



Fascist Italy's poisonous censorship



by Francesco Spurio

Since the Mondadori Publishing House included them in the series *I Libri Gialli* in the 1930s, Agatha Christie's novels have met with considerable and lasting success in Italy, too. Such popularity is something of a miracle if one considers the dubious quality of the translations of the day, which continued to be published up until the beginning of the Eighties. Besides the censorship and changes imposed by the Fascist regime (examples of which are evident in the opening chapters of both *Murder on the Orient Express* and *Lord Edgware Dies*), the first Italian editions are characterized by the general tendency to thin out the text, deleting sentences or entire paragraphs. This is particularly evident in *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* and *The Seven Dials Mystery* and even in *The Sittaford Mystery* where a number of imaginative textual re-workings lead to an illogical and arbitrary rewriting of the book. Such intervention on the part of the publisher clearly demonstrates the low esteem in which, at that time, the authors, their works and even the readers were held.

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