the story more plausible; however, it would not be unrealistic to think that the other passengers actually did not notice it, considering nobody was especially paying attention to Gale.

Singer (1984) argues that the reason of Christie's success lies in the fact that the solutions to her crimes are not arbitrary: Many whodunits resort to the technique of making the least likely character the culprit, so that it would be hard for readers to get to the correct solution; Christie, instead, often chooses the most likely suspect to be the murderer, someone who has a clear motive and who has played a central role in the story (p. 159). The difficulty of solving Christie's mysteries, then, has to lie in the way her stories are constructed: For instance, Singer (1984) finds several "block elements" in Christie's novels that help her misguide her readers, such as red herrings, contradictions or going against readers' expectations (pp. 161-162, 169) and goes as far as to claim that "following a progressive series of Agatha Christie's clues only leads to total confusion" (p. 170). Therefore, preserving the original intrigue laid out by Christie is important in order to allow readers to fully enjoy their reading experience. The analysis of how the intrigue is translated, however, has proven that this does not always happen in the Italian translations. The results show that *DiC2019* is the closest to the original, while the most different is *DiC1986*. Surprisingly, *DiC1937* does not deviate considerably from the text, and is significantly closer to *DiC2019* in terms of completeness and faithfulness than *DiC1986*.

## Explicitation

As discussed in the previous section, *DiC1986* employs an accommodating strategy aimed at making the murderer more recognizable to the readers, by giving them information that the author of the source text had purposely not disclosed. This finding suggested to research other strategies used in the translations that are aimed to aid readers' comprehension, the most obvious being explicitation. For the purpose of this paper, I consider as instances of explicitation those "additions in a

translated text which cannot be explained by structural, stylistic, or rhetorical differences between the two languages” (Séguinot, 1988, p. 108).

In the first example, presented in Table 11, all three translations use explicating solutions to translate an English idiom.

**Table 11**

*Japp Suspects Mr. Clancy*

<i>Death in the Clouds</i>	<i>DiC1937</i>	<i>DiC1986</i>	<i>DiC2019</i>
I suppose that little writer chap <b>hasn't gone off his onion</b> and decided to do one of his crimes in the flesh instead of on paper? (Christie, 1935/1987, p. 32)	Chissà che quell'autore di libri gialli non abbia deciso tutto d'un tratto di tradurre in realtà qualcuna delle sue immaginarie trame? [Who knows, maybe that detective-story writer all of a sudden decided to turn some of his imaginary plots into reality?] (Christie, 1935/1937, p. 31)	L'assassino non potrebbe essere quello scrittore di romanzi gialli, che tutto a un tratto ha deciso di tradurre in realtà qualcuna delle sue trame? [Couldn't the murderer be that detective-story writer, who all of a sudden decided to turn some of his plots into reality?] (Christie, 1935/1986, p. 178)	Non ci sarà da pensare che quel piccoletto, lo scrittore di romanzi polizieschi, <b>abbia perduto il bene dell'intelletto</b> e abbia deciso di mettere in atto uno dei suoi delitti nella realtà, invece di farli vivere solo sulla carta? [Wouldn't we have to think that that little man, the detective-story writer, lost his mind and decided to do one of his crimes in reality, instead of making them live only on paper?] (Christie, 1935/2019, pp. 25-26)

The idiom “go off one’s onion” has a non-compositional meaning and is used to refer to someone’s suddenly going crazy. The only translation to render it with a similar idiom in Italian is *DiC2019*, which opts for “perdere il bene dell’intelletto” (lost his mind); despite the use of a corresponding idiom, *DiC2019* evidently constitutes an explication, because the meaning of the idiom can be easily inferred from its literal meaning. On the other hand, *DiC1937* and *DiC1986* omit the idiom

and substitute it with the adverbs “tutto d’un tratto” and “tutto a un tratto” (all of a sudden), which eliminate the reference to the writer’s potential craziness, but still efficiently convey the idea of the impetuosity of his decision.

Mr. Clancy is also the subject of the following example. During an interrogation, he mentions that he had left his seat to take a railway guide from the pocket of his coat to work on an alibi. The following extract shows his conversation with Inspector Japp.

**Table 12**

*Mr. Clancy Mentions an Alibi*

<i>Death in the Clouds</i>	<i>DiC1937</i>	<i>DiC1986</i>	<i>DiC2019</i>
He had been absorbed in the perfecting of his cross-Europe alibi. ‘Alibi, eh?’ said the inspector darkly. (Christie, 1935/1987, p. 36)	era stato assorto nel perfezionamento del suo alibi . . . <b>per il libro.</b> – Un alibi, eh? – fece l’ispettore bruscamente [He had been absorbed in the perfecting of his alibi . . . for the book. ‘An alibi, eh?’ – said the inspector abruptly]. (Christie, 1935/1937, p. 36)	«E per tutto il resto del tempo, sono stato assorto nel mio alibi.» «Un alibi?» ripeté Japp, sorpreso. « <b>Si, quello per il mio assassino. Sto scrivendo un nuovo libro.</b> » [‘And for the rest of the time I was absorbed in my alibi.’ ‘An alibi?’ repeated Japp, surprised. ‘Yes, the one for my murderer. I’m writing a new book.’] (Christie, 1935/1986, p. 181)	Era stato assorbito dal perfezionamento di un certo alibi durante un viaggio attraverso l’Europa. «Alibi, eh?» disse l’ispettore in tono cupo [He had been absorbed in the perfecting of a certain alibi during a cross-Europe trip. ‘Alibi, eh?’ said the inspector darkly]. (Christie, 1935/2019, p. 30)

While *DiC2019* is a quite literal translation of the original, we can see that *DiC1937* and *DiC1986* both explain what kind of alibi Mr. Clancy was working on: Even though the profession of Mr. Clancy is known to all readers, it is possible that Christie mentioned the word “alibi” in order to confuse readers and plant the seed of doubt in their mind; after all, Mr. Clancy is so overly naive and enthusiastic that

it is possible that his behavior is only an act. *DiC1937* and *DiC1986*'s specification of the nature of the alibi makes explicit what readers might have already suspected, but at the same time also categorically eliminates the possibility that Mr. Clancy's words are interpreted in any other way. This, in turn, helps readers to eliminate Mr. Clancy from the suspects' list. What is interesting is that *DiC1986* turns the whole passage into a dialogue between Mr. Clancy and Inspector Japp and not only makes explicit what was originally implicit, but also adds new information that is absent from the source text. While all translations employ explicating strategies, *DiC1986* is the only one to display a consistent tendency to disambiguate information that might create difficulties for the readers.

## Conclusion

*DiC1937* seems to confirm the findings of previous research on Fascist-era translations with regard to the omissions and ideology-related alterations attributed to translations of that time. However, contrary to expectations, *DiC1937* is not the least faithful translation to the original among the three I have analyzed; *DiC1986* is. The fact that *DiC1986* was published as part of a four-novel volume could explain some of the cuts imposed on the book as necessary to adapt the novel for publication in that format. However, the "unfaithfulness" on *DiC1986*'s part is not merely a result of its publishing format, because other intentions are clearly prioritized over making the story shorter. First, clues are added and red herrings eliminated in order to avoid unnecessary distractions, thus making the mystery more accessible; second, *DiC1986* not only preserves the changes made by *DiC1937*, but also unexpectedly further modifies parts of the novel for ideological reasons, as in the case of the added judgments on gambling or moneylending. Therefore, while Spurio (2011, para. 1) and Federici (2018, p. 37) denounce the



fact that readers were forced to read outrageously incomplete, ideologically-modified translations until the 1980s, the truth is that the re-editions presented an even-higher amount of cuts and changes than the actual Fascist-era editions. Undoubtedly, it would be a worthwhile endeavor to extend this research to other novels both by Christie and other authors to see whether the same phenomenon can be identified in other pairs of Fascist-era translations and later re-editions. *DiC2019*, as a second translation, is unsurprisingly the closest to the original. However, it is still possible to identify changes that are not motivated by linguistic problems and that take the form of exaggerations: This seems to be a purely stylistic choice whereby elements from descriptions or dialogues are rendered in an inflated way, possibly to add vivacity to the passage. Three points emerge from this analysis: The year of publication of a translation is not always a reliable indicator of its quality; ideology and censorship can exert their influence on translations even in the absence of an ideologically-charged context, such as the Fascist regime was; finally, even a translation that strives to be as “faithful” as possible to the original can have its own agenda.

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