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Red herrings and other misdirection in translation

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In 1928, Anthony Berkeley and other detective story authors founded the prestigious Detection Club. One of its first presidents was Dorothy L Sayers and the membership reads like a *Who's Who* of Golden Age detective fiction and beyond. The club is still active and contemporary thriller writers such as Val McDermid, John Harvey and Iain Rankin are members. The club was founded as a forum for networking, in order for members to help each other with technical aspects of their writing and to develop a 'code of ethics'. On joining, new members had to take the oath of fair play, promising that they would not withhold information from their readers or resolve their mysteries in an unrealistic manner. The detectives in their stories would

“well and truly detect the crimes presented to them using those wits which it may please [the author] to bestow upon them and not placing reliance on nor making use of Divine Revelation, Feminine Intuition, Mumbo Jumbo, Jiggery-Pokery, Coincidence, or Act of God.” (Detection Club: online)

However, the authors' solemn oath “never to conceal a vital clue from the reader” (Detection Club oath) did not prevent them from engaging in ingenious forms of reader manipulation and misdirection. The golden age detective story lives on the battle of wits between author and reader, where the author attempts to lead the reader astray by providing partial information, foregrounding irrelevant clues and burying crucial evidence, giving facts out of context so that their relevance is not apparent or by suggesting associations and emphasising details which are later revealed to be misleading. Reader engagement – and entertainment – largely relies on the cognitive involvement of the armchair detective attempting to solve the puzzle despite authorial misdirection, to match their wits against the genius of the detective, to avoid and recognise the traps laid for them.

The truth of the problem must at all times be apparent—provided the reader is shrewd enough to see it. By this I mean that if the reader, after learning the explanation for the crime, should reread the book, he would see that the solution had, in a sense, been staring him in the face—that all the clues really pointed to the culprit—and that, if he had been as clever

as the detective, he could have solved the mystery himself without going on to the final chapter. (van Dine: online)

Of course, detective fiction lends itself to these cognitive games, to misdirection and rhetorical manipulation. The condition of all detective stories is that “the detective repeat, go over again, the ground that has been covered by his predecessor, the criminal.” (Brooks 1984: 24) This retracing of steps makes crime fiction a double and discontinuous narrative, where the crime is presented (usually) at the beginning of the story initiating a double narrative moving backwards in time, retracing and uncovering the steps leading to the (usually) murder, and at the same time moving forward chronologically, charting the development, the growing understanding and knowledge of the detective towards resolution, the identification of the culprit. The crime is solved through rational deduction and logical thinking, where clues are uncovered, interpreted and causally related until ultimately the different layers of meaning and discontinuous narrative strands around hypotheses of cause, motive, manner and means are resolved into a linear narrative of cause and effect.

In addition to this fundamental structural discontinuity of crime fiction, the author further fragments the narrative by consciously manipulating the chronology, mis-associating time and place or characters, unsettling narrative perspective through shifting narrators and focalisers, scattering evidence through the text and across the different narrative strands and by giving differential treatment in terms of focus and emphasis to the various narrative components.

This manipulation of the reader is popularly referred to as red herrings. Strictly speaking, a red herring is a misleading plot line rather than the technical devices and manipulative strategies which the author deploys. In the following, I will focus on two broad categories: 1) the exploitation of inferences, that is the gaps in the text which the reader fills in on the basis of the knowledge they bring to the text, and 2) the use of rhetorical manipulation where plot-significant information is presented in such a way that the important is hidden and the unimportant becomes prominent.

Like all genre literature, detective stories draw on a set of typical tropes and topoi and it is these conventions that the author can exploit by playing a game of bluff and double-bluff with the reader’s knowledge of and attentiveness to how typical settings, actions, conversations etc may suggest a clue (or an

attempt to divert attention from a clue). Similarly, the author can take advantage of shared assumptions what constitutes typical character behaviour or appearance and create character constructs which do not conform to the norm. Such departures from the conventional can function as a clue to moral deviancy and signal a potential suspect.

The following two examples show how the author exploits the reader's knowledge of genre conventions. In *Mrs McGinty's dead* (1952), Agatha Christie's Poirot conducts an informal investigation to clear the suspect awaiting trial for the murder of the eponymous old woman and 'interviews' all the people who employed Mrs McGinty as a cleaner.

"I am investigating the murder of Mrs McGinty," said Poirot. "And I do not joke."

"Ouch," said Mrs Summerhayes. "I've cut my hand. " (Christie 1952: 42)

The knowledgeable reader, on the look-out for potentially relevant clues, may interpret the fact that Mrs Summerhayes cut her hand as a guilty reaction to Poirot's announcement, an involuntary disclosure that she is implicated in the crime, rather than as an unrelated, accidental slip of the knife while chopping vegetables, and, as a result, will put her on the 'suspect list'. Similarly, in *The Bomber*, Liza Marklund exploits the convention that we assume the perspective presented in a prologue and interspersed first person reflections to be that of the perpetrator, giving the reader an insight into the mind of the killer, that it is their voice we are hearing.

Sometimes I would put a lump of sugar on the hill. The ants loved my gift, and I smiled while they poured over it and pulled it down into the depth of the hill. In the autumn, when days grew colder and the ants slowed down, I would stir the hill with a stick to wake them up again. The grown-ups were angry when they saw what I was doing. They said that I was sabotaging the work of the ants and had ruined their home. To this day, I remember the feeling of injustice. I meant no harm. I just wanted a bit of fun. I wanted to rouse the little creatures. (Marklund 201: 10)

Here the inference is that this is the voice of the killer based on the assumption that cruelty to animals in childhood is a marker for abnormal behaviour and closely linked to (popular) psychological profiles of murderers. It also assumes that the killer is a man, because it is 'understood' that it is little boys who

torture animals, that murderers are usually men, and that their victims are women – and the reader knows that the victim in *The Bomber* is a woman who was killed by brutal blows with a hammer to her head – described on the page immediately preceding the first person reflection. As a consequence, the reader is guided towards building up a construct of the killer as a man, potentially disregarding any contextual clues implicating women. Throughout the novel, Marklund ensures that any references to the killer are non-gendered, for example as ‘the figure’ (Marklund 2011: 9) and that none of the first-person reflections contain any unambiguously gendered indicators (clothes, behaviour patterns, absence of pronominal references, etc)

In *The mysterious affair at Styles* Christie creates an inference-rich scenario in which the characters and the reader develop a number of assumptions around the identity of the male speaker in a quarrel which is overheard by the maid Dorcas and reported to Poirot who is investigating the poisoning of Mrs Inglethorp in the night following the exchange.

“Well, sir, as I said, I happened to be passing along, when I heard voices very loud and angry in here. I didn't exactly mean to listen, but—well, there it is. I stopped. The door was shut, but **the mistress was speaking very sharp and clear**, and I heard what she said quite plainly. 'You have lied to me, and deceived me,' she said. I didn't hear what Mr. Inglethorp replied. **He spoke a good bit lower** than she did—but she answered: 'How dare you? I have kept you and clothed you and fed you! You owe everything to me! And this is how you repay me! By bringing disgrace upon our name!' **Again I didn't hear what he said**, but she went on: 'Nothing that you can say will make any difference. I see my duty clearly. My mind is made up. You need not think that any fear of publicity, or scandal between husband and wife will deter me.' Then I thought I heard them coming out, so I went off quickly." "You are sure it was Mr. Inglethorp's voice you heard?" "Oh, yes, sir, **whose else's** could it be? “ (Christie 1920: online)

Dorcas takes it as read that the quarrel is between Mrs Inglethorp and her husband and that she is accusing her husband of having an affair, on the basis of the rather odd phrasing ‘a scandal between husband and wife’. Any seasoned reader of detective novels will of course realise that Dorcas’s certainty is a fairly obvious indicator that it is likely that the male speaker is not Mr Inglethorp and that the third-person reference to husband and wife also points

towards a scandal between another couple in the household. However, the English leaves this entirely open to interpretation and the reader's sharpened awareness relies on knowledge of genre conventions.

The German translation however closes down on the possibilities of interpretation. The indeterminacy of 'whose' scandal Mrs Inglethorp is talking about is reduced by translating the word 'kept you' as 'aushalten' which is only used to describe a sexual relationship where the (usually older) man pays for the upkeep of his (young) mistress. The English can have two meanings, either the sexual relationship or the situation where a relative or guardian pays for the upkeep of a dependent child or ward. In German, this word is 'unterhalten' (although it would be more common to use a noun-verb construction 'Unterhalt zahlen'). Because the German does not have the hyperonym containing both meanings of sexual and familial financial support but differentiates these meanings into the two hyponyms ('aushalten' and 'unterhalten/Unterhalt zahlen'), the translator had to make a choice and opted for the sexually connoted hyponym, clearly indicating that the quarrel is between Mr and Mrs Inglethorp, when, in fact, as is revealed at the end, the quarrel was between her and her stepson and she used the word in the sense of familial support and upkeep.

So far, I have discussed two types of inference where the reader supplies meaning for a textual gap or decides on a preferred meaning for a polyseme on the basis of co-textual clues. As we have seen, the first type of inference, where two unconnected actions are linked by a motivated interpretation in the reader's mind, does not necessarily pose any problems in translation, while the choice of preferred meaning poses a problem if the target language does not have a similarly polysemous or superordinate lexical item available. I will now turn to inferences which build on gender and identity role assumptions which are far more difficult to convey in languages which have explicit gendering strategies or where culturally-specific expectations are diverse. In the following examples, again taken from *Mrs McGinty's dead*, the author exploits norms expectations around femininity – our understanding of what is – especially in the fifties – normal behaviour and appearance. The attributes or characteristics which build up a cumulative image of an 'unwomanly' woman are highlighted in bold in the descriptions of Deirdre Henderson.

The **big** young woman with the **plain** face looked gratified. (Christie 1952: 160)

Deirdre Henderson came in. She looked pale and strained and, as usual, rather **awkward**. [...] Spence rose and pushed forward a chair. She sat down on it **squarely in an ungainly** schoolgirlish sort of way. (id: 227)

"**No lipstick**," he said. "Or is that only this morning?" "No, it is not only this morning. **She never uses it**." "That's **odd**, nowadays, isn't it?" "She is rather an **odd kind of girl** - undeveloped." (id: 230)

Deirdre is shown to be somewhat odd, unfeminine, big, and the knowledgeable reader might use these apparent discrepancies in character presentation as marking her out as deviant, potentially placing her on the suspect list. In addition, some of her behaviour is described in such a way that it is suggestive of masculinity making this a possible case of gender manipulation where Deirdre could conceivably be unmasked as a man at the end of the novel. Playing with gender, is, in fact, central to *Mrs McGinty's dead* and is an increasingly foregrounded theme in relation to a number of characters, but Deirdre's non-conforming lack of femininity is a very clear red herring – she is simply an awkward and not very stylish young woman. However, the German translation foregrounds the gender theme in its choice of title 'Vier Frauen und ein Mord' (Four women and a murder), making the knowledgeable reader even more susceptible to anticipate any potential twists in the tale based on gender. Titles perform a number of functions in guiding reader expectation, from the phatic (raising reader interest), informative (providing topic and content) and the hermeneutic. It is the hermeneutic function which is most important for crime fiction because it gives a clue for text interpretation (Iliescu 2001: 94) and in the context of genre expectations, the reader will take the information contained in the title as a heightened stimulus for interpreting any gender clues in the text.

So far, I have been addressing how an author can create ambiguity by negotiating norms expectations and genre expectations revolving around gender identity and gender norms. Grammatical gender, of course, adds a further dimension to gender manipulation and poses particular problems for the translator, especially if the author is consciously withholding linguistic clues by using unmarked forms. We saw an example of this in Marklund's use of 'the figure' to refer to the killer without disclosing whether this is a man or a woman. English lends itself particularly to such masking of the biological sex of an unknown character. Unlike inflected languages, it does not have gendered endings or definite articles

The following examples illustrate how the translation of grammatical gender introduces (at times obligatory) shifts and makes things explicit that the source text leaves, deliberately, open. Let us look at a number of instances taken from *The mysterious affair at Styles*, where Christie was careful not to identify whether the referent was male or female but the German translation rendered these as explicitly feminine or masculine. The classic device of prolonging suspense over the identity of the murderer even as s/he is revealed in the detective's final explanation of the crime to the assembled closed group of 'suspects', is also deployed by Christie in *Styles* when Poirot is about to name the suspect:

‘We all know **this** hand-writing and——" A howl that was almost a scream broke the silence. "You devil! How did you get it?" A chair was overturned. Poirot skipped nimbly aside. A quick movement on his part, and **his** assailant fell with a crash.’ (Christie 1920: online)

‘Wir alle kennen **seine** Handschrift und ...’ Ein Aufheulen, das sich fast zu einem Kreischen steigerte, durchbrach die Stille. Du Teufel! Wie bist du daran gekommen?’ Ein Stuhl fiel um. Poirot wich geschickt zur Seite. Eine rasche Bewegung **seinerseits** und **der** Angreifer stürzte krachend zu Boden.’ (Christie 2011: 295-6)

Christie was quite careful to avoid any gendered references – the handwriting is not modified by a gender-disclosing possessive (his/her) but by a demonstrative (this) pronoun and ‘the assailant’, admitting his guilt by attacking Poirot, similarly leaves gender undetermined. In German, however, the use of gendered pronouns and articles cumulatively builds up a male identity: the possessive male pronoun (‘seine’) identifies the handwriting as a man's and the use of the masculine definite article in ‘**der** Angreifer (the [male] assailant) further spoils the suspense and removes immediately all female characters from the suspect list.¹

While this occurs towards the end of the novel, and resolution is imminent, instances of gender explicitation in the middle of the novel have a more substantive impact on how effective the author's misdirection works. A central

¹ It could be argued that the use of the masculine definite article is an instance of generic masculine usage into which the feminine is subsumed, allowing a potential female referents, and that it would have been difficult for the translator to render a similarly ungendered form in German without a class shift from noun to adjective or participle. However, the male (rather than potential female) interpretation of the attacker is reinforced by the masculine possessive pronoun identifying the handwriting, which could have easily been rendered in an ungendered demonstrative pronoun as in the English.

feature in *Styles* is signalled in the multiple meanings of ‘affair’; the plot, and the shifting suspicions of who might be the murderer, revolves around a number of visible, suspected, concealed and surprising affairs of the heart between the members of the household at Styles (Mr and Mrs Inglethorp, her stepsons John and Lawrence Cavendish, her ‘ward’ Cynthia, her daughter-in-law Mary, her companion Evie Howard) and the visitors connected with Styles, Dr Bauerstein, Captain Hastings, and Mrs Raikes, the farmer’s wife. Jealousy, infidelity, suspected or concealed love affairs and love not acknowledged, recognised or admitted, provide the motivation for the characters suspecting each other, for the reader to be attentive to any suggestions of clandestine affairs and for the author to create a cumulatively tighter web of misdirection and confusion.

In the following two examples, Christie leaves it open whether the relationships referred to are opposite-sex ones. When Captain Hastings discusses the possibility that Dr Bauerstein, a frequent visitor at Styles, the home of the victim, might be the murderer and might not have acted on his own, his phrasing leaves open whether this accomplice is a man or a woman: ‘Dr. Bauerstein might have had an accomplice. (Christie 1920: online). In the German translation, *Das fehlende Glied in der Kette* (The missing link in the chain), Nina Schindler makes the accomplice unequivocally female by using the feminine ending ‘in’: ‘dass Dr Bauerstein eine Komplizin gehabt haben könnte.’ (Christie 2011: 216) Similarly, in a fight between John and Mary Cavendish, Mary responds to her husband’s jealous accusation over her inappropriately close friendship with Dr Bauerstein, challenging him ‘Have *you* no friends of whom I should disapprove?’ (Christie 1920: online). In the German, this again becomes explicitly feminine, the friends are women friends: ‘Hast du denn keine Freundinnen, die mir missfallen?’ (Christie 2011: 210) The relationship between Mary Cavendish and Dr Bauerstein is one of the classic red herrings in *Styles*, ultimately revealed to be innocent on Mary’s part who is used by Dr Bauerstein as an alibi for his spying for the Germans. But the fact that in the German version Hastings suggests a **female** accomplice, Mary is implicated far more explicitly, forcefully directing suspicion at her and placing her on the suspect list in a far more pronounced manner than in the English. Similarly, the exchange between Mary and John, explicitates her jealousy (which is revealed to be the explanation for a number of ‘suspicious’ actions which potentially implicate her in the murder) and foregrounds her suspicion that her husband has an affair. Again, this is revealed to be the case at a much later point in the book, but it discloses a red herring Christie which very consciously and carefully

constructs, by withholding and gradually revealing partial information. The German here closes down on the reader's cognitive enjoyment and interaction with the text – a clue is revealed rather than allowing the reader to deduce it by spotting the inferential gap.

I will now turn to an analysis of the rhetorical manipulation of plot-significant information, which strategies Christie deploys in *Styles*, and what implications these have for translation. Catherine Emmott and Marc Alexander have shown how cognitive poetics provides a theoretical framework which is particularly suitable to analyse reader manipulation in detective fiction (Alexander 2002; Emmott 2003; Emmott/Sanford/Alexander 2010). What is crucial here is the readers' ability to process, remember, and recall information. For example, research has shown that information in main clauses is more easily remembered than information in sub-clauses (Sanford/Sturt 2002: 386) and 'that false assertions in logically subordinate clauses are less likely to be noticed than they are in main clauses.' (id: 385) The opportunities for authors to misdirect their readers by hiding crucial clues in sub clauses and placing red herrings in main clauses are obvious. But this also has crucial relevance for translation strategies. In order to produce an idiomatic and stylistically fluent text, it is frequently necessary to reorganise sentence construction in the target language and such rearrangements frequently mean that units of meaning are shifted from their position in a subordinate clause to a main clause. In *Styles*, one of the very complex red herrings revolves around impersonation and disguise. Mr Inglethorp is implicated in the murder of his wife when he is identified to have bought a bottle of rat poison. However, he can provide an alibi for the time of the purchase and Poirot is attempting to find evidence of who could have carried out the successful disguise and posed as Mr Inglethorp. He has found a false beard, trimmed to the shape of Mr Inglethorp's beard in a dressing up box in the attic and is interviewing the maid Dorcas whether this box was used recently and who might have had access.

Well, sir, not very often nowadays, though from time to time we do have what the young gentlemen call 'a dress-up night.' And very funny it is sometimes, sir. Mr. Lawrence, he's wonderful. Most comic! I shall never forget the night he came down as the Char of Persia, I think he called it—a sort of Eastern King it was. He had the big paper knife in his hand, and 'Mind, Dorcas,' he says, 'you'll have to be very respectful. This is my specially sharpened scimitar, and it's off with your head if I'm at all

displeased with you!' Miss Cynthia, she was what they call an Apache, or some such name—a Frenchified sort of cut-throat, I take it to be. A real sight she looked. You'd never have believed **a pretty young lady like that could have made herself into such a ruffian.** Nobody would have known her.
(Christie 1920: online, my emphasis)

Hidden in a sub clause, (identified in bold), is evidence of Cynthia's success at carrying off a male disguise in the past which places her on the suspect list of having impersonated Mr Inglethorp. While the German translation has maintained the order of information in this instance, it has somewhat shortened Dorcas's long-winded narrative by summarising Cynthia's disguise (identified in italics) as 'Miss Cynthia hat sich als Gangster verkleidet, die sah vielleicht aus! (Miss Cynthia had disguised herself as a gangster; she looked a sight!). This tidying up on the part of the translator affects another feature of information processing which authors exploit. The more information is compressed into short text units, the shallower the reader processes this information – i.e. the reader skims over items, does not remember all details or does not differentiate between potentially relevant and irrelevant detail. Here are two examples where Christie has buried crucial information:

I know what it is," she accused him, "you've been listening to the doctors. Never should. What do they know? Nothing at all—or just enough to make them dangerous. I ought to know—my own father was a doctor. That little Wilkins is about the greatest fool that even I have ever seen. Heart seizure! Sort of thing he would say. Anyone with any sense could see at once that her husband had poisoned her. I always said he'd murder her in her bed, poor soul. Now he's done it. And all you can do is to murmur silly things about 'heart seizure' and 'inquest on Friday.' You ought to be ashamed of yourself, John Cavendish. (Christie 1920: online)

In this long and excited rant, Mrs Inglethorp's devoted companion Evie Howard puts forward yet another tirade agitating against Mr Inglethorp, arguing that he is the murderer. Her pronounced dislike of Mr Inglethorp, articulated repeatedly by Evie, is another of the complicated red herrings Christie carefully devised. Mr Inglethorp and Evie are not only distant cousins but are actually in love with each other and they have planned the murder of Mrs Inglethorp in meticulous detail in order for Mr Inglethorp to inherit his wife's fortune. Exploiting the

double indemnity feature of English law², they had planned to implicate Mr Inglethorp in the murder by laying a trail of false clues (including buying the strychnine/rat poison), only for him to be cleared of the murder charge when he can demonstrate alibis for the (planted) evidence. The crucial clue which Christie has buried in the passage above is that Evie has sufficient medical knowledge (because her father was a doctor) to have executed the poisoning of Mrs Inglethorp through using a little-known interaction between sleeping powders and strychnine in a tonic which the murder victim was taking.

The challenge for the translator consists not so much in complex ambiguity but rather in maintaining a stretch of text containing substantial redundancy and not to fall into the trap of producing a more cohesive and coherent passage as the next example demonstrates. Here the translator has complied with the Gricean maxim of quantity³ and has counteracted the intended effects of shallow processing (Emmott/Alexander 2010: 332) by removing apparently irrelevant detail and repetition in Poirot's description of his clumsiness.

Is it possible? Ah, but I am vexed with myself! **I am not usually clumsy.** I made **but a slight gesture**"—I know Poirot's gestures—"with the left hand, and over went the table by the bed! (Christie 1920: online)

Ich ärgere mich schrecklich über meine Ungeschicklichkeit. Stellen Sie sich vor, ich machte eine Handbewegung' – eine von Poirots Gesten – 'und schon fiel der Tisch beim Fenster um. (Christie 2011: 178)

The phrases in bold have been omitted in the German translation, and the sentence is far more focused, makes fewer demands on the reader's processing capacity, and as a result does not bury the relevant clue (knocking over the table by the bed which accounts for some of the evidence found at the scene of the crime). In addition, the translator mistranslated bed as 'window', completely confusing the reader who wishes to follow the deductive trail of the detective.

Repetition is another strategy for misdirection which builds on the processing capacity of the reader and it can be used to confuse or to aid recall. We know that information which has been encountered more recently is more easily available for recall than less recent information. (Emmott/Alexander 2010: 331) Since clues and crucial information are broken up into small components and

² Double indemnity means that a person cannot be tried for an offense if they have been cleared of it in a prior trial.

³ See Baker for a discussion of Gricean maxims and their relevance for translation, pp. 225-6.

distributed across different narrative strands over potentially long stretches of text, the author needs to ensure that relevant details can be recalled by reader at the conclusion so that they follow the argument and accept it without feeling that they have been misled or that information was withheld. In this balancing act of burying hints or fracturing evidence on the one hand, and complying with the fair play rules, repetition plays an important role.

Mrs Inglethorp has been poisoned and all evidence suggests that the agent was strychnine, although there are many factors which argue against it. The investigation into the properties, forms and occurrences of strychnine and its derivatives is a red thread throughout the narrative, and the question whether strychnine can have been the poison or whether it is another poison is complex and confusing, burying the ‘identity’ of the poison in the bewildering plots and turns, pros and contras. In the course of the English text, strychnine is mentioned six times – four repetitions of ‘hydro-chloride of strychnine’ and two minor variations ‘strychnine hydrochloride’ and ‘Liq. Strychnine Hydro-clor’. These repetitions keep the name of the poison sufficiently active in the reader’s memory to recognise it at the resolution and to realise that what had been suggested at the very beginning was proved to be right at the end. (This is quite important because it is the underlying structure of the novel which is built on a double-bluff: the main suspect at the beginning turns out to be the real murderer and the method of poisoning is also shown to be the one initially suspected.)

In the German translation however, the repetition of the initially buried minor detail is not sustained. The name of the poison is mentioned only five times (one omission) and these five occurrences have two repetitions of ‘Strychnin’, and three variations of the name (Chlorsäure-Strychnin-Mischung, Chlorsäure-Strychnin, Chlorsaures Strychnin). Since it is not clear from the context whether these variations are synonyms or refer to different forms of poison, this use of co-referents rather than repetition adds to the confusion and makes reader recall even more difficult.

Christie herself deploys repetition as a means to obscure meaning when she creates a passage where, again in a witness statement by the maid Dorcas, she repeats the pronoun ‘it’ seven times but links it two different referents ‘salt’ and ‘tray’.

Yes. Coarse kitchen salt, **it** looked. I never noticed **it** when I took the tray up, but when I came to take **it** into the mistress's room I saw **it** at once,

and I suppose I ought to have taken **it** down again, and asked Cook to make some fresh. But I was in a hurry, because Dorcas was out, and I thought maybe the coco itself was all right, and the salt had only gone on the tray. So I dusted **it** off with my apron, and took **it** in. (Christie 1920: online)

The German translator clarifies the confusing repetition of cohesive devices by using the pronoun ‘es’ (it) only four times and only when it refers to ‘salt’ (Salz). All references to the ‘tray’ (Tablett) are repetitions:

Ja, **es** sah aus wie grobes Küchensalz. Als ich das *Tablett* hochbrachte, hab ich **es** nicht gesehen, aber als ich dann später das *Tablett* in Mrs Inglethorps Schlafzimmer bringen wollte, hab ich **es** gleich bemerkt. Wahrscheinlich hätte ich das *Tablett* mit runternehmen und die Köchin bitten sollen, neuen Kakao zu kochen. Aber ich war in Eile, denn Dorcas war nicht da, und ich dachte, der Kakao selbst wäre in Ordnung, und irgendwer hätte Salz auf dem *Tablett* verschüttet. Deshalb wischte ich **es** mit meiner Schürze weg und brachte das *Tablett* hinein. (Christie 2011: 85-6)

Since ‘Salz’ and ‘Tablett’ are both neuter, they take the same personal pronoun ‘es’ and it would have been perfectly possible to maintain the highly complex chain of referents in the German. The translator has tidied up and produced a fluent, clear and transparent passage but as a result has reduced the processing load required, working against the intentional construction of reader confusion in the English. The above example is not the only instance where the German produces a far more reader-friendly, transparent and fluent text, in line with translational, or perhaps editorial, guidelines observing Grice’s maxims, in particular those of quantity and manner. But this compliance with producing a well-constructed, clear, precise and non-redundant style actually works against the text function and undercuts the author’s intentional deployment of rhetorical devices to misdirect and manipulate the reader.

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